

Tuesday 24 March 2020

IMO & ICGP Joint Statement

Department of Health/HSE notification of changes to Case Definition and Algorithm - COVID-19 Testing

Dear Colleague,

Please find attached correspondence from the Department of Health and Health Service Executive to the Irish Medical Organisation and the Irish College of General Practitioners with regard to the testing process for COVID-19.

The WHO case definition will now be applied and this is available on the HPSC website www.hpsc.ie. Where a patient meets the case definition, they will also have to fall into one of the priority groups as per the new algorithm available on the HSPC website in order to be referred for a test.

GPs should note the following:

- All patients who have been swabbed to date will have their samples processed and tested.
- We are awaiting clarification on with regard to patients who have been given a test date but not yet been tested and will update members further on receipt of same.
- All patients who have not yet been swabbed and do not have an appointment for a test date will **not** now be tested. Such patients will be required to reengage with their GP and the GP will triage the patient again in accordance with the new case definition. Where a GP refers a patient who fits the new criteria whom they had already previously referred they will be entitled to claim the COVID-19 triage fee again regardless of whether they have already claimed the fee for this patient.

The Department and the HSE are of the view that in applying the WHO case definition and the prioritisation criteria this will allow for a focus on those in at risk populations and those at the highest risk of exposure.

Two information leaflets are now available on the HPSC website for the patient who needs to self-isolate and for restricted movements for their household contacts. These are:

- 1. Patient information leaflet for self-isolation**
- 2. Advice for people who share the same home with someone has or may have COVID-19**

The information in these leaflet are for those who:

- Are waiting to be tested for coronavirus (COVID-19) infection
- Are waiting for the results of testing for COVID-19 infection
- Were waiting to be tested for COVID-19 but are not in a priority group for testing
- Have symptoms of COVID-19 but are not in a priority group for testing
- Have been diagnosed with COVID-19 infection and your doctor has agreed that you can stay at home to recover

We will be updating members further once we are in receipt of further clarification.

In the meantime GPs should adhere to the new case definition and algorithm as set out on the HPSC website and may note the points above with regard to testing done to date.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Mary Favier
President ICGP

Dr Padraig McGarry
President IMO

