

5 June 2020

## **AN IMPORTANT UPDATE FOR OUR PATIENTS AND VISITORS ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Melanoma Institute Australia and clinics at the Poche Centre have been 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. As the Australian and NSW Governments take steps to ease restrictions on our movement and attendance at work and events, MIA will continue to apply our safeguards and update our patients and visitors of changes as they occur.

### **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

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

### **As a cancer patient what is your risk?**

Your risk of contraction of the virus is no different from anyone else in the community. It is unknown if patients receiving immunotherapy or targeted therapy are at an increased risk of a more severe illness if they do not fall into the above-mentioned more vulnerable categories. Not everyone who is at higher risk will necessarily experience a more severe illness if infected with COVID-19. If you have any concerns please contact your treating clinician.

### **How can you help prevent spread of COVID-19?**

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 also practice social distancing of 1.5 metres and we recommend downloading the COVIDSafe app to assist with contact tracing.

### **What to do if you are feeling unwell**

If you are feeling unwell with any cold or flu symptoms such as elevated temperature, sore throat, cough, and shortness of breath, you should stay at home and contact the National Coronavirus Help Line on 1800 020 080 or call your GP. You may be advised to be tested for COVID-19. DO NOT present to a medical clinic without prior notification by phone. You should also self-isolate if you have been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 or you are awaiting results of testing for COVID-19.

### **When should you notify your MIA clinician?**

You should notify your MIA clinician by phone prior to your appointment:

- 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

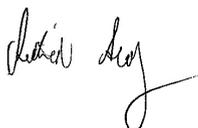
### **What we are doing as an organisation**

Clinical care is continuing at The Poche Centre with the following measures implemented to minimize potential exposure and risk to patients, carers and staff:

1. Any patients/carers/staff with known respiratory symptoms and/or fever, or who have come into close contact with anyone who is being tested for or confirmed to have contracted COVID-19 2, are prevented from entering into the Poche Centre building and clinics
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. This includes a staged and measured return of those MIA staff normally working within the Poche Centre, but who have worked from home over the past few months. 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.



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Co-Medical Director



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