


From: lksfong@gmail.com 
Subject: [HunterGP] COVID19 - HNELHD Update 17/4/20 - +1, 272 total, 27 ?contact, 0 under 1x; spotlight Muswellbrook & Scone
Date: 17 April 2020 at 10:18 pm
To: huntergp@googlegroups.com



From: Michael DiRienzo (Hunter New England LHD) <Michael.Dirienzo@health.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 17 April 2020 4:55 PM
To: @HNELHD-AllStaff <HNELHD-ALLStaff@health.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Important information from the Chief Executive - Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) - Update no. 45

Important information from the CE



COVID-19 UPDATE 45: Friday, 17 April 2020 4:55pm

Dear Staff

As part of our ongoing commitment to keep you updated, here is the latest information on confirmed COVID-19 cases across the District:

According to our latest situation report, the total number of confirmed COVID cases in Hunter New England is 272. This is one additional case of COVID-19 since our last update to staff yesterday.

Age	Female	Male	Total
0-9	1	1	2
10-19	9	4	13
20-29	30	19	49
30-39	17	17	34
40-49	6	8	14
50-59	26	17	43
60-69	33	21	54
70-79	24	22	46
80-89	10	7	17
90-100	0	0	0
Total	156	116	272

Table 2: Confirmed cases by source of infection	
Overseas travel	206
Locally Acquired (within Australia), contact with a confirmed case	39
Locally Acquired (within Australia), no contact identified	27
Under investigation	0
Total	272

Currently 16 patients are receiving care from Hospital in the Home services, and six COVID-19 patients are being cared for in our hospitals.

Hospital	ICU	Acute Ward
John Hunter	1	3
Calvary Mater Newcastle	0	1
Belmont	0	1
Total	1	5

Across the District, 219 people have recovered.

Tragically, three people from our District have died from complications related to COVID-19. There have been no new deaths since our last update.

You may observe that the data provided in the staff update can differ slightly from the information released publically to the media and via our Facebook page. This is because the public data is reported at a particular point in time and aligned with the release of the NSW Ministry of Health state wide data on their website. Case numbers can also change as they undergo further investigation and review.

Call to the community of the Upper Hunter

As cases stabilise, Hunter New England Health is identifying areas where testing is relatively low and further investigation is needed to ensure an accurate picture of COVID-19 occurrence across the District.

Hunter New England Health is calling on Upper Hunter locals with fever or recent onset respiratory symptoms to contact their GP or attend the free COVID-19 clinics at Muswellbrook and Scone hospitals to arrange testing.

We are not putting the spotlight on the Upper Hunter because we expect to find a significant cluster of the disease there. If anything, we're expecting to find a very small number of cases, if any at all.

But it's important that we know what is actually happening in the community. We will only be able to confirm that there is no issue if we increase testing.

Scone Hospital is operating a drive through COVID-19 Clinic from 1.30-3.30pm, Monday -

Friday.

Muswellbrook Hospital is operating a COVID-19 clinic from 1.30-3.30pm, seven days a week. Signage in the main hospital carpark will direct you to the Clinic.

SMS updates for staff

In a bid to maximise the number of staff receiving updates about COVID-19, NSW Health is sending SMS updates directly to staff mobile phones.

An introductory SMS is being sent to staff with a mechanism to opt-out if they choose not to receive updates on their mobile phones. Staff will also have the option to opt-out of SMS notifications at any time.

Only important NSW Health and COVID-19 updates will be sent via this channel. The text messages will be brief (limited to 160 characters) and provide staff with a link to further information.

Issues likely to be covered via SMS include issues such as PPE supply and updated guidance on use and clinical communities of practice.

To ensure the SMS messages reach as many staff as possible, I am asking staff to check or update their mobile number on their Stafflink record. The steps staff need to take are attached to this email.

COVID-19 testing criteria expanded

NSW Health has expanded its testing criteria for COVID-19. If a person has a cough, shortening of breath, temperature or sore throat, they are encouraged to get tested.

Anyone with these symptoms is encouraged to go to a COVID-19 Clinic, their local GP or closest hospital for testing.

Staff parking and accommodation

As you know, the NSW Government has announced free parking and hotel accommodation for frontline health staff. Following this announcement, we've had some enquiries from staff seeking more information.

For those staff that pay for parking, deductions were ceased from 6 April. Staff are currently not being charged for parking at this time. All swipe cards will still be active.

Please continue to park in the same place that you have always parked and ensure the car parks closest to the hospital entrance are reserved for our afternoon and evening shift colleagues.

I am awaiting further details from NSW Health on hotel accommodation arrangements for health staff and will provide an update once I hear more.

Home isolation kits

to assist with frontline management of COVID-19 testing, new [home isolation kits](#) are now available.

These kits include masks to support a person's home isolation efforts, with the aim of limiting the potential spread of COVID-19.

Testing stations will receive initial stock to cover people completing a COVID-19 test, and kits should be provided to them upon completion of the test.

Protecting yourself at work

I realise there is still some concerns among clinical staff about the effectiveness of PPE (personal protective equipment) in preventing COVID-19 infection at work. The recommended PPE has not changed for [direct patient care](#).

Here are some more general pointers for protecting yourself:

- Avoid unnecessary face touching! Always clean your hands before touching your face
- Adhere to the [5 Moments of Hand Hygiene](#) standard
- Make [wearing eye protection](#) a standard practice for every clinical care occasion
- Make sure you have done the necessary PPE training
- Don't touch the front of a mask while it is worn. Discard it after a single use. Replace it when moist
- Take particular care when removing PPE not to contaminate your eyes, nose or mouth. Ensure you have cleaned your hands again as a last step
- Don't wear procedural or theatre scrubs and head gear outside of those zones
- Never leave a COVID-19 zone wearing PPE. Do NOT wear a mask around the hospital corridors
- Wear clean scrubs/uniform underneath your PPE for COVID19 patient care
- When arriving home from work, shower immediately and clean and wash your clothes
- It is recommended only changing into uniform once at work and remove and bag them for cleaning before leaving the hospital
- Take responsibility for reducing clutter at shared ward desks and wipe these down several times daily, including computer keyboards
- Ensure you always eat and drink only in a suitable non-clinical area

Stay updated

Stay up to date with our latest developments via the [HNE Health Facebook page](#) and the [HNE Health YouTube channel](#) as well as [Patientinfo.org.au](#)

This information can be shared with your networks, families and friends to help us spread these important messages to our wider communities.

Clinician-specific information related to COVID-19 is available at [COVID-19 Clinical Guidelines](#).

[Kind regards](#)

Michael DiRienzo

Chief Executive | **Hunter New England Local Health District**

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