



24th September 2020

COVID-19 Update No 21

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- PPE stock and usage

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Dear Colleagues,

As I write this letter, I am mindful that yesterday marked 6-months since we were told that primary care practices should close their doors to patients. I don't think any of us thought then about the far-reaching implications of this pandemic and that we would still be where we are 6-months later. Firstly therefore can I thank all of you for the care and support you have offered to your patients during this incredibly difficult time. I know it hasn't been easy and that some of you have genuine concerns about the viability of your businesses going forward. However, without your help and support the UDCCs would have been overwhelmed in terms of the demand they faced.

I also want to thank formally all the volunteers from the GDS and the staff from both the PDS and the secondary care service who have provided that UDCC capacity for 6-months so far and will continue to do so for as long as it is required.

There are ongoing challenges ahead around PPE supply and use, delivery of a more comprehensive care package for NHS patients, ventilation and fallow-time and for the OHS around the remobilization of the PDS and secondary care services while still delivering the UDCC needs. We need to continue to work together to achieve as much as we can for the patients we serve. A second challenge the PDS is facing is an increasing number of unregistered patients seeking care, this is driven in part by people moving to the Lothians and not having found a dentist locally previously and in part by some practices withdrawing from the NHS and de-registering their clients. I can fully appreciate that most of you are not in a position to take on new clients at the moment and indeed are struggling to cope with the demands of your own patient population, but as restrictions are eased there will be patients seeking NHS care. In the meanwhile the PDS will continue to provide a safety net for this group, we will however also be checking registration status for people as "life-long" registration came into place 11 years ago now in Scotland and some will be asked to go back to you even if they haven't been seen for 5 or 6 years because they are your registered patients.



SDCEP guidance

The SDCEP evidence review about AGPs in dentistry will be published around 14:00 tomorrow. I am assuming it will be distributed in the same fashion as all SDCEP guidance and will be available from the SDCEP web site. My understanding is that this guidance document will be used to help to inform a 4 Nations policy document about mitigation of aerosol production. The timescale for this is not clear at present. I have seen a pre-publication draft of the evidence review and it is a balanced document giving some sensible and pragmatic advice where the evidence is available to support that from the published literature.

Increased rates of community infection

We are all (painfully) aware of the current increase in infection rates in the UK generally and in Scotland. Whilst we had not reached the levels that would have triggered a local lockdown in NHSL the rate has been increasing across Scotland and hence the national guidance issued earlier this week. Increases in symptomatic carriage will be mirrored by increases in asymptomatic carriage or people in pro-dromal phases of infection. The Test and Protect system has already identified a number of instances where people who become +ve for SARSCoV2 have attended a dental practice during the period when they would have been infectious but not displaying symptoms. Thus far all of the contacts with Test and Protect have told us that the practices concerned have been following SIPC measures so no further action has been taken. We are likely to see more contacts with dental practices from Test and Protect and by this message I am hoping to remind all about the importance of following SIPC guidance at all times. The prospect of a forced closure of a practice through a requirement to self isolate is not an appealing one!

PPE

As you know level 2 PPE is now being delivered free of an charge on a push basis direct to your practice by the NHS for non-AGP procedures and enhanced PPE is available on collection from the FFP3 fit-testing hubs. This is being delivered at the rate of each "stood up" surgery delivering 5 AGP and 10 non-AGP per day. Currently the number of surgeries supplied in this formula is based on those you were approved to open during phase 2 of recovery. Whilst you are being asked to deliver urgent care only the NHS will not provide more PPE than that. At the present time there is also no mechanism for the push deliveries to be more responsive to things like glove sizes and whilst you may ask PSD to facilitate a difference I'm afraid they simply don't currently have the capacity or ability to do so. I strongly suspect there are practices with lots of unused gloves of one size or another where the push system does not match the local need. Please work with your buddy practices locally to see if you can resolve these issues by local re-distribution of PPE.



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You will have been sent an email recently from PSD asking about the number of WTE surgeries you could use in the practice within current social distancing guidance and allowing for fallow-time and AGPs etc. This piece of work is to look forward to PPE requirements should a wider range of care be available through the NHS and I would be grateful if you could send your replies to PSD as soon as possible.

In closing once again can I thank you for all the help and support you have given to me but also and much more importantly to your patients in this very unusual period. We all look forward to better times ahead, sadly likely not until the spring of 2021, but they will come.

With all my best

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