

25.03.2020

Kia ora e te whanau,

COVID-19 community response

Thank you for all the work you and your teams are doing in response to the COVID-19 outbreak; you are an essential part of front-line healthcare delivery and will continue to be so as the country moves to Alert Level 4. Community health services including primary care and community pharmacy will remain operational for the public, but we also need to do as much as possible to protect and sustain this critical workforce. We have heard your concerns that you need to be supported to work differently and sustainably. This support package will go some way towards your immediate needs.

Financial support

Financial support packages have been developed to support general practice and community pharmacy up to 30 June 2020. The payment is to recognise additional workload, and how your work will change as we move into Alert Level 4.

The primary care funding package consists of a \$15 million primary care response payment aimed to support general practices with additional workload from testing patients and the costs incurred moving to virtual consultations.

Further, there will be an additional payment to District Health Boards (DHBs) to support the setup, implementation and running costs of Community Based Assessment Centres (CBACs). Funding will be available to general practices who have agreed with DHBs to form part of the CBACs network.

The community pharmacy funding package totalling \$15 million is a support payment for all community pharmacy service providers to recognise the increased workload currently being experienced and moving into a virtual working environment alongside general practice.

The detailed summary of the funding packages to primary care and community pharmacy will be available by Friday 27 March 2020. We can assure you we are taking into account high need populations and the size of practices/ pharmacies with both a minimum and a per patient/ volume-based payment. We will also regularly review what other support may be required and clearly this will depend on the length and severity of the impact of COVID19 on New Zealanders. We aim to get this money into your accounts from next week.

Support

We recognise the challenges in needing to work differently and at pace. We are working to unlock systems and processes to make this as easy as possible for you, with minimal disruption and red tape. You will appreciate we need to work through a range of issues urgently and will communicate with you as we do this.

CBACs/Designated practices

As you activate your CBACs/designated practices, please provide NHCC Operations NHCC_Operations@health.govt.nz with the following information:

- Physical address
- Telephone number (for patients to call ahead)
- Specify if walk in/drive through/appointment or walk in or mixed model

NHCC will notify Healthline of these changes on a twice daily basis. Please **do not** call Healthline with this information. Due to the excessive volume of call Healthline is receiving they can no longer refer patients to primary care facilities, instead they will provide the patient a telephone number to call ahead. Direct referrals from Healthline will only be made to emergency departments where appropriate.

PPE

As a health system, it is important that we manage our PPE stocks appropriately, and **ONLY** use PPE when needed. There are different levels of PPE required from hospital-level care to community-level care, reflecting the severity of patients and the procedures involved in their clinical care. PPE will be made available to frontline staff, who are, or may be, providing frontline close contact patient care.

We recognize there is further guidance regarding when and what PPE is required. We also recognize that every provider needs a single point of contact to access appropriate PPE. We will be providing urgent guidance on both of these issues.

Influenza vaccine

Influenza vaccinations remain an essential service. Please ensure patients are contacted prior to the appointment and social distancing processes are in place and that you are able to stream flu vaccination patients separately. Over the next few weeks, as per previous guidance, only high-risk patients should be vaccinated.

COVID-19 Community Response Framework

A community response framework for COVID-19 that enables regions to escalate local response as required, is currently being finalised. We have created specific hospital and community frameworks that provide some guidance as to the activities and interventions that may be required by regions to manage demand and are working with the sector on this. We will share these with you as soon as possible. In the interim, you may receive communications directly from central organisations (such as the National Screening Unit) that provide specific direction.

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