



Department of Health & Social Care

Freedom of Information Team
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0EU

www.gov.uk/dhsc

Mr Daniel Hadfield
Request-693030-868c18ff@whatdotheyknow.com

21 October 2020

Dear Mr Hadfield,

Freedom of Information Request Reference FOI-1258041

Thank you for your request dated 23 September, in which you asked the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC):

"I am writing to request any information that is available regarding the loss of the B814 strain of coronavirus that the UK was researching during the 1960s which the strain was lost.

I am specifically wanting information on the following points:

- 1) How was the strain lost in the first place?*
- 2) What steps following its loss were taken to prevent infection amongst the general population?*
- 3) If, as research at the time of the loss of the strain the virus was rendered inactive by ether - why isn't that something that is public knowledge?*
- 4) When strains B814 and 229E were cultivated by British scientists - what steps when the strains were tested on human volunteers, to protect the rest of the population?*
- 5) As per the above couple of points - why, when the strain B814 was lost, following the human volunteer trials with B814 and 229E, have there subsequently been at least 4 traceable outbreaks of human coronavirus - SARS, MERS, COVID-2, COVID 19 that have caused epidemics and pandemics, plus there being 4 base strains of coronavirus - of which 229E is a known strand - you see why the above points have been raised? Before our scientists researched B814 and cultivated 229E there were no known human coronaviruses - then our scientists cultivate 2 strains, lose 1 and decades later we are in our current situation.*
- 6) What happened to the human trial volunteers after their use as test subjects?*
- 7) Where were the human volunteer tests carried out - where does the previous test location fit into the current lockdown situation - it would be interesting to know if the site is in a known coronavirus hotspot."*

Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

DHSC does not hold information relevant to your request.

DSC has also checked with the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR), which does not hold any information on research into 229E.

However, outside of the FOIA and on a discretionary basis, below is a link to the Covid research that is being funded by the NIHR:

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/covid-studies/>

If you are not satisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to appeal by asking for an internal review. This should be submitted within two months of the date of this letter and sent to FreedomOfInformation@dhsc.gov.uk, or to the address at the top of this letter.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communication.

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may complain directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have already appealed our original response and received our internal review decision. You should raise your concerns with the ICO within three months of your last meaningful contact with us.

The ICO can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

<https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>

Yours sincerely,

Jane Spencer
Freedom of Information Officer
FreedomOfInformation@dhsc.gov.uk