

Covid-19 and General Practice Part 2:

Interview with Dr. Ray Walley MRCGP FRCGP, Member of the National Covid-19 GP Liaison Committee

The IMO & ICGP have led on and supported the HSE message emphasising that patients need to promptly seek attention for urgent care.

The IMO secretariat supported by the GP committee have organised IT changes for Social Welfare certification with contractual arrangements in place for Covid-19 telemedicine consultation for both public and private patients and respiratory assessments. They have also arranged provision of GP Hub contracts.

This is in no way a complete overview of work done but is a summary of some priorities dealt with to date.

How Has General Practice Responded to the Covid-19 Crisis:

1. A high level IMO/ICGP/HSE National GP Liaison Committee has been meeting and teleconferencing with the HSE since 6.2.20.
2. The National GP Liaison Committee meet thrice weekly with peripatetic attendance from HSE representatives from Chief Clinical Officers Office/Operations/Infectious Disease/Procurement/I.T etc.
3. The Liaison has allowed prompt addressing of organisational and educational issues pertaining to General Practice and community care.
4. The IMO and ICGP:-
 - have a high level GP Liaison group that teleconference on a daily basis.
 - on a regular basis cascade to members changes in algorithms/educational material/contract briefings on issues related to general practice care and provision.
 - provide expert opinion to media to inform debate on this complex medical issue to ensure that General Practice receives accurate and timely representation.
 - utilise social media as a priority method of communication.
5. The ICGP has an excellent website to meet the educational needs of its members. Webinars are held on a twice weekly basis with recordings and other supports accessible on the ICGP website.
6. The IMO and ICGP contribute to the weekly Medical Leaders Forum that engages with Government, The Chief Medical Officer and other agencies.

GP Corona Hubs:

Output from the National Liaison Committee has included initiation, development and operationalising GP Corona Hubs*.

GP Corona Hubs are centres that accept GP and GP out of hours referrals on Covid-19 positive or presumed Covid-19 positive patients. Exclusion criteria include:-

1. Acutely unwell patients who require AMAU/Emergency Dept. referral
2. Non-Covid patient
3. Maternity patients
4. Children under 16 years old

***A more detailed HSE GP Corona Hub operational document is available from IMO ICGP and HSE.**

Ongoing Challenges for General Practice Include:

- Triaging covid-19 and urgent care appropriately.
- Supporting nursing home residents.
- Imploring patients to promptly engage with urgent care issues like cardiac/diabetes/respiratory disease etc.
- Prioritising Children's immunisations and maternity care.
- Commencing a return to chronic care.
- Ensuring GP self and staff care.
- Ensuring access to PPE.
- Rostering for out of hours and Hub shifts in addition to surgery shifts.