



COVID-19 update 78 – 25/04/2020

Lest we forget.

It was touching to see so many Queenslanders holding their own ceremonies this morning for ANZAC Day. I was pleased to hear about the Metro North staff who were also able to take time and commemorate our service men and women. I appreciate the staff who took a moment, no matter how big or small, to honour those who have served Australia.

Health professionals like ourselves share a long history with our armed forces, dating back to the ANZACS at Gallipoli where medical officers provided much needed services quite literally on the frontline. This remains true today.

There's a few things I want to discuss today:

- Expanded testing
- Changes to the CDNA National Guidelines
- Steps moving forward

Expanded testing

In case you missed it, yesterday the Chief Health Officer Dr Jeanette Young released a [new public health alert](#) stating that testing for COVID-19 in Queensland will now be expanded to anyone with acute respiratory symptoms. This means individuals presenting with symptoms that are within the defined Clinical Criteria [fever of 38 degrees or greater **OR** history of fever **OR** symptoms of acute respiratory infection (e.g. cough, shortness of breath, sore throat)] anywhere in Queensland can now also be tested to further identify and prevent community acquired infections.

I have often been asked if it is mandatory to test anyone with symptoms.

It is not mandatory to test anyone with symptoms. Like all tests, the SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test is a tool available to clinicians to help identify the cause and inform the management of symptomatic individuals. If an individual has a clear other clinical focus of infection or alternate explanation of the illness, and there is no clinical suspicion of COVID-19, then testing for COVID-19 is not mandatory.

Changes to the CDNA National Guidelines

Overnight the [Communicable Diseases National Guidelines](#) were updated to include revised case definitions (that essentially underpin the new testing criteria), and release from isolation criteria. The latter changes provide greater clarity for clinicians who are managing COVID-19 patients.

Steps moving forward

The National Cabinet this week and determined that border and quarantine arrangements in place are adequate and that managing local transmission is a priority. They set out the next steps for the Australian Response including:

- Maintaining and refining local mitigation strategies (including social distancing)
- Expanding the testing criteria across Australia (as enacted by the Chief Health Officer as above) to ensure cases are quickly identified.
- Further planning for enhanced monitoring, testing and tracing
- Development of nationally-consistent, industry-specific work health and safety guidance on COVID-19 through Safe Work Australia in accordance with agreed principles

These steps provide us with a framework to help us continue to plan return to our “new normal.”

It does mean, however, that we are likely to remain in a low level of ‘response phase’ for quite some time. This is a situation that isn’t quite covered by our current [Metro North COVID-19 Response Plan](#). So, it’s back to the planning table we go....We will revise our plan this week with a view to develop a lower level of Sustain – Tier 0, so that we document our ‘new normal’ that keeps us operating, but with a high level of readiness to respond in the event of local outbreaks.

Thank you all for continuing to flexible as the guidelines around COVID-19 continue to change. You are doing great things and continue to face the unprecedented challenges caused by this virus.

Until tomorrow.

Kindest regards,
 Dr Liz Rushbrook
 Metro North Health Incident Controller

Metro North HHS – Overview of Cases*

| HHS | Patients being managed by HHS | | | | | FEVER Clinics | | | |
|-------|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|-----------|--|---------------|---------------|---------|-------|
| | Total In-patients | | Virtual Ward / HITH / or similar | Deaths ** | Total cases managed by HHS (including recovered) *** | # of clinics | Presentations | | |
| | ICU-NOT Ventilated | ICU-Ventilated | | | | | Last 24 hrs | TOTAL ^ | |
| MN | 6 | 1 | 2 | 31 | 3 | 321 | 4 | 184 | 12991 |
| TOTAL | | | | | | | | | |

*With effect 1000 25 April 2020

**Metro North has three recorded deaths (one person a return traveller into NSW, who passed away in NSW)

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