

From: Nixon, Jamie (DOH)
Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2020 2:04 PM
To: Smith, Jaime (GOV Contractor)
Subject: RE: Different question - Dr. Lofy

I would definitely read all of the Freedom Foundation piece if you haven't.

They are saying that "inflating" these numbers suggests the response has been politicized.

"As the Freedom Foundation has previously [documented](#), most of the persons advising Gov. Inslee on the process of re-opening the state are donors to his campaign. Inflating the number of COVID-19 deaths further suggests Washington's COVID-19 response has become politicized."

Thought it was important you saw it.

Jamie

From: Smith, Jaime (GOV Contractor)
Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2020 1:56 PM
To: Nixon, Jamie (DOH) <Jamie.Nixon@doh.wa.gov>
Subject: RE: Different question - Dr. Lofy

I hadn't seen this yet – thanks for forwarding. Interesting example (again) of how complex all this information can be.

From: Nixon, Jamie (DOH) <Jamie.Nixon@doh.wa.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2020 12:46 PM
To: Smith, Jaime (GOV Contractor) <Jaime.Smith@gov.wa.gov>
Subject: FW: Different question - Dr. Lofy
Importance: High

Wasn't sure if you had a chance to see this over on the JICDirector email.

Wanted to make sure you saw it.

Jamie Nixon

From: Nixon, Jamie (DOH)
Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2020 9:27 AM
To: JIC Director (MIL) <JICDirector@mil.wa.gov>; Bayne, David M (DOH) <david.bayne@doh.wa.gov>; 'doh-pio3@doh.wa.gov' <doh-pio3@doh.wa.gov>; Lead PIO (MIL) <LeadPIO@mil.wa.gov>
Cc: Portner, Cory (DOH) <cory.portner@doh.wa.gov>; Maki, Kristen E (DOH) <kristen.maki@doh.wa.gov>; Baggett, Jessica L (DOH) <Jessica.Baggett@DOH.WA.GOV>; Stromme, Lisa M (DOH) <lisa.stromme@doh.wa.gov>
Subject: FW: Different question - Dr. Lofy
Importance: High

Good morning all,

After discussing with the Lead PIO this morning, we felt it was important to elevate this conversation to JIC leadership and give a roundup of where we are at with this issue.

On Monday the Freedom Foundation [published a piece](#) where they explain how DOH counts COVID deaths. As a result of the conclusions reached in the piece, we have received several requests from various outlets looking for comment. After discussion with Cory Portner and Amy Reynolds yesterday morning, we decided it would be prudent to see if we could put a couple experts from the Center for Health Statistics on the Thursday tele-briefing to speak to the issue. Katie Hutchinson and Cathy Wasserman have agreed to do the tele-briefing.

Attached is a clip from the Dori Monson radio program, that was forward to Amy Reynolds by KIRO reporter Hanna Scott (Amy forwarded it to me last night), wherein the author of the Freedom Foundation piece explains that someone who tested positive for COVID, and then perhaps a couple weeks later died in a car accident, would be counted as a COVID death under our system. This is true. If you read the thread below you will see how Katie Hutchinson explains this.

The statement we've crafted is below. I believe as a holding statement this still works, but I wanted to make sure everyone agrees given the circumstances.

"The Washington State Department of Health collects, maintains, and publicly releases data about death in our state in a transparent fashion. The process for identifying, recording, and registering COVID-19 deaths is complex and involves multiple data systems. The conclusions reached by the Freedom Foundation are based on a source of data that is very early in the death reporting, coding and processing sequence for legally registering deaths in WA. **That is to say, the data is preliminary and not yet finalized.** The numbers provided on [our website](#) represent the best information available from our multiple data systems and are current as of the day prior to release."

If everyone is ok with this statement, I will start responding to request for comment using this. We are hopefully getting a media advisory out today for the tele-briefing tomorrow (I'm waiting for confirmation of the proposed time from Cathy and Katie). There, Katie and Cathy can explain why the count is done as it is, why the preliminary nature of the data is an important caveat, and why the count we publish should not be discredited due to the circumstances of how this kind of public health work is done.

I welcome all feedback and guidance.

Thank you.

Best,

Jamie Nxon

From: Hutchinson, Katie H (DOH)
Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2020 7:24 AM
To: Nixon, Jamie (DOH) <Jamie.Nixon@doh.wa.gov>; Wasserman, Cathy (DOH) <Cathy.Wasserman@DOH.WA.GOV>
Cc: Portner, Cory (DOH) <cory.portner@doh.wa.gov>; Lead PIO (MIL) <LeadPIO@mil.wa.gov>
Subject: RE: Different question - Dr. Lofy

I haven't listened to the clip, but yes, in theory, that is correct. However, it doesn't make our data unreliable, not credible or not trustworthy.

So far, we probably have 4-5 deaths where the person clearly wasn't COVID – eg, gunshot wound, or something like that. Of the rest of the 1000+ deaths that we have, somewhere between 20-35 are likely not COVID right now. Most are deaths from things like Alzheimer's. However, even for those it is unclear whether or not COVID19 contributed to the death. We are following up on many of these deaths.

Katie

From: Nixon, Jamie (DOH)
Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2020 7:13 AM
To: Hutchinson, Katie H (DOH) <katie.hutchinson@DOH.WA.GOV>; Wasserman, Cathy (DOH) <Cathy.Wasserman@DOH.WA.GOV>
Cc: Portner, Cory (DOH) <cory.portner@doh.wa.gov>; Lead PIO (MIL) <LeadPIO@mil.wa.gov>
Subject: FW: Different question - Dr. Lofy
Importance: High

Good morning,

Attached you will hear a clip of the author of the [Freedom Foundation article](#) speaking to it on the Dori Monson

radio program.

In it, he says that someone who has had a positive COVID test, and then maybe a month later died of a car accident, will be counted as a COVID related death. Please listen to the clip and let us know if what he is saying is correct.

Their implying that our death count isn't trustworthy or credible because of this.

Please get back to me at your earliest convenience.

Best,

Jamie

From: Reynolds, Amy (DOH)
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2020 7:43 PM
To: Stromme, Lisa M (DOH) <lisa.stromme@doh.wa.gov>; Nixon, Jamie (DOH) <Jamie.Nixon@doh.wa.gov>; Bayne, David M (DOH) <david.bayne@doh.wa.gov>
Subject: FW: Different question - Dr. Lofy
Importance: High

All,
Thanks to Hanna for flagging this. Jamie, I know you're taking the lead on this and it highlights the importance and urgency of the event you were proposing on Thursday. I will leave it up to y'all to decide if you want to go out strong with a statement against the misinformation in this soundbite sooner. I hold Hanna someone would get back to her as soon as possible, but that it might not be Dr. Lofy.

For reference if you weren't on the telebriefing today, here are my terrible notes about Hanna's question and Kathy's answer:

Hanna Scott: How are we calculating the deaths from COVID-19 in our state. If someone is positive, do we count them as a COVID death regardless of how they die?

Kathy: Cardiac problems created by flu – we leave it to the health care providers to tell us if they believe flu has contributed. Second way – we receive death certificates as part of our vital records work and use these to see if anyone has been reported. We also learn about deaths through our electronic death system – would need to follow up with which they count and which they don't. We'd have to get back to you about how these death certificate deaths are counted. Third way – died at home, had respiratory symptoms, get them tested if doctor asks and then ME decides if covid caused or contributed to the death.

Thanks,
Amy

From: Hanna Scott [<mailto:hscott@bonneville.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2020 6:04 PM
To: Reynolds, Amy (DOH) <amy.reynolds@doh.wa.gov>
Subject: Different question - Dr. Lofy

Hi again Amy,

I wasn't sure if I should send this straight to DOH or JIC so sending to both.
On today's media call I asked a question about the death calculation for COVID-19 in Washington and Dr. Lofy provided some answers but said she would need to follow up after talking to some people for a thorough answer.

I'm attached an mp3 of a claim being made by the Freedom Foundation about how deaths are calculated in WA, and I'm just trying to find out if the statement is accurate? Dr. Lofy provided some great info for me today, but if she gets a moment to listen to this short file and can offer more specifics that would be fabulous.

Thank you!

Hanna Scott
Reporter
KIRO Radio
206-920-1176