

Reference Number: FOI202223/066
From: Private Individual
Date: 25 May 2022
Subject: hypoxic challenge tests / fit to fly service provisions, number of tests carried out and waiting times

I would like to make a freedom of information request regarding hypoxic challenge testing (often part as a "fit to fly" assessment as follows:

Q1 Does the Trust provide hypoxic challenge testing services?

A1 Yes

Q2 If yes, is HCT testing provided as an NHS service or as a private service?

A2 It is provided as both

Q3 If HCT testing is offered as a private service, what is the fee?

A3 £250.00

Q4 Do patients need a GP referral or consultant referral to access hypoxic challenge testing?

A4 To be provided by the NHS, there needs to be a consultant referral or a referral made by an appropriate healthcare professional. GP referrals are not supported as part of the NHS service, as it's not a commissioned service.

Q5 How is the HCT/fitness to fly service "marketed" to GPs and private patients?

A5 Currently via Word of mouth. We have also previously provided leaflets for GP Practices.

Q6 Which patient groups / morbidities typically require HCT testing? e.g. patients with interstitial lung disease etc.

A6 All patients with compromised respiratory systems.

Q7 How many hypoxic challenge tests have been completed in the last year?

A7 From 01/04/2021 – 31/03/2022 we completed 12 hypoxic challenge tests

Q8 What is the current waiting time to access an HCT test?

A8 Currently, we don't have a waiting list as our referrals are small numbers. The referrer will contact us and generally arrange it within a couple of weeks. This has the potential to increase if more referrals are received

Q9 Has the emergence of long Covid added to demand for fit to fly assessments in recent months?

A9 Yes

Q10 For patients referred for a fitness to fly assessment, what outputs does the patient receive? e.g. a letter from a respiratory consultant advising whether they will need supplementary oxygen when flying, a consultation, any other intervention.

A10 Patients are verbally told the results following the test to enable them to access services if the test was provided by the NHS. All results are recorded on patient information systems and results are sent back to referrer. Private patients receive a written report of their results.