



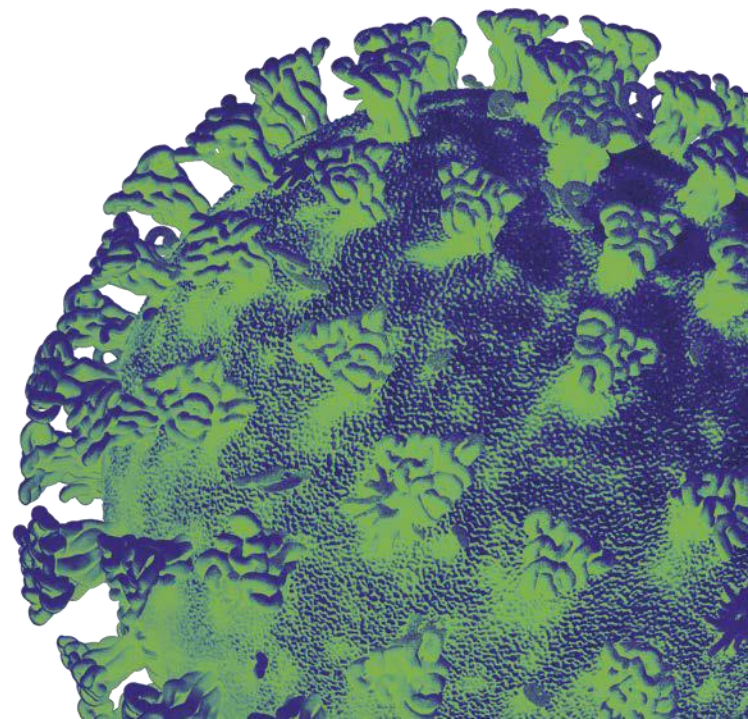
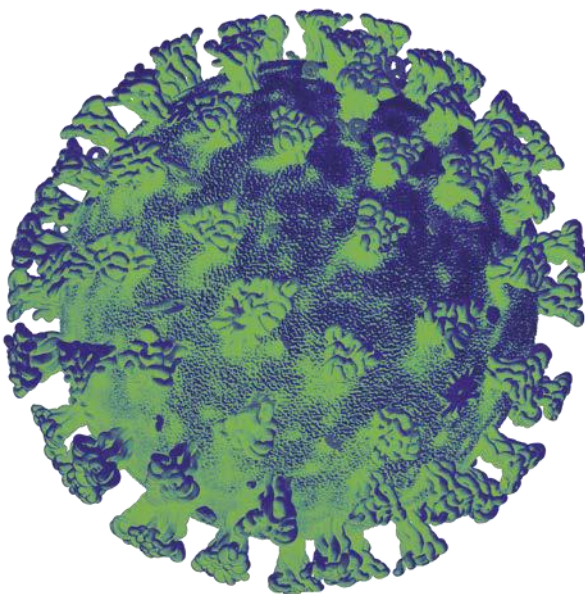
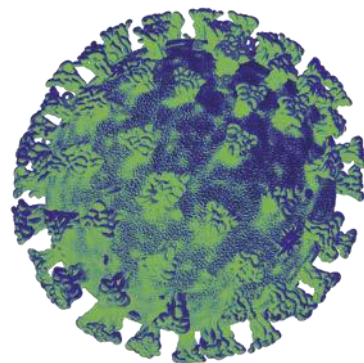
Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# Technical Advisory Group

## Consensus Statement:

### Post-mortem testing

17 July 2020



# Welsh Government COVID-19 Technical Advisory Group

## Consensus Statement: Post-mortem testing

### Background

- The Technical Advisory Group has been asked to consider the viability of testing for infection with SARS-CoV-2 after the death of the individual to be tested.

### Consensus

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have reviewed published evidence of the recovery of SARS-CoV-2 virus from the lower respiratory tract. They found that:  
*“No data are currently available on the frequency of detection of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the virus that causes COVID-19, by RT-PCR on postmortem swabs collected at different durations after death. If COVID-19 testing on postmortem swab specimens is being considered for a suspected COVID-19 case, SARS-CoV-2 RNA may still be detected up to 3 days postmortem and possibly longer based on available data from experiences with MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV; however sensitivity may be reduced with a longer postmortem interval, and duration of illness may need to be considered in interpreting a negative result.”*
- Thus in cases where there is a clinical indication for diagnostic testing, e.g. infection with SARS-CoV-2 is suspected, samples may be taken within 3 days of death for RT-PCR testing with a reasonable likelihood of detecting virus if present.
- Non-targeted post-mortem screening for surveillance purposes where COVID-19 is not suspected is considered to be of questionable value and is not recommended at this time.
- Post-mortem testing policy should be kept under review and may evolve in the response to new evidence, for example that supporting targeted testing in a specific and clearly defined cohort.

### References

- ‘Collection and Submission of Postmortem Specimens from Deceased Persons with known or Suspected COVID-19’; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; last revised 15 June 2020; <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-postmortem-specimens.html#submission-specimens>; Accessed 23/06/2020.