

Julie Williams

By email: [fyi-request-14170-57d8f134@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-14170-57d8f134@requests.fyi.org.nz)  
Ref: H202008345

Dear Julie Williams

### Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) on 19 November 2020 for:

*"Please provide a full, accurate and complete list of records held within the Ministry of Health in New Zealand describing the isolation of a SARS-CoV-2 virus directly taken from a symptomatic patient of CoVID-19 where the sample was not first combined with any other source of genetic material not limited but by way of example monkey kidney cells, Vero cells, liver cancer cells thereby eliminating contamination as a positive possible alternative source of sampling. Please note isolation is used in the normally understood meaning of the word "the act separating a thing from another". Should your routine viral culture techniques not satisfy the parameters stated in my question please limit your response to the specificity of my question"*

The Ministry of Health (The Ministry) holds no information on which cell lines are used to culture COVID-19 (in an appropriate BioSafety setting). Therefore, your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act as the information requested is not held by the Ministry I have no reason to believe that this information is held by another agency. However, the below information may be of use to you.

There are several examples of the virus being isolated and cultured in a laboratory setting. One example provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) describes the isolation and culture of SARS-CoV-2. This information and research on SARS-CoV-2 can be found at the following link:

[https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/26/6/20-0516\\_article](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/26/6/20-0516_article).

A research paper, *Isolation and rapid sharing of the 2019 novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) from the first patient diagnosed with COVID-19 in Australia*, describes the first isolation and sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 in Australia. It is available at:

[www.mja.com.au/journal/2020/212/10/isolation-and-rapid-sharing-2019-novel-coronavirus-sars-cov-2-first-patient](http://www.mja.com.au/journal/2020/212/10/isolation-and-rapid-sharing-2019-novel-coronavirus-sars-cov-2-first-patient).

I trust this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website at: [www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests](http://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca Drew', with a small mark to the right.

Rebecca Drew  
**Group Manager, Science and Insights**  
**COVID-19 Health System Response**