

17 March 2020

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO OUR PATIENTS AND VISITORS ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Following the outbreak of COVID-19 and the evolving medical advice being issued, Melanoma Institute Australia and clinics at the Poche Centre are working closely with the NSW Department of Health and other Australian cancer centres to keep you safe. We remain open and fully functional with the appropriate safeguards and containment precautions in place. Much preparation and planning is already underway and much more is being planned.

What is a Coronavirus or COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can make humans and animals sick. They cause illnesses that can range from the common cold to more severe diseases.

Symptoms can range from mild illness to pneumonia. Most people recover from the disease without needing special treatment.

People with coronavirus may experience:

- *fever*
- *flu-like or cold-like symptoms such as cough, sore throat, sore eyes and fatigue*
- *shortness of breath*

If you develop any of these symptoms you need to contact the National Coronavirus Help Line on 1800 020 080 or call your GP. DO NOT present to a medical clinic without prior notification by phone.

The virus spreads from person-to-person, most likely through:

- close contact with an infectious person, where droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze are breathed in
- touching objects or surfaces (like doorknobs or tables) that have cough or sneeze droplets from an infected person, and then touching your mouth or face

Those at higher risk of more severe illness include:

- those who are aged >60 years
- those who are immunosuppressed e.g. chemotherapy, high doses of steroids (e.g. prednisone or dexamethasone)
- those who have pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, lung disease or advanced cancer

It is unknown if patients receiving cancer treatments such as immunotherapy are at an increased risk of a more severe illness if they do not fall into the above categories.

Not everyone who is at higher risk will necessarily experience a more severe illness if infected with COVID-19.

As a cancer patient what is your risk?

Your risk of contraction of the virus is no different from anyone else in the community.

Should you get infected, you may experience a more severe illness than others, however the exact risk of severe illness remains unknown.

If you have any concerns please contact your treating clinician.

What should I do?

Everyone should practice good hygiene to protect against infections. Good hygiene includes:

- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing and sneezing, before, during and after food preparation and whenever using the bathroom. Hand sanitizer may also be used - solutions with greater than 60% alcohol are best
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose and eyes
- Use a tissue and cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze

Everyone should practice social distancing, for example:

- Maintain at least 1 metre distance between yourself and anyone else
- Avoid large crowds and unnecessary travel
- Consider working from home
- Avoid going out of the home as much as possible

If you have travelled anywhere overseas and arrived in Australia from 16 March 2020 you must self-quarantine at home for 14 days upon your return to Australia.

Isolate yourself especially if you:

- Have flu or cold-like symptoms
- Have been in contact with anyone with a confirmed case of COVID-19
- Have been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting test results
- Are about to be tested for COVID-19
- *If you develop any of these symptoms you need to contact the National Coronavirus Help Line on 1800 020 080 or call your GP. **DO NOT** present to a medical clinic without prior notification by phone.*

When to notify your clinician:

- If you have returned from travel overseas in the last 14 days and are due for a clinic appointment, test or treatment
- If you have any respiratory symptoms or fever
- If you have come into close contact with anyone who is being tested for or confirmed to have contracted COVID-19
- If you have any concerns about the appropriateness of attending clinic, test or treatment

What we are doing as an organisation

Clinical care will continue throughout this period. To minimize potential exposure and risk to both patients, carers and staff, we are taking the following measures in the Poche Centre.

1. The following patients/carers/staff with the following conditions are prevented from entering into the Poche Centre building and clinics:
 - Any persons that have returned from travel overseas within the last 14 days
 - Any persons with known respiratory symptoms and/or fever
 - Any persons who have come into close contact with anyone who is being tested for or confirmed to have contracted COVID-19

2. Where ever possible clinical areas have been adjusted to incorporate current medical advice, including:
 - Requiring that all patients limit the number of support people attending clinic with them to 1 (one) person.
 - Requiring that patients arrive no earlier than 10 mins prior to their scheduled appointment time
 - Spacing out of chairs in waiting rooms and consult rooms
 - Increased access to hand sanitizer and tissues

3. We strongly recommend, where ever possible, that consultations are conducted via telehealth (over the phone or video conferencing). The practice will contact patients directly via phone call to offer this service.

Our organization is continuing to monitor the situation and adapting accordingly. We are aware of the impact COVID-19 is having on our community and wish to continue medical services and care during this difficult time. We hope the above measures will help protect the safety of you and others. If you have any concerns regarding attending clinics during this time please contact your clinical team.

Thank you for your patience during this period.



Prof Richard Scolyer
Co-Medical Director



Prof Georgina Long
Co-Medical Director



Matthew Browne
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