



COVID-19 update 68 – 15/04/2020

Dear Colleagues,

Some more encouraging news for you today: Queensland recorded only 5 additional cases of COVID-19 overnight, making it our lowest number of cases since early March. Even with broadening of our testing criteria last week, we continue to see these numbers decrease.

While our rates may be slowing, our planning and preparation across Metro North is as strong as ever. This positions us as ready to respond if or when we see a surge in cases. Keep up the fabulous work!

I'd like to share with you a few updates from today:

- A day from the Virtual Ward
- Year of the Nurse and the Midwife
- PPE supplies

A typical day from the Virtual Ward

A staff member asked the great question in one of our vidcasts yesterday: what's it like working from the Virtual Ward? I reached out to Mary Wheeldon Acting Operations Director of the Virtual Ward to learn about what she and the team get up to in a day's work.

A typical day in the Virtual Ward starts at 7.30am and not long after, referrals begin to flow from Public Health. In a very short space of time, the team of skilled administration staff, nurses, doctors and allied health practitioners have become wizards in the virtual care realm, making daily or twice daily virtual contact with their patients.

Using telehealth and videoconferencing technology, the team spend their day monitoring patient symptoms and tracking how they are coping in isolation. If a patient is identified as deteriorating, the team make a further patient assessment for possible hospital review and, if necessary, organise inpatient hospital admission.

Around 9pm, they call it a day after making approximately 150 calls and learning a bunch of new ways of to better support patients at home. A big thank you to our fantastic Virtual Ward team! This innovative model of care continues to prove a fantastic way to free up hospital beds and ease the load across our facilities.

We truly hope that over time this may become part of our business as usual process. If COVID-19 does anything positive, it is the opportunity to do things differently and learn new ways of working.

Year of the Nurse and the Midwife

While I know that my nursing and midwifery colleagues are well aware that 2020 is the Year of the Nurse and the Midwife, some of our healthcare colleagues may not be. This was decreed by the World Health Organisation because it is Florence Nightingales 200th birthday. Slightly ironic that we have COVID-19 in the same year and that Florence was probably the first nurse to describe and espouse what is now the backbone of good infection control practice, hygiene and sanitation.

Florence, even all those years ago, understood the value of social distancing. While the environments practiced in were difficult, she understood the intent of not placing the patients too close

together. Certainly, the Lady with the Lamp (as she came to be known) was a pioneer in the development of innovative models of care in very challenging circumstances - not unlike what we are trying to do today in 2020. I am sure Florence would be proud of us all!

PPE supplies

I want to provide you with some further reassurance about our PPE supplies. A significant amount of work is being done to ensure there is a constant and equitable supply of PPE across all facilities and that our [procedure](#) is evidence-based and reflects the highest standard of safety for you and our patients.

You can be assured that if you are instructed not to use PPE, this is because it is not required according to our procedure. This is in no way any indication of a shortage.

If you have any issues in your local areas regarding PPE, I encourage you to report this to your line managers. You can also escalate this up through your directorate EOC to MN EOC (Attention: Clinical Advisor) so that it can be considered by the PPE Clinical Advisory Group (CAG) who meet weekly.

Taking care of your physical and psychological health and wellbeing has never been so important. If you are unwell, it's important to seek assistance and stay at home if necessary. If you or your loved ones require psychological support, you can access resources on our [Staff Wellbeing page](#), including a link to our Employee Assistance Service, Benestar.

Thank you so much for all you do every single day to care for the patients, families and carers that come to Metro North. Dr Seuss said, **“sometimes you will never know the VALUE of a moment, until it becomes a memory.”** And that, colleagues, is how I would like to think we'll feel about COVID-19 in the future.

Regards,
Adjunct Professor Alanna Geary
Metro North Health Incident Controller

Metro North HHS – Overview of Cases*

Confirmed COVID-19 Cases				
Virtual Ward	Inpatient Ward	Inpatient ICU	Recovered	Fever clinic presentations over 24 hours
64	7	5	239	259

*With effect 1000 15 April 2020

**Metro North has two recorded deaths

*** These number reflect the cases being managed by Metro North