

30 April 2020

Tēnā koe Community Provider

**COVID-19 advice line for primary and community health clinicians: 0800 177 622**

Over the past few weeks, our primary and community care organisations have tackled some of the greatest challenges our health system has ever been faced with.

We want to mihi to all the kaimahi (staff), both those on the frontline and those in support services, for your dedication and commitment to ensuring the public have been cared for. We also want to acknowledge the impact and stress these uncertain times may have had on your whānau and 'bubbles'.

What has become apparent, is that clinicians are looking for more support, including direct peer-to-peer advice, to deal with these rapidly changing and complex situations. At times 10% of all calls to the Healthline's COVID-19 number have been from primary and community care staff.

To help, the Ministry of Health has contracted the National Telehealth Service to provide a dedicated COVID-19 telephone advice line for you and your colleagues. The number is **0800 177 622**, and is now operational, offering clinical support and advice Monday to Saturday 8am -7pm (with the exception of public holidays).

Community health providers including primary care, pharmacy, midwives and aged residential care providers can access general advice about management of COVID-19, peer review of presenting problems and advice on specialist referral or connection to other services.

The helpline will be staffed by primary care nurses GPs, with at least one GP on every shift. Most calls will initially be managed by a nurse, with a GP, pharmacist and midwife available at all times to provide specialist advice, as required.

The service is not a source of information about or access to equipment, staffing or funding which are managed through the usual channels.

We know that COVID-19 will be with us far beyond this immediate crisis phase and will impact the way we work and the support we need to provide for a long time yet. We expect the service to provide clinical staff with a valuable additional resource to help them navigate the range of information available and to support them in making local decisions to protect their patients and populations.

Please share this letter and use your communication channels to promote the number with your care providers and clinical teams.

He waka eke noa

Ngā maanaki

  
Clare Perry

**Acting Deputy Director-General  
Health System Improvement and Innovation**