



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

ATISN 15647

29 November 2021

Dear

ATISN 15647 – Development of COVID Vaccine

Thank you for your request to the Welsh Government for information under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) received on 01 November regarding the development of COVID vaccines. The Freedom of Information Act allows access to recorded information that is held by an organisation and as advised in our acknowledgment letter 03 November, we are responding to the following under the Freedom of Information Act.

- 1. Can the Minister prove to the Welsh population that none of the inoculations currently being offered have had any involvement with the HEK 293 practices?*
- 2. If the Minister cannot, what measures will be taken to provide exemption certificates for those citizens rejecting all inoculations/vaccines produced with HEK 293 involvement - on moral and/or religious grounds?*

Our response

In relation to question 1:

HEK-293 cells are used in the **production** of vaccines in use in the UK and used in the manufacture of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine. With regards to **development**, both Pfizer and Moderna used HEK-293 in testing, but not in production of the vaccine.

- Oxford / AstraZeneca The manufacturing process for the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine involves the production of a virus, the adenovirus, which carries the genetic material to the cells inside the body. To produce this virus in the laboratory, a “host” cell line is needed. The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine uses a cell line called HEK-293 cells. HEK-293 is the name given to a specific line of cells used in various scientific applications. The original cells were taken from the kidney of a legally aborted foetus in 1973. HEK-293 cells used nowadays are clones of those original cells, but are not themselves the cells of aborted babies.

The Department for Social Justice of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales [released a statement](#) addressing the use of HEK-293 cells in the COVID-19 vaccine. They say that “one may in good conscience and for a grave reason

receive a vaccine sourced in this way”, and “that one does not sin by receiving the vaccine”.”

- Pfizer / Moderna Foetal cells were used for proof of concept but HEK-293 is not used in the production.

In relation to Question 2:

The domestic Covid pass is available to unvaccinated individuals in Wales who have had negative LFT results. The Welsh Government will shortly be publishing the qualifying medical criteria that will be used in Wales for COVID-19 vaccination exemption certificates

Next Steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government’s handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government’s Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ
or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

*Information Commissioner’s Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF*

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely,