



PRESS RELEASE

May 4, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

No COVID-19 Test Sample Has Been Lost in Manchester

The Southern Regional Health Authority, which administers public healthcare in Manchester, Clarendon and St. Elizabeth, wishes to refute a claim in a Jamaica Gleaner article entitled, Test Sample Lost, Alorica COVID-19 Patient Told, and published May 4, 2020.

The article stated that: "A patient who has been housed at a Manchester isolation centre since April 10 and who harboured hopes of finally being released has been gutted by the news that health authorities have reportedly lost his second exit sample."

The Medical Officer of Health for the parish of Manchester, Dr. Nadine Williams who receives and dispatches all test results for the parish notes that there has not been any misplacement of test results in Manchester, and at no time was the client told by staff members that his results have been misplaced.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness' discharge protocol, states that each client confirmed to have COVID-19 must be retested with the aim of having two consecutive negative results prior to discharge from the isolation facility.

"Results are shared with the clients within hours of receipt from the Ministry of Health. There was a delay in testing as a result of the great burden placed on the laboratory system due to the Alorica Call Centre situation which has now been alleviated with the new machine up and running at the National Public Health Laboratory" Dr. Williams explained.

She pointed out that clients are in dialogue with the staff on a daily basis both in person and by phone.

"The clients in this particular facility can communicate with the staff when the rounds are made and by telephone in between the rounds. There is a phone at the nurse's station that clients can call for queries. The space

(more)

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also allows for communication outside the door to the client's room if they are not able to call as the rooms are close to the station for staff. Once results are available this is communicated to the clients, otherwise they are told that we are still waiting for their outstanding result. At no time was any client told that their sample was lost" Dr. Williams said.

"It is understandable that clients will become frustrated especially when they feel physically well but have to remain in the facility until two negative results return. The period to achieve this can be variable and can last for weeks even with a rapid turnaround time for results. Some clients have had to be referred for counselling to help them to cope with the situation. Other measures that we have put in place to help them cope are free wireless internet access, physical activity sessions by the health promotion team, and word puzzles and games to occupy their time. The rooms are well ventilated and were prepared to ensure the comfort of the clients and the meals are prepared with individual dietary restrictions in mind" Dr. Williams explained.

She commended the staff at the facility for their commitment and dedication and for rising to the occasion to take on this task of caring for clients with COVID-19, who have been working hard on a daily basis to lift the spirits of the clients.

Relatives are also permitted to take things for the clients so that their stock of personal items can be replenished. This is received by the staff on behalf of the clients.

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