

ALLEGATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA ABOUT FALSIFICATION OF COVID-19 TESTING RESULTS AT NOGUCHI MEMORIAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH (NMIMR)

PRESS BRIEFING

March 3rd 2021; 2:00pm

Background

On 15th January, 2021, the University of Ghana, Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR), received reports of the circulation of a controversial audio recording on social media. The audio message was from an individual alleging that he was requested by British Airways (BA) to obtain a COVID-19 test result for his travel to the UK. He, therefore, visited the NMIMR on 10th January, 2021 to take a COVID-19 test, which turned out positive when he returned to collect the results on 12th January, 2021. He alleged that about an hour after taking the test result, he received a phone call from someone at NMIMR who informed him that the positive result could be changed to negative for a fee of five hundred Ghana Cedis (GHS500.00) to enable him to travel to the UK. The individual further alleged that, he went back to NMIMR, where he was issued a negative COVID-19 test result after paying the agreed fee. He said that after arriving in the UK, he took another COVID-19 test on 13th January, 2021, just three (3) days after the test at NMIMR, which turned out negative.

He accused the NMIMR and its staff of falsification of test results and exploitation of clients for monetary gain.

On 16th January, 2021, the NMIMR (in consultation with the University), commissioned a 5-member committee to conduct internal investigations into the allegations at the institute. The matter was also investigated by the National Intelligence Bureau (NIB).

Findings:

Evidence of COVID-19 test conducted at NMIMR and the UK test result circulated by the complainant bore the name “Kofi Acheampong”.

A. NMIMR Internal Investigations

1. On the 10th of January 2021 at 11:40 am, an individual by name Kofi Acheampong was sampled for COVID-19 test at the walk-in testing station.

2. He paid the official fees (GH₵350.00) for the test and his sample was assigned a lab ID NUR-21-2102
3. The Sample was processed through COVID-19 testing processes and it showed positive.
4. A report dated 12th January was prepared by NMIMR data processing unit, which was verified and signed by the supervisor on duty, Dr. Helena Lamptey.
5. Mr. Kofi Acheampong's positive result was collected and signed for at around 1333 hours on 12th January 2021.
6. Mr. Kofi Acheampong's positive result circulated on social media is valid.
7. There was no evidence in the NMIMR data and reporting system for the generation of another report (negative) for Mr. Kofi Acheampong.
8. Without giving credence to the supposedly UK NHS negative COVID-19 result that was also circulated on social media, we would like to state that, scientifically, it is possible for a person to test positive for COVID-19 and convert to negative status within a few days. The technical data from Mr. Kofi Acheampong's COVID-19 test gave a cycle threshold (Ct) value of 36.12, which suggested that his viral load was low, or he was on the path to recovery.
9. The 5-member committee worked by listening to the audio, examined accompanying images, identified and interviewed a number of key staff involved in the COVID-19 testing process at NMIMR. They also walked through the various COVID-19 process areas and traced the reference sample of Mr. Kofi Acheampong from the registration of the client to the point of result collection. The committee extensively examined all documentation relating to the process.

B. National Intelligence Bureau (NIB) External Investigations

Mr. Kofi Acheampong is a Ghanaian and Irish citizen resident in the UK.

1. On 10th January, 2021, Kofi ACHEAMPONG accompanied by one Solomon AMOAKO, his friend, visited NMIMR for a COVID-19 PCR test. He was requested to report for the test results on 12th January, 2021, the same day he was expected to travel to the UK.
2. On 12th January, 2021 at about 1333 hours, Kofi ACHEAMPONG was again accompanied by Solomon AMOAKO, to NMIMR to collect his COVID-19 test results.
3. Apart from this positive Covid-19 PCR test result, NMIMR does not have records of a negative Covid-19 PCR test result for Kofi ACHEAMPONG.
4. Investigation revealed that, contrary to claims by Kofi ACHEAMPONG, he neither received a phone call from anyone at NMIMR promising to change the test results at a fee nor did he return to NMIMR after he left the place on 12th January, 2021.

5. Investigation also unearthed that, Kofi ACHEAMPONG did not use a falsified COVID-19 test result to travel to the UK on British Airways, flight 075. Checks with British Airways indicated that the company did not request for a COVID-19 test report **as a condition** for Kofi ACHEAMPONG to board their flight. At the time Kofi ACHEAMPONG left for UK on 12th January, 2021, a COVID-19 test report was not a prerequisite for travel on British Airways flights.
6. The claim by Kofi ACHEAMPONG that he conducted a COVID-19 test on 13th January, 2021 in the UK could not be immediately verified.
7. Several phone discussions with Kofi ACHEAMPONG, who is in the UK, to get him to assist with the investigation proved futile as on each occasion, he indicated he would prefer his lawyer to speak on the issue. He however failed to honour his many promises to provide the phone contact of the said lawyer.
8. Meanwhile, Solomon AMOAKO, who came from KUMASI to ACCRA with Kofi ACHEAMPONG and was with him throughout his stay in ACCRA prior to his departure to the UK, has declared as untrue the allegation made by Kofi ACHEAMPONG that he acquired a falsified negative COVID-19 test result to enable him to travel to the UK.

Concluding Comments

It is apparent that, Kofi ACHEAMPONG made false allegations in respect of the falsified COVID-19 test result from NMIMR. The University of Ghana would take the necessary steps to protect its reputation.

The University of Ghana Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research wishes to assure the general public that it will continue to provide accurate and reliable COVID-19 test results.

March 3 2021

UG-NMIMR

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