



21 April 2021

Dear colleagues,

Things never stay the same for long in this new world of COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccinations

We have started inviting Metro North ambulatory patients in the over 50s cohort to receive their first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine. The first text message went out to Redcliffe Hospital patients who were invited to register for an appointment using our new [COVID-19 vaccination website](#). This week, other hospital clinics will commence same. I also encourage you to use this website to register your family members for a vaccine as part of our 1b vaccination roll out.

We are also expecting an announcement later this week from National Cabinet about bringing forward the commencement of vaccinations for people over 50. If this change is agreed to, people from priority group 2a will be eligible to receive an AstraZeneca vaccine.

I know a lot of staff in our under 50 cohort who have had their first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine have many questions about their second dose. Many have asked if they can instead move to the Pfizer vaccine. The short answer is no, this is not recommended at this time. Whilst we will be receiving more Pfizer vaccines later next month, we still need to prioritise people entering into the vaccination program over those that have already commenced a vaccination regimen. Because of this, and in line with Commonwealth guidelines, we are not currently able to support requests for change of vaccine type between first and second doses unless there is a genuine clinical reason to do so (e.g. anaphylaxis to the first dose). We are reassured that evidence to date indicates good protection against severe COVID disease following an initial dose of Astra Zeneca vaccine, as well as evidence that the incidence of severe / significant side effects are even rarer with the second dose.

Clinical trials in some countries are looking at the efficacy of first dose from one vaccine and a second dose from a different vaccine. There isn't enough data yet to recommend this type of combination. As evidence emerges, we will be carefully examining the best approach for any additional vaccination requirements and opportunities.

It's important you, our staff, and our patients have all the information needed to make an informed decision about choosing to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine. The Federal Department of Health has created the following guide: [Weighing up the potential benefits against risk of harm from COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca](#). There are also more vaccination resources for clinician available on the [COVID-19 extranet site](#).

Fit Testing

As you may all be aware, we have been working hard over recent months to develop and implement a comprehensive staff fit testing program (for fitting the P2/N95 mask), as part

of a core respiratory protection program. We will be working as quickly as we can through priority areas within our HHS, starting with those that are working directly with or supporting known COVID-19 positive patients and quarantining personnel, then those that can reasonably be expected to respond to or provide emergent services known COVID-19 positive patients and quarantine personnel, then those that provide services to those that meet the definition of suspect patients in the current tier 0 environment and so on.

I encourage you to watch out for the opportunity to be fit tested and work with your supervisor to ensure that you can access this testing when it is made available to you.

I would like to remind everyone that regardless of fit testing, there is an enduring requirement to fit check your mask each and every time you don a P2/N95 mask.

Update on New Zealand

You may have seen in the news that one day after the trans-Tasman bubble opened, a New Zealand airport worker has tested positive for COVID-19. This airport worker was fully vaccinated as their job was to clean planes that had travelled from high-risk countries into New Zealand. While the COVID-19 vaccines do not stop people from contracting the disease, they are very effective against serious illness, hospitalisation and loss of life. We will continue to monitor the situation, but we have full confidence in New Zealand's ability to manage these cases.

Flu vaccinations

We are expecting delivery of our staff flu vaccinations late this week or early next week (we have received the small amount of VIVAS flu stock for eligible patients on the National Immunisation Program). I will let you know once we have these vaccinations and the details of our staff vaccination program.

Regards,

Dr Liz Rushbrook
Metro North Incident Controller

Metro North Health – overview of cases*

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						Last 24 hrs	TOTAL ^
		ICU-NOT Ventilated	ICU-Ventilated						
MN TOTAL	8	0	0	0	4	542	4	189	169339

*As at 21/4/2021 0900

**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.