

**Public Health Link**

**From the Chief Medical Officer for Wales**

**Distribution:** As Appendix 1

**From:** Dr Frank Atherton, Chief Medical Officer for Wales

**Date:** 27 January 2021

**Reference:** CEM/CMO/2021/04

**Category:** Immediate (cascade within 6 hours)

**Title**: **INVESTIGATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SARS-CoV-2 virus new variants of concern**

**What is this about:**  Immediate Actions in response to SARS-CoV-2 virus new variants of concern.

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| **Immediate Actions for the NHS:**  Due to the Variant of Concern originally associated with South Africa (**VOC-202012/02**) and as a precautionary approach, as of **4:00am on Friday 22 January** visitors from or transiting through **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** and **Tanzania** in the last 10 days will be denied entry to the UK. Based on Passenger Locator Form data from the past two months, there are approximately 20 people per day arriving in the UK from DRC and 40-60 from Tanzania. There are no direct scheduled flights to the UK from either country.  Due to the Variant of Concern originally associated with South Africa (**VOC-202012/02**) the current restrictions on travel to the UK from **South Africa**, southern African countries (**Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Eswatini, Zambia, Malawi, Lesotho, Mozambique,** and **Angola**) and other countries with potential community transmission of the South African variant (**Mauritius** and **Seychelles**) remain in place.  Due to Variant of Concern originally associated with travellers from Brazil (**VOC-202101/02)** the current restrictions on travel to the UK from **Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela, Cape Verde, Panama** and **Portugal (**including **Madeira** and the **Azores)** remain in place.  Any individuals who do arrive in Wales from the listed countries must isolate for 10 days and are recommended to have a COVID PCR test immediately if they develop symptoms or on day 7/8 if they have not developed symptoms. Anyone who shares a household with somebody self-isolating since their return from the listed countries will also have to self-isolate for 10 days. All household members should be tested if the traveller tests positive. All individuals who may already have travelled to Wales from the listed countries will need to be contacted and asked to isolate for 10 days along with all the members of their household.   * Individuals should not be seeking routine outpatient, ambulatory or primary care, elective treatment while in their 10 days of isolation after return from the listed countries. Primary and secondary care organisations should assess that an individual has returned from any of the listed countries and delay elective and non-urgent treatment until after the 10 days of isolation. * Any individual with a travel history from the listed countries in the preceding 10 days OR contact with an individual with a travel history to the listed countries in the previous 10 days who requires emergency assessment or admission to hospital should be managed in isolation in a single room with en-suite bathroom facilities. * Personal protective equipment (PPE) should be worn as recommended in the IPC guidance. * These individuals should be tested on admission and according to NHS testing regimes while in hospital. Current PCR assays in use should be effective and used for testing. * Hospitals should contact their local Health Protection Team with the details of individuals who test positive who have returned from the listed countries or been in contact with someone who has returned from the listed countries. If required, infection control concerns can be discussed with the Public Health Wales and HCID Unit at University Hospital of Wales.   Please follow the arrangements below for management of patients with possible SARS CoV-2 variants of concern:  **Possible routes of referral**   * Patient identified as returnee from one of the listed countries and isolating at home, tests positive on surveillance PCR throat swab [TTP teams to enquire re- the listed countries travel in all cases where overseas travel reported ] * Patient identified as returnee from the listed countries and isolating at home, reports symptoms, tested by local TTP team and positive * Patient presents to local healthcare, identified as having returned from the listed countries, tests positive on admission screen (**should be isolated in ensuite cubicle from point of admission and throughout) [Healthcare staff should ensure that all cases of infectious respiratory illness should be asked about recent travel]** * Patient presents to primary care, dependent on clinical presentation should either be asked to go home and isolate and testing to be arranged via local TTP, or referred to secondary care.   SWAB TO BE MARKED AS POSSIBLE SOUTH AFRICAN/BRAZILIAN VARIANT CoV2 AND PROCESSED WITHIN PHW LABORATORY, IF POSITIVE TO BE TRANSFERRED PROMPTLY TO MICROBIOLOGY UHW, CARDIFF FOR SEQUENCING  **Notification of possible case**   * Laboratory and/or local TTP to notify PHW Incident Director for the Day * Cases presenting directly to local healthcare should be notified to local on call health protection teams who will inform PHW incident director for the day * Incident director to arrange discussion between local CCDC, microbiology on call Consultant Cardiff, WAST and local clinical team (if inpatient). * UHW Virology to be informed within daytime working hours of sample and need to expedite sequencing |

**General background information on variant of concern and variants under investigation**

The **VOC-202012/01** variant was first detected in the UK and was first sequenced in the UK in September 2020.

The **VOC-202012/02** variant was first detected in South Africa and was first sequenced in the UK in December 2020.

Note, there is a VUI and VOC associated with Brazil:

* The **VUI-202101/01** variant was first detected in Brazil and was first sequenced in the UK in November 2020.
* The **VOC-202101/02** variant was first detected in Japan in travellers from Brazil in January 2021 and has not been detected in the UK.

Gnomically confirmed case numbers for SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern and variants under investigation in the UK are updated twice weekly and can be accessed via the link below:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-variants-genomically-confirmed-case-numbers](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fpublications%2Fcovid-19-variants-genomically-confirmed-case-numbers&data=04%7C01%7CStephen.Barry%40gov.wales%7C319c4e46aebc4c56e4b708d8c1f59553%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637472607988599021%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=IOsqL4uQb9udR4480%2FQA%2F92b8W0gueUPQAR12CJTjZA%3D&reserved=0)

The Welsh Government is currently in discussions with the other UK nations regarding strengthening our international travel arrangements in order to reduce the possible importation of these variants of concern or any new variants of concern that may arise. I will keep you updated.

Decorative

**DR FRANK ATHERTON**

**Prif Swyddog Meddygol/Cyfarwyddwr Meddygol, GIG Cymru**

**Chief Medical Officer/Medical Director NHS Wales**

**Appendix 1**

To: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership to forward to:

All General Practitioners - please ensure this message is seen by all

practice nurses and non-principals working in your practice and

retain a copy in your ‘locum information pack’.

Cc: Health Boards and NHS Trusts:

Chief Executives

Medical Directors

Nurse Directors

Directors of Public Health

Cc: Public Health Wales:

Chief Executive

Director of Public Health Services

Consultants in Communicable Disease Control

Microbiologists

Consultant Epidemiologists

Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme

Cc: NHS Direct Wales

British Medical Association

Royal College of GPs

Royal College of Physicians

Academy of Medical Royal Colleges

Royal College of Nursing

Royal College of Midwives

Royal Pharmaceutical Society

Community Pharmacy Wales

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health Wales