Risk management hierarchy of controls Managing COVID-19 transmission risk in general practice

Managing the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace is a priority for general practice.

Some strategies to control risks are more effective than others. Implement the most effective measures that are most reasonable and practical under your circumstances.



An Australian Government Initiative

EFFECTIVE MOST

1. ELIMINATION

Remove the hazard. This is a very effective way of removing the risk, but it should be a last resort.

• Close the practice and redirect patients to another practice with co-operative agreement.

2. SUBSTITUTION

Replace the hazard with a safer alternative.

• Conduct alternative consultation methods e.g. phone triage, patients' cars, telehealth.

3. ENGINEERING **CONTROLS**

Isolate staff and patients from the hazard by changing the• Increase ventilation by opening windows and adjusting air physical environment.

- Appoint a daily triage nurse, and ensure reception staff understand the current triage script.
- STOP sign or other instructions at practice entrances.
- Arrange alternative entrance, waiting area and consultation
- Temperature checks on patients and staff.
- Ask patients to wait in the car or outside and call when GP is ready.
- Put chairs outside the practice (1.5m apart).

- conditioning.
- Replace high-touch communal items and equipment with alternatives.
- Remove all magazines / toys / non-essential items.
- Use floor marking to ensure physical distancing.
- Use perplex screens as barriers.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE **CONTROLS**

Implement work policies or procedures to reduce the hazard.

- Consider staffing and WH&S modifications required to establish telehealth and offsite service delivery.
- Use website, social media, on hold messaging and practice signage to communicate important information to patients and support services e.g. deliveries, pathology, pharmacy.
- Establish staggered work schedules and implement ways to reduce staff members working across multiple settings/
- Establish a process to record the attendance of patients, visitors and delivery drivers.

- Ensure spacing of workstations (1.5m) and signage indicating maximum occupancy of common spaces.
- Provide training to staff on physical distancing and hand hygiene expectations in the workplace.
- Provide and promote hand sanitiser for use on entering the practice and ensure adequate supplies of mask, tissues, hand soap and paper towels.
- Increase environmental cleaning (including between changes of staff), ensure high touch surfaces (desks, stethoscopes, otoscopes) are cleaned and disinfected regularly between patients.
- Ensure there are adequate supplies of cleaning products.

5. PPE

Replace the hazard with a safer alternative.

- Provide staff and patients with fit for purpose PPE masks (surgical and N95/P2), face shields, gloves, and gowns as applicable.
- Ensure frequent and reminder training for staff on the correct use and disposal of PPE (donning and doffing), hand hygiene, cough etiquette, and waste management as appropriate (collect, segregate and dispose of waste).

This offers the lowest level of protection and is the least reliable method of managing occupational hazards. It should be used only when other methods are not feasible or cannot be implemented immediately.