

Testing and Tracing International Forum: 01/10/21

Symptom Requirements

Key Points:

- In **England**, research suggests that only a minority of symptomatic people come forward for testing. Therefore, there is extra scope to add additional symptoms to our current list to help find more positive cases and prevent onward transmission. Some additional symptoms are highly prevalent in the general population (e.g. headaches, fatigue).
- **Denmark's** symptom list remains same as England's current list. PCR testing is sourced through the state, and rapid testing has been done through private providers. This will soon change, and rapid testing will only be available from public PCR providers. Antigen testing has been available for people with symptoms for some time.
- In **France**, for people visiting their GP, symptom definitions are slightly different. For example, for people who are aged 80 and over, and for children, a wider criterion for symptoms exists which considers their general health. Additionally, in France symptomatic people can get either a supervised rapid test, or a PCR test if they are symptomatic. If they take a supervised rapid test as symptomatic and test negative, they must still take a PCR test. In other words, a confirmatory PCR is needed for a negative LFD.

UK Health Security Agency

- Current guidance on when to seek a PCR test is based on three cardinal symptoms: a fever, a new continuous cough, and a loss or change of smell or taste. We (England) currently advise people and their households to self-isolate immediately and take a PCR test if they experience COVID-19 symptoms.
- However, there are many other symptoms related to COVID-19. Additional symptoms increase test sensitivity but will reduce test specificity by varying amounts e.g. headaches add the most to sensitivity but cause a large drop in specificity.
- Research suggests that a minority of symptomatic people come forward for testing. Therefore, there is extra scope to add additional symptoms to help find more cases.
- Some of the additional symptoms are highly prevalent in the general population (e.g. headaches, fatigue).
- The challenge is to balance the sensitivity and specificity of additional symptoms with PCR capacity

Denmark:

- Denmark has one of the highest testing rates per capita in the world, with 14 tests per person during the pandemic.
- PCR testing is sourced through the state, and rapid testing has been delivered through private providers. This will soon change, and rapid testing will only be available from public PCR providers.
- Symptom definitions for COVID-19 have not changed. Denmark has a similar list of symptoms to the UK's.
- Capacity constraints previously meant that people had to book ahead to get a PCR test. However, now with increased capacity people can go to a number of walk-in test sites
- Denmark still encouraging people to get tested if symptomatic despite all NPIs being lifted.

- They have now removed their *coronapas* which has led to a reduction in people taking tests as there is now no need to use either negative test/proof of vaccination to enter public settings.
- There is slight testing fatigue amongst the population however no national comms campaigns are planned to increase testing uptake.
- Denmark's generous welfare support has been integral in supporting people to self-isolate for the duration of their quarantine.

Japan:

- As the autumn/winter period is approaching, a new wave of the virus is predicted. They are considering implementing rapid testing on a wider scale to help with this, until now rapid testing has not been as prevalent in Japan as it has been in Europe.
- The definition of symptoms has not changed following Delta, it has remained broadly similar to that of the UK's.

France:

- Symptom definition and self-isolation requirements have not changed for some time. Fever, new continuous cough, and loss of taste/smell remain the cardinal symptoms –same as the UK.
- For people visiting their GP, symptom definitions can be slightly different. For example, for people who are aged 80 and over, and for children, a wider criterion for symptoms exists which considers their general health.
- Symptomatic people can get either a supervised rapid test, or a PCR test if they are symptomatic. If they take a supervised rapid test as symptomatic and test negative they must still take a PCR test. In other words, confirmatory PCR is required a negative LFD.
- From 15 October, non-vaccinated people cannot be reimbursed if they use a test for the purposes of COVID-19 status certification/*Pass Sanitaire*.

(END)