



Doctors call for “no holds barred” attack on COVID-19

An emergency meeting of the ADF management committee has called for “no holds barred” attack on COVID-19 and has recommended the following actions to **MINIMISE DEATHS** and **ENSURE THAT THE RESPONSE OF OUR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IS NOT SWAMPED BY AN UNMANAGEABLE SURGE ON THE HEALTH SYSTEM’S CAPACITY.**

International travel

- *Australia should **replicate the international travel restrictions** implemented recently by the government of New Zealand.*
- ***mandatory temperature testing** of all incoming international travellers*
- ***swabs for all febrile and unwell** incoming international travellers*

Halting of non-essential services

- *Australia should follow the lead of countries such as Italy, Singapore and Spain, in **imposing a temporary suspension of non-essential services** in order to limit human-to-human spread of COVID-19*
- ***Schools, TAFEs and universities to be shut down for 4 weeks** and utilise online learning.*
- ***Pharmacies, doctors surgeries, food retailers, public transport, petrol stations and public utilities to remain open***
- ***Religious gatherings to be kept to small numbers** with adequate spacing amongst participants*

Mandatory self-isolation

- ***a period of 3 weeks of self-isolation for all Australians** when not performing essential services or tasks*
- ***wearing of masks to be encouraged** when close interpersonal contact inevitable*
- ***hand-hygiene techniques to be encouraged** when interpersonal contact inevitable*

Open access to free testing

- ***free open-access tests at all hospitals and pathology collection centres for the next 3 months to be funded by Australian and State governments,** in order to allow case detection, isolation and treatment*

Role of Chief Medical Officer

- *ensure that the **regulatory powers of the Chief Medical Officer are adequate** to effectively respond to this pandemic.*

Specifically, with respect to the medical profession, the ADF proposes as follows:

- ***consider suspending elective surgery for non-life-threatening conditions***
- ***make mask and gowns more easily available*** by opening up distribution currently restricted to Primary Health Networks (PHNs)
- ***suspend 2020 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for doctors and health professionals*** to free up more time for them to deal with sick patients
- ***immediately remove restrictions on the registration of senior active [retired] doctors*** to increase skilled workforce and provide support in appropriate roles

Why COVID-19 is different

- **C-19 has been spreading for 3 months at an alarming rate**
- **Is a new virus, challenging the human immune system with no vaccine or adequate antiviral currently available.**
- **Health authorities are having to devise new tests and protocols to diagnose and track COVID-19 whilst fighting it. This takes time.**

As a result, when a patient becomes ill with COVID-19, regardless of whether mild or severe, **treatment is supportive not curative.** This situation will improve once we have a vaccine and antiviral available.

The ADF strongly supports government decisions that have:

- Restricted International travel
- Improved distribution of personal protective equipment
- Made Medicare more flexible by allowing easier access to video and telephone consultations
- Allowed Medicare to rebate pathology tests for COVID-19
- Suspension of non-essential gatherings
- Banned gatherings over 500 persons
- Funded research into COVID-19

Just like all other viruses, the 2019 novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 will not go away. It will remain one of the many infectious diseases that afflict the human body.

As Australia moves into the cooler temperatures that will see COVID-19 merge with the influenza season making diagnosis and management more challenging.

The ADF urges the Australian government to seriously consider our recommendations which are put forward by frontline doctors who are working around the clock to fight this virus.

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