

Welcome to the New Zealand Rural General Practice Network e-zine for 9 April 2020



In this issue: Influenza vaccination prioritisation to be continued until 27 April • COVID-19 response – Changes to vaccinator training and vaccinator processes • PRIME training courses suspended • Covid-19: How New Zealand's level 4 lockdown might end much more...



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COVID-19 THE NETWORK IN THE MEDIA

Rural News, Chairperson Dr Fiona Bolden: [COVID-19: Financial hit for Rural GPs](#)

Stuff, Chief Executive Dalton Kelly: [Rural medical staff contract coronavirus, leading to 'significant' healthcare impact](#).

Rural News, Chief Executive Dalton Kelly: [COVID-19: Virus hits rural medical practices](#).

NewsHub, Chief Executive Dalton Kelly: [Coronavirus: Urban doctors, nurses to boost struggling rural practices](#)

Influenza vaccination prioritisation to be continued until 27 April

Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Health brought the start of the vaccination programme forward by two weeks. In this early phase the focus is on providing vaccinations for those who are most vulnerable - those over 65, pregnant women and others with underlying health conditions, as well as healthcare and other front-line workers.

The Ministry had previously stated that vaccinations should only be provided for these priority groups until 13 April and be opened to the general population after that. In order to ensure that everyone in the priority populations have had adequate opportunity to receive their vaccination, this date is being moved to **27 April**.

The Ministry urges providers to ensure Māori and Pacific communities are protected, as their immunisation rates have historically been significantly lower than those of the wider population. The Ministry has heard reports of some providers vaccinating outside of the priority groups as noted above. Every vaccine given to a healthy adult is one that can't be given to someone at greater risk of serious illness. Vaccinations for everyone else will depend on the Ministry being confident that the priority groups have been vaccinated. Wherever possible, the Ministry asks that providers make sure they record influenza vaccination on the NIR. The NIR is the most accurate source of information for the Ministry about how many vaccines have been administered and how many are still likely to be in circulation and guides decision-making.

COVID-19 response – Changes to vaccinator training and vaccinator processes

As part of the New Zealand COVID-19 response it is essential that all immunisation vaccinations continue to be delivered with a particular need for influenza vaccinations to be provided as rapidly as possible. There are several vaccination processes that have been amended to enable vaccinations to proceed and be given as safely and efficiently as possible.

[Read more](#).

PRIME training courses suspended

ACC Rural General Practice service agreements require General Practitioners and Nurses to complete an initial PRIME training course (or another relevant course) and undertake a PRIME refresher course every two years thereafter. There is currently a 6-month grace period in place for practitioners to complete a PRIME refresher course.

In response to Covid-19, St John has suspended PRIME training courses for initial and refresher training until at least 1 June 2020. Further to this, ACC has extended the grace period for completing refresher training for all practitioners by a further six months.

This means practitioners due for PRIME refresher training now have up to 12 months to complete training. This extended grace-period will apply for all practitioners due for refresher training before 1 July 2021.

This allows time for courses to be re-established by St John when possible and any backlog cleared for practitioners to attend a course.

If a practitioner's training lapses beyond the 12-month grace period, they must complete a training exception request. Such requests are processed on a case-by-case basis by St John and ACC's Health Sector Services team. Any practitioner whose training lapsed beyond the grace period before the Covid-19 response should continue to be managed on a case-by-case basis as above.

Please refer to the [St John PRIME website](#) for further information about PRIME training courses and available online resources to support your practice (sign in required).

Further payments to rural practices during COVID-19 lockdown

The Ministry of Health is continuing to work with the primary care sector to ensure support is provided where it is most needed. The Ministry is pleased to advise that a further payment was made to PHOs on 8 April, 2020, with a follow up payment to be made in approximately two weeks.

This payment includes particular consideration of rural practices and the resources required to support service continuity in these times. The Ministry has worked with the NZ Rural General Practice Network and District Health Boards to identify the rural practices.

Payment notification will include the schedule of payments for each general practice team based on the enrolled population as at 1 April, 2020.

COVID-19 NEWS

120 COVID-19 testing centres now operating

Across New Zealand 120 sites are taking samples to be tested for COVID-19. (Beehive)

68 community based assessment centres (CBACs) have been established to take samples from people with COVID-19 symptoms. Alongside this, 52 other centres including designated general practices, swabbing centres, and mobile clinics are now testing people for COVID-19.

[Read more](#).

Covid-19: How New Zealand's level 4 lockdown might end

It's the question on everyone's mind - so Radio NZ asked experts how and when the level 4 restrictions might be lifted.

[Read more](#).

Coronavirus: Bulls' flying doctor steps up to transport tests after flights cut

When Air New Zealand cut flights needed to transport coronavirus samples, labs turned to the flying doctor of Bulls. (Manawatu Standard)

Dr Dave Baldwin, who runs the Bulls Medical Centre, got the call from an old friend who told him his expertise and Cessna light aircraft were needed for an emergency run of swabs from Palmerston North to Rangiora, where they would be driven on to a lab in Christchurch.

[Read more](#).

Doctor warns rural areas vulnerable

Rural communities are vulnerable to the impact of Covid-19, and strict measures must continue to be enforced, a University of Otago academic says. (Rural Life/ODT)

University of Otago associate dean (rural) and Dunstan Hospital rural doctor Garry Nixon said residents of rural towns were on average older, had a lower socio-economic status, a higher percentage of Maori population and less access to health services than in urban areas.

[Read more](#).

Changed face of general practice likely to linger

Empty waiting rooms, screening at the clinic door and diagnosis by telephone are the new normal for community healthcare. (Manawatu Standard)

Systems already being used in a small way have become the mainstay of how healthcare is being provided during the Covid-19 lockdown.

[Read more](#).

Coronavirus: Calls for Govt to report number of health workers who contract Covid-19

The doctors' union is calling for the Government to report the number of medical professionals who contract [coronavirus](#) as part of its official daily updates. Earlier this week Stuff revealed [51 healthcare workers across the country](#) had contracted Covid-19, as of Monday. The majority had not recently been overseas.

[Read more](#).

Coronavirus: What life is like on the front line of the Covid-19 fight

Within four hours of getting to [Matamata - the site of an emerging coronavirus cluster](#) - Debra Larsen and her team were welcoming the first car into the testing centre. (Stuff)

Since the [coronavirus](#) outbreak began, normal work days have been turned upside down for Larsen, a registered nurse. "It was a real whirlwind."

[Read more](#).

NZ Doctor stories – log-in required

New association means business on behalf of general practice owners

Some hard-hitting and high profile names are behind a new association which has been established to represent front-line general practice owner-operators and urgent care providers in what it describes as a direct response to the Covid-19 threat to general practice sustainability and the previously mounting dissatisfaction across the sector.

The intent of the General Practice Owners Association, which will be known as GenPro, is already evident in the announcement that its interim Chair will be previous RNZCGP President, Dr Tim Malloy, and who will be supported by interim Deputy Chair, Dr Angus Chambers – an increasingly vocal critic of existing national representative arrangements for general practice contract holders.

[Read the media release](#).

Gearing up to the max makes sense for tiny Cromwell practice

A Cromwell solo GP improvised his practice team wears PPE in all consultations with patients.

Greg White, of Cromwell Family Practice, wore his own homemade shield until a neighbour shared a hardware-store one over the back fence.

[Read more](#).

Links

Medtech – protecting your practice during the COVID-19 crisis, see the [YOUTUBE video](#)

Ministry of Health online bulletins, click [here](#).

The Ministry of Health website has a dedicated COVID-19 [website](#).

The Royal New Zealand College of GPs has dedicated resources on their [website](#).

ACC provider updates COVID-19 click [here](#).

Leaning on Fence Posts, Otago University rural research blog, click [here](#).

Health Workforce New Zealand stakeholder bulletin, click [here](#).

Mobile Health news, click [here](#).

Medline (USA rural health) click [here](#).

Death Documents Project (Ministry of Health), click [here](#).

Health Promotion Agency (HPA) SunSmart campaign, [Click here](#)

Health Quality & Safety Commission Implicit Bias (resource video), [click here](#).

New patient resources for skin cancer

Most skin cancers are preventable. And if detected early, most can be successfully treated.

The resources can help you promote early detection to your patients

To order go to [SunSmart.org.nz](#)



Not a member? Join the Network!

The Network is the only nationwide membership-based organisation in New Zealand representing the interests of rural general practice.

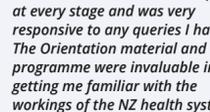
Visit our [website](#) for additional information and an online application form or contact Rob Olsen on 021 472 556.



Testimonial

"NZLocums has been instrumental in allowing me to fulfill my dream of relocating to New Zealand and working as a GP here. They offered me guidance from the earliest stages till the Orientation before starting work. I had a specific contact in NZLocums who helped at every stage and was very responsive to any queries I had. The Orientation material and programme were invaluable in getting me familiar with the workings of the NZ health system. I cannot thank them enough."

Dr Nicole Yuen, Singapore



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TELL US YOUR STORY

We are looking for health sector-related stories from around rural New Zealand. People, places, achievements and challenges. If you have a good yarn to tell contact Network communications manager Rob Olsen, email rob@rgpn.org.nz or 021 472 556.