

MESSAGE FROM THE COVID-19 HEALTH INCIDENT CONTROLLER

Metro North Hospital and Health Service

Dr Elizabeth Rushbrook



16 April 2021

Dear colleagues,

Vaccination update

We have been informed this week that there will be more Pfizer vaccine available for us to distribute from mid-May. While I cannot guarantee the exact timing of this, I want to share all the information that we have available to us, so that staff and the community we serve can make an informed decision about when they will be vaccinated and which vaccine they choose to receive.

This, together with the recent approval of wider storage and transportation changes (allowing for short term storage of the Pfizer vaccine at normal freezer temperatures), means that we will be able to offer both AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines from more of our vaccination hubs in the near future.

Needless to say, it's going to be a very busy four weeks of training, planning and coordinating logistics to make this happen.

I'm also excited to share that my parents were recently safely vaccinated with AstraZeneca. My mum had very mild transient sore arm, and my dad had a fever overnight that settled with paracetamol. I am very excited that they are now busily mounting an immune response and will be protected against the effects of COVID-19 (physiology is such a wonderful thing) should they encounter it in the future.

We still are continuing to vaccinate health staff and other frontline workers, such as ambulance, police and quarantine workers in the 1a cohort. We are now also offering vaccinations to existing patients of ours in the priority 1b cohort and broader healthcare workers, as well as household members of the 1a cohort and healthcare workers.

You can now visit our new [COVID-19 vaccination website](#) to pre-register for a vaccine. Once you are pre-registered, an account for the State Vaccination System will be created, and this will enable you to book an appointment at any of our vaccination clinics. Please be patient if the clinic you want to book at is not yet available - more appointments will be open each week.

This new website also holds general information about both the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines as well as information for clinicians in relation to the use and common side effects of each vaccine, and links to adverse event reporting information.

COVID-19 PPE and fit testing

While Metro North has moved back to Tier 0 and Low Risk PPE requirements, it is important we maintain the necessary PPE requirements across all of our healthcare settings, including our community settings. Community and Oral Health bedded services align with the [hospital setting matrix](#), while our ambulatory services align with the [community health and in-home setting matrix](#).

Our fit testing program has got off to a flying start – commencing with our COVID wards and Quarantine hotel workers. In the short term, we will move to fit testing our ED, ICU and Critical Care workers. So that we can expand our program, the Clinical Skills Development Service (CSDS) is coordinating fit testing training over the next few weeks. This program has been in planning for some time and it is great to see it being rolled out. Please look out for when your department is scheduled for fit testing and take the opportunity to be fit tested when it arises.

International arrivals

The Prime Minister has announced that the current reduction of international arrivals into Brisbane (capped at 650 per week), suspension of international passenger arrivals from Papua New Guinea into Cairns and the 25% reduction of arrivals from PNG into Brisbane will continue until 11.59 pm on 27 April 2021. This reduction in international arrivals has resulted in an expected reduction of positive COVID-19 patients in our hospitals.

After the 27 April we will see increased arrivals (new cap of 1300 per week) back into Brisbane. This means that we can expect an increased number of COVID-19 cases from these returned travelers in May. I am confident and comforted that our Emergency Departments, Low Acuity wards, Infectious Disease wards, Intensive Care Units and all of the key support areas are fully prepared to continue this vital work.

In closing

With this being our first weekend without restrictions, I hope you all manage to go out and enjoy yourselves. I encourage you all to carry a mask with you when you go out, in case you find yourself in a crowd, and remember to keep practicing good hand hygiene and physical distancing.

Regards,

Dr Liz Rushbrook
Metro North Incident Controller

Metro North Health – 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 Pts		ICU-NOT Ventilated					ICU- Ventilated	Last 24 hrs	TOTAL^
	ICU-NOT Ventilated	ICU- Ventilated								
MN TOTAL	13	0	0	0	4	540	4	207	168283	

*As at 16/4/2021 1000

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

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