

On being poked up the snozzler

Lin and I were tested for Covid-19 last week.

Lin's had stuffed-up sinuses for weeks, putting it down to hay fever and the usual effects of dust.

Her GP prescribed medicine, but also insisted on a test for the dreaded virus, saying there was too little testing going on in Taranaki. Lin was booked to be probed within the hour.

That set me thinking – if Lin tested positive then I'll probably have it as well. I also recalled we'd had a couple of overseas travellers for a BBQ in early February and for some time afterwards we both suffered Covid-like symptoms.

On hearing that, my GP – at the same medical centre as Lin's - immediately arranged a test for me at the same time.

We had half an hour to report to the Taranaki District Health Board's New Plymouth testing centre, based in the former ambulance station at Taranaki Base Hospital in Westown.

Off we trundled, armed with a purposeful feeling we were finally getting to go out to somewhere other than a supermarket.

Then we got lost. Lin swore the testing centre was at the far, western entrance to the hospital estate, so we ended up in the complex of old buildings down towards the helicopter base.

Backtracking, we found it down at the edge of the big car park, although we got no help from the TDHB. There wasn't a sign anywhere on the way, something I find odd, given the interior of the main hospital block has more signs per square centimetre than a motorway junction.

We were ushered to a stop in the car park in front of the old building there and asked to wait in our vehicle while the one in front was processed. Nurses in masks and gloves emerged and checked Lin in, but didn't know about me.

They happily accepted my explanation, but then before proceeding asked my date of birth and full name what seemed like half a dozen times for a plethora of different forms.

My immediate concern was my right nostril. I'd had a blood vessel at the top of it cauterised last year to stop nosebleeds and didn't fancy the damage that might be done by the long, thin probe I saw going up Lin's snozzler.

No problem. Up it goes into the left one. An unpleasant, stinging experience, especially when the nurse starts screwing it around.

But it's quick, the smarting pain is fleet, and in our cases no blood was drawn.

We were told we would hear the result from our respective GPs within two or three days. As we pulled out, another car pulled in behind. It all seemed steadily constant.

Two days later, no word. It was Anzac Day, so understandable.

JT col for May 2 2020 - getting testy

Then three days later at 11am on Sunday, I noticed an alert on my iPad. The online medical service we're enrolled in said it couldn't tell me my result, but if I logged in there would be a message from the doctor.

There were two. One said in a sentence that I was negative. The other said the same, but with a bunch of technical details. It was a relief, although when I thought about it, I was pretty sure I'd be clear.

There was a caution that I might need another test.

Anything for Lin? She checks her iPad and there's no word. Oh well, surely any time now. But subsequent checks reveal nothing.

By Anzac Monday (four days) old impatience here decided it was time to investigate. The medical centre was closed (it was, after all, a public holiday) but the phone message redirected us to another medical centre for emergencies.

Was this an emergency? Hmm. A call proved fruitless, though. Another answerphone message directing me back to our medical centre.

I tried Healthline and was connected to someone who said they couldn't supply our Covid results, but we could try the TDHB Covid line. Another answerphone, another message about emergencies. Hmm, again.

I pressed on and got another human, who said only the GP could give us the result, but since I was negative Lin probably would be, too.

She was. She called the med centre on Tuesday and got the good news.

We emailed the few people we'd told (it's a bit like admitting you've been tested for the clap). One said it might have been better to hear we'd had it; then we'd be over and done with it all. Tempting thought.