

MEDIA RELEASE

New clinical guidelines for COVID-19 help Australian clinicians deliver best care

Saturday 4th April, 2020: A large coalition of peak Australian health professional groups has come together to develop new “living guidelines” that will provide world-first, continually updated evidence-based guidance to clinicians caring for people with COVID-19.

This innovation has been developed under the auspices of the **National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce**. The new Taskforce has been convened by the Australian Living Evidence Consortium which is based at Cochrane Australia in the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine at Monash University. Teams of researchers, experts and clinicians have been working *around the clock* to deliver national guidelines for the clinical care of people with COVID-19 across primary, acute and critical care settings.

Chair of the Taskforce, Associate Professor Julian Elliott, says Australia’s world-leading efforts in generating ‘living’ clinical guidelines in areas like stroke and diabetes have now pivoted to focus wholly on helping clinicians manage COVID-19.

“There is urgent need to arm Australia’s healthcare professionals with evidence-based guidance about how best to care for people with COVID-19. These will be ‘living guidelines’, updated with new research in near real-time in order to give reliable, up-to-the minute recommendations to the clinicians during this unprecedented health crisis. These guidelines will help our frontline clinicians treat COVID-19 with confidence, knowing that their approach is backed by evidence and the very latest research from around the world,” said Professor Elliott.

Using ground-breaking evidence surveillance and automation technologies, the Taskforce will identify and summarise global COVID-19 research findings and feed this evidence to guideline panels every week, drawn from across Australia’s clinical and consumer communities. The results will then be delivered into the hands of clinicians at point of care. This will provide a trusted ‘single source’ of advice to help inform clinical decisions.

“This is about ensuring that Australian clinicians are supported at the front line with the right information. There is a lot of conflicting advice circulating and not all of it is based on good quality evidence. We can leverage our world-leading technologies and our partnership with the globally trusted Cochrane network to make sure Australian healthcare professionals have the very best information at their finger-tips,” said Professor Elliott.

The Australian Government has announced that it will provide funding to support the Taskforce, together with contributions from the Victorian Government, the Ian Potter Foundation and the Walter Cottman Endowment Fund managed by Equity Trustees.

The guidelines will form a key part of Australia’s response to COVID-19 and are available via www.covid19evidence.net.au

The initial focus of the guidelines will be on

- Definitions of disease severity
- Monitoring and markers of clinical deterioration
- Antiviral medications and other disease modifying treatments
- Respiratory support

The Taskforce will now be working weekly with its members, partners and other stakeholders to monitor emerging evidence and expand the scope of the guideline recommendations in response to the most pressing needs of clinicians seeking to provide the best possible care during the pandemic.

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About the Taskforce

[The National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce](#) is comprised of Australia's peak health professional bodies whose members are caring for people with COVID-19. We will be working closely with Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, as well as our community partner, [the Consumers Health Forum of Australia](#) (CHF) to ensure that Australians receive the best possible care during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The [Australian Living Evidence Consortium](#) is an existing collaboration of chronic and non-communicable disease groups currently leading a *living evidence* approach to guideline development in Australia. In effect, ongoing collaborative efforts in Australia to develop living guidelines in a range of clinical areas have pivoted, in the current circumstances, to focus wholly on COVID-19.

Taskforce Member Organisations

- Australian Living Evidence Consortium (Convenor)
- Cochrane Australia (Secretariat)
- Australasian Association of Academic Primary Care (AAAPC)
- Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA)
- Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society (ANZICS)
- Australian College of Critical Care Nurses (ACCCN)
- Australian College of Emergency Medicine (ACEM)
- Australian College of Nursing (ACN)
- Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM)
- Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association (APNA)
- Australian Sleep Association (ASA [Sleep])
- Australian Society of Anaesthesia (ASA [Anaesthesia])
- Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases (ASID)
- CRANaplus
- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP)
- Royal Australia College of General Practitioners (RACGP)
- Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA)
- Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ)