

Date: Friday, 10th March 2023  
Our Ref: MB/CM FOI 5603

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**Re: Freedom of Information Request FOI 5603**

We are writing in response to your request submitted under the Freedom of Information Act, received in this office on 20th February 2023.

Your request was as follows:

1. Of the following, which guidelines does your Trust follow for the diagnosis and treatment of meningitis/encephalitis:  
(Please answer: Yes/No)

- NICE Guidelines (CG102) - Bacterial meningitis in under 16s: recognition, diagnosis and management
- UK Joint Specialist Societies guideline on the diagnosis and management of acute meningitis and meningococcal sepsis in immunocompetent adults (published 2016)
- Association of British Neurologists and British Infection Association National Guidelines - Management of suspected viral encephalitis in adults (published 2011)
- Association of British Neurologists and British Paediatric Allergy, Immunology and Infection Group National Guidelines - Management of suspected viral encephalitis in children (published 2011)

[NICE Guidelines \(CG102\) - Bacterial meningitis in under 16s: recognition, diagnosis and management - The Walton Centre NHS Foundation Trust \(WCFT\) is a Specialist Neuroscience Tertiary Care Centre; for the treatment of adults, therefore we cannot provide this information.](#)

[UK Joint Specialist Societies guideline on the diagnosis and management of acute meningitis and meningococcal sepsis in immunocompetent adults \(published 2016\) - Yes](#)

[Association of British Neurologists and British Infection Association National Guidelines - Management of suspected viral encephalitis in adults \(published 2011\) - Yes](#)

[Association of British Neurologists and British Paediatric Allergy, Immunology and Infection Group National Guidelines - Management of suspected viral encephalitis in children \(published 2011\) - The WCFT is a Specialist Neuroscience Tertiary Care Centre; for the treatment of adults, therefore we cannot provide this information.](#)

2. Does your Trust have any locally developed/adapted guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of meningitis/encephalitis in both adults and paediatric patients?

If yes, please state which guidelines have been adapted and please provide a copy of your local guidelines.

The WCFT do have adapted guidelines, based on UK Joint Specialist Societies guideline on the diagnosis and management of acute meningitis and meningococcal sepsis in immunocompetent adults (published 2016)

Please see attached.

3. What are the top 3 roles in your Trust, in order of involvement, that are responsible for the development of local pathways and guidelines for meningitis/encephalitis?

The consultant microbiologists and antimicrobial pharmacist are involved with the development of the antibiotic guidelines for meningitis/encephalitis

4. Does your Trust typically take samples of blood cultures from patients with suspected meningitis/encephalitis within: (Please select answer)

- 1 hour of admission?
- 2-4 hours of admission?
- 4-8 hours of admission?
- 8> hours of admission?

I can confirm in accordance with Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) that we do not hold the information you have requested. Therefore we cannot provide this information.

Under the FOIA, we are not required to create this information in order to answer your request. I should explain that the FOIA is to do with transparency of information held by public authorities. It gives an individual the right to access recorded information held by public authorities. The FOIA does not require public authorities to generate information, or to answer questions, provide explanations or give opinions, unless this is recorded information that they already hold.

5. Does your Trust consistently carry out lumbar punctures in patients with no contradictions who have suspected meningitis/encephalitis? (Yes/No)

If yes, who performs the lumbar puncture? (Please specify job role)

Does your Trust consistently carry out lumbar punctures in patients with no contradictions who have suspected meningitis/encephalitis? (Yes/No) - Yes

who performs the lumbar puncture? - This information is not readily available, however this tends to be Junior Doctors on the wards.

6. Does your Trust consistently take cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) samples via lumbar puncture from patients with suspected meningitis/encephalitis within: (Please select answer)

- 1 hour of admission?
- 1-2 hours of admission?
- 2-4 hours of admission?
- 4-8 hours of admission?
- 8-12 hours of admission?
- >12 hours of admission?

[Same as Question 4](#)

7. Does your Trust administer antibiotics to patients where appropriate prior to taking blood culture and CSF samples? (Yes/No)

Yes

8. Does your Trust consistently administer antibiotics to patients with suspected meningitis/encephalitis within:  
(Please select answer)

- 1 hours of admission?
- 2-4 hours of admission?
- 4-8 hours of admission?
- 8> hours of admission?

[Same as Question 4](#)

9. Which of the following guidelines does your Trust follow for the microbiological investigation of meningitis/encephalitis: (Please select: Yes/No)

- UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations - Meningoencephalitis (published 2014)
- UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations - Investigation of Cerebrospinal Fluid (published 2017)

[UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations - Investigation of Cerebrospinal Fluid \(published 2017\)](#)

10. Does your Trust have any local adaptations or amendments to the two UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations listed in the above question?

If yes, please provide a copy of your local amendments.

[Does your Trust have any local adaptations or amendments to the two UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations](#)

listed in the above question? - Yes

please provide a copy of your local amendments. - Heavily blood stained CSF sample - no cell count performed.

11. Following lumbar puncture on a patient with suspected meningitis/encephalitis, how long are the turnaround times from point of receiving specimen to result on the following tests: (Please select answer for each result)

- a) Cell count (<1 hour, 1-2 hours, 2-4 hours or >4 hours)
- b) Gram staining (<1 hour, 1-2 hours, 2-4 hours or >4 hours)
- c) Bacterial culture (<1 hour, 1-2 hours, 2-4 hours or >4 hours)
- d) PCR (<1 hour, 1-2 hours, 2-4 hours or >4 hours)
  - a) Cell count (<1 hour, 1-2 hours, 2-4 hours or >4 hours)  
2 hours
  - b) Gram staining (<1 hour, 1-2 hours, 2-4 hours or >4 hours)  
2 hours
  - c) Bacterial culture (<1 hour, 1-2 hours, 2-4 hours or >4 hours)  
>4 hours
  - d) PCR (<1 hour, 1-2 hours, 2-4 hours or >4 hours)  
> 4 hours

12. Where does your Trust process CSF samples?

Samples of CSF are processed in the laboratory, Urgent Fluid Area, Medical Microbiology at the laboratory based at The Royal Liverpool Hospital. Samples indicating High Risk factor, e.g., TB, are processed in our Containment 3 area. This is within the Liverpool Clinical laboratories.

13. Does your Trust perform PCR testing to test samples from patients with suspected meningitis/encephalitis? (Yes/No)

Requests for meningococcal PCR testing are sent away to Manchester Reference Unit. Virology requests are tested inhouse.

14. If PCR testing is carried out in your Trust, which bacterial and viral pathogens are tested for? (Please separate your answer by bacterial and viral pathogens)

Standard screen will get HSV 1&2, VZ, Enterovirus & Parechovirus. Extended panel, usually immunocompromised patients or clinically significant will also get CMV & EBV added on. On medic request we can also do JC virus or HIV viral load on CSF samples.

Please see our response above in blue.

#### Re-Use of Public Sector Information

All information supplied by the Trust in answering a request for information (RFI) under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 will be subject to the terms of the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005,



Statutory Instrument 2005 No. 1515 which came into effect on 1st July 2005.

Under the terms of the Regulations, the Trust will licence the re-use of any or all information supplied if being used in a form and for the purpose other than which it was originally supplied. This license for re-use will be in line with the requirements of the Regulations and the licensing terms and fees as laid down by the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI). Most licenses will be free; however the Trust reserves the right, in certain circumstances, to charge a fee for the re-use of some information which it deems to be of commercial value.

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If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to the Freedom of Information Office at the address above.

**Please remember to quote the reference number, FOI 5603 in any future communications.**

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioners Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

*Mike Burns*

**Mr. Mike Burns, Executive Lead for Freedom of Information**