

3 June 2020

To: Office of National Statistics [ONS] - Contact Centre

I have concerns regarding the way the number of deaths from Covid-19 is currently being recorded and published and would appreciate clarification on how the statistics are compiled. I set out below information copied from "**World Health Organisation**" website relating to the I C D -10 codes used.

Abstract

Emergency use I C D codes for COVID-19 disease outbreak

The COVID-19 disease outbreak has been declared a public health emergency of international concern.

- *An emergency ICD-10 code of 'U07.1 COVID-19, virus identified' is assigned to a disease diagnosis of COVID-19 confirmed by laboratory testing.*
- *An emergency ICD-10 code of 'U07.2 COVID-19, virus not identified' is assigned to a clinical or epidemiological diagnosis of COVID-19 where laboratory confirmation is inconclusive or not available.*
- *Both U07.1 and U07.2 may be used for mortality coding as cause of death. See the International guidelines for certification and classification (coding) of COVID-19 as cause of death following the link below.*
- *In ICD-11, the code for the confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 is RA01.0 and the code for the clinical diagnosis (suspected or probable) of COVID-19 is RA01.1.*

End of abstract

Am I correct in assuming that clinicians are able to use code **U07.1** on death certificate following a positive test result. It remains unclear which test is used as the manufacturer of "SARS - CoV-2 Coronavirus Multiplex RT-qPCR kit" has confirmed that the test should only be used for research purpose and not for clinical diagnosis. It also remains unclear under what circumstances clinicians are able to use code **U07.2** on death certificate thus confirming death from Covid-19 without any evidence that the "virus" is the cause of death.

In compiling and analysing death statistics is the ONS able to differentiate between code U07.1 and code U07.2.

I remain concerned that misleading statistics regarding number of deaths from Covid-19 may now be driving UK Government **policy** and **process** with serious consequences for the UK economy. You will be aware of constant reference in news bulletins to "*death from coronavirus*". There are a number of coronaviruses, the common cold and seasonal flu being two examples. In order to avoid generating misleading death statistics, does the ONS agree that we need to clearly differentiate between:

1. Death from Covid-19, and
2. Death with a coronavirus

I appreciate the difficult working conditions for ONS staff during the current lock-down period but would appreciate clarification on death recording process at your convenience. Thank you.

Regards

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