



Our file: PHAC-A-2020-000110 / TTL

February 2, 2020

Christine Massey  
21 Keystone Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4C 1G9

Dear Christine Massey:

This is in follow-up to our response, December 28, 2020 to your request made under the *Access to Information Act* (the Act) for the following information:

**All records in the possession, custody or control of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) describing the isolation of a SARS-COV-2 virus, directly from a sample taken from a diseased patient, where the patient sample was not first combined with any other source of genetic material (i.e. monkey kidney cells aka vero cells; liver cancer cells).**

**Please note that {I am} using "isolation" in the every-day sense of the word: the act of separating a thing(s) from everything else. {I am} not requesting records where "isolation of SARS-COV-2" refers instead to:**

- the culturing of something, or
- the performance of an amplification test (i.e. a PCR test), or
- the sequencing of something.

**Please also note that {my} request is not limited to records that were authored by the PHAC or that pertain to work done by PHAC. {My} request includes any sort of record, for example (but not limited to) any published peer-reviewed study that PHAC has downloaded or printed.**

**Clarification:**

**Date range of request is January 1, 2020 until June 15, 2020**

As requested, The Public Health Agency of Canada has further discussed with the program area and requested clarification of the records that were provided in response to the request above.

Your request has resulted in a "No Records Exist", because of the way that you have formulated your request. The isolation of the virus is not completed without the use of another medium, therefore we have no records that would show this process taking place. It is important to understand the following: The gold standard assay used to determine the presence of intact virus in patient samples is viral isolation in cell culture. With this

assay, if virus is present in the patient sample, it will multiply and produce visible cytopathic effects, which means that infected cells demonstrate visible changes. Additionally, the detection of an increase in the genetic viral material by PCR further confirms that intact virus is present in the patient sample, since increasing viral genetic material necessitates replication of the viral within the cell culture. This technique was successfully used to confirm that intact SARS-COV-2 was present in Canadian patient samples as evidenced in the material provided. In the case of SARS-COV-2 isolation, Vero cells combined with minimal essential medium (MEM) were used because they are essential to support viral replication and cell growth. This combination supports the growth of other coronavirus types and was successful in the case of SARS-CoV-2 as well

Should you have any questions or concerns about the processing of your request, please do not hesitate to contact Tammy Turpin-Loyer, the analyst responsible for this file, by email at [tammy.turpin-loyer@canada.ca](mailto:tammy.turpin-loyer@canada.ca) with reference to our file number cited above.

Please be advised that you are entitled to complain to the Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada concerning the processing of your request within 60 days of the receipt of this notice. In the event you decide to avail yourself of this right, your notice of complaint can be made online at: <https://www.oic-ci.gc.ca/en/submitting-complaint> or by mail to:

Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada  
30 Victoria Street  
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 1H3

Yours sincerely,

Christine Smith  
Team Leader  
Access to Information and Privacy Division