

## Health Line Calls and Very Unwell Patients

The number of callers to Healthline currently is 16,000 daily. 200 more staff have been deployed to manage the workload and the call waiting time is down to two minutes.

Healthline reports that they are receiving calls from patients who have delayed contacting their general practice resulting in high numbers of ambulance call outs from Healthline for stroke, heart attacks and cardiac arrest. There are also high numbers of women delivering babies unexpectedly at home.

GPNZ members are working closely with the MoH to develop communications stating General Practice is open for business – alongside the communications regarding isolation, staying in your bubble etc.

Attached is a paper written by the BMA - Vulnerable Patient: The role of the general practitioner in COVID-19.

## Message sample from you to your patients – for your website or communications

During this lockdown, you may still become unwell or require medical treatment. Please rest assured that GP practices and hospitals are still open. Your GP may offer a personal or virtual consultation, depending on how they are currently operating.

Stay in touch with your medical provider if you're concerned about your health at this time. This ensures you are offered the appropriate treatments and medications to help keep you well, even in isolation.

Be sure to contact your GP practice for regular appointments, updates on vaccinations and prescription renewals.

It's important to seek immediate help in an emergency - don't delay. If you are injured or experiencing severe symptoms, it's critical that you still call 111 or go to hospital.

## Zostavax Claiming

We have been informed by the DHB via the MoH that unfortunately, the recent *Immunisation Update* that said practices would be able to claim electronically from 18 March 2020 for a Zostavax vaccine when given with an Influenza vaccination, was a little premature. This has not occurred and the process for this year will continue to be a manual. They are very sorry for the continued inconvenience this will cause.

## NZePS updated FAQs; Remote Prescribing / Signature Exempt Prescriptions

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/digital-health/other-digital-health-initiatives/emedicines/new-zealand-eprescription-service/signature-exempt-prescriptions-and-remote-prescribing>

## Cremations - exemption for medical and nurse practitioners for viewing and identifying the deceased in some circumstances

As you know, before a body can be cremated, the Cremation Regulations 1973 require the permission of a medical referee. Under regulation 7 of the Regulations, a medical referee cannot permit any cremation unless a Cremation Certificate is issued by a certifying practitioner which requires the medical or nurse practitioner to see and identify the body. This creates risks for both practitioners and facility operators to maintain their self-isolation requirements necessary to protect themselves and their residents during COVID-19 Alert Level Four.

Under regulation 12(b) of the Cremation Regulations 1973, on 1 April 2020, Hon Dr David Clark authorised medical referees to permit cremations to be carried out without complying with regulation 7 for cremations where completion of a Cremation Certificate by a certifying practitioner would increase the risk of transmission of COVID-19. This authorisation applies

- during COVID-19 Alert Level Four
- in rest homes, residential care facilities, and other long-term in-patient facilities
- where the medical history and current conditions of the deceased are known by the medical or nurse practitioner

Under this authorisation a medical referee must receive advice from a trusted source, who has a reasonable level of assurance of the cause of death to verify the identity of the deceased and that the deceased died of natural causes, in lieu of a certifying practitioner providing a Cremation Certificate. Medical referees will have discretion in determining who constitutes a trusted source, but that the identity, contact details, and position of the trusted source must be recorded.

Click [HERE](#) to download a *FDANZ Deceased Verification during COVID-19 template* you can use or alter for your funeral homes needs to record the identity, contact details and position of the trusted source who verifies the identity of the deceased during this period.

## Message from MoH re Influenza Vaccinations

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Health brought the start of the vaccination programme forward by two weeks. In this early phase we are focused 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 opening up 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**.

We urge 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. We all need to work together to protect our most vulnerable.

Vaccinations for everyone else will depend on the Ministry being confident that the priority groups have been vaccinated.

Wherever possible, we ask 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 our decision-making.

## Repatriation of International Travellers

As international travellers arrive in New Zealand and are then repatriated to their final destinations, a number of steps are undertaken to ensure a safe and controlled transition process is adhered to. Attached is further information on this process.

## Webcams

We have been on the back foot with desktop video capability in general practice as we were catapulted into a brave new virtual world. I don't know if any of you have tried to purchase webcams but if you have you will know they are scarce.

A contact has managed to track down a supply through Harvey Norman of the Razor Kiyo model – they have a small shipment arriving from Hong Kong next week and they have indicated they will give preference to essential services. The quote is attached (a club price) of \$152.55 (plus GST).

Please let Barb know asap if you would like to piggyback on this offer.

## Infection Control in Primary Care

For those who missed the webinar, here is the link to watch on You Tube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7WEpEZdD30&feature=youtu.be>