

Welcome to the New Zealand Rural General Practice Network e-zine for 27 March 2020



In this issue: Important message from Pharmac's Director of Operations Lisa Williams to prescribers • Medical Council of New Zealand advice for provisionally registered GPs/IMGs currently in NZ wanting to assist at COVID-19 test centres • NZLocums COVID-19 latest update much more...



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COVID-19 ADVISORIES

Important message from Pharmac's Director of Operations Lisa Williams to prescribers

"Thank you for all the work you are doing in really difficult circumstances. This message includes important information about restrictions on dispensing from midnight Thursday, March 26."

The information you need to know is below and also on Pharmac's website pharmac.govt.nz/covid19.

Key messages

"At 11.59pm Thursday, March 26, 2020, PHARMAC put in place pharmaceutical schedule rule changes which will restrict the dispensing of funded community medicines to just one month's supply at a time. This is consistent with [steps taken](#) in Australia from 19 March, 2020.

This means that from Friday, March 27 community pharmacists will be required to limit dispensing of all funded medicines to one month's supply (or three months for oral contraceptives), effective from midnight, March 26, 2020.

There are no changes to the way prescriptions are written, people won't need to visit their prescriber more frequently.

We don't currently have significant medicine shortages. Paracetamol is the only confirmed medicine affected by COVID-19 supply issues.

This is a temporary measure to see us through COVID-19."

Advice for provisionally registered GPs/IMGs currently in NZ wanting to assist at COVID-19 test centres

In the last few days NZLocums have received enquiries from some of our international trained doctors, currently working as rural GP locums, wishing to assist with Covid-19 testing. We are aware of the immediate critical need to support our rural regions.

The MCNZ has confirmed that doctors registered in a provisional general scope of practice may work at Community Based Assessment Centres (CBACs).

To approve these doctors to work at CBACs, you will need to submit the following information:

- A letter/email from the relevant DHB requesting their service; and
- Confirmation that a (named if possible) vocationally registered doctor will be onsite to provide supervision.

Where the vocationally registered doctor might change on a daily basis, the Medical Council will request a copy of the roster, to confirm who the supervisors will be.

For more information contact Jacinta Sanders, Team Leader NZLocums, email jacinta@nzlocums.com

NZLocums is the government funded rural recruitment and locum service run by the New Zealand Rural General Practice Network.

NZLocums COVID-19 latest update

As the COVID-19 situation evolves, NZRGN and NZLocums have been monitoring developments across the country and the globe and we are acting in a proactive manner to mitigate the impact to our teams and all those we work closely with: our members, locums, rural practice teams and our partners. As you will be aware, the New Zealand Government has made a difficult decision in ensuring the health and safety of our people.

On Wednesday, March 25, 2020 in an effort to slow the transmission of Covid-19, New Zealand went into lock down moving to security level 4, the highest level of the [Covid-19 alert system](#). What this means is that all New Zealanders will be required to stay within their home environment and only allowed out to collect essential supplies and a short walk for fresh air and fitness, however there are conditions around this. All essential services will remain open however non-essential businesses will close initially for a 4-week period. Please see the following link which outlines what are deemed as [essential services](#), which includes health services.

Due to these changes we would like to let you know the following:

- We have closed the physical office from Wednesday, March 25, 2020 as per the recommendations made by the New Zealand Government.
- We will all be working remotely to continue with our business as usual as far as possible and aim to continue to provide you with support and assistance.
- We will of course still be maintaining our core NZLocums service through this period and will be working hard to continue to meet as many recruitment needs as we are able.

NZLocums is the only recruitment agency funded by the Government to assist rural general practice with their recruitment and retention needs. The practices across the country whom we support are viewed as an essential service and during these turbulent times require additional doctor support. We support the increased need for doctors and view what we do as vital to ensure that these essential businesses stay open and service their communities effectively.

The emerging and evolving situation will of course impact the numbers of locums that are available so we will be working with practices to prioritise those areas of greatest need wherever we can. Please do not hesitate to contact us at enquiries@nzlocums.com

NETWORK IN THE NEWS - COVID-19

Call for establishment of COVID rural testing stations

The New Zealand Rural General Practice Network is calling for the urgent establishment of rural testing stations in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic to cater for not only locals but also an influx of out-of-towners. (NZRGN media release)

NZRGN Chairperson and rural GP Dr Fiona Bolden says feedback from rural practices is that there is already a huge influx of people coming from cities to their beach baches and rural getaways.

Dr Bolden is calling on the Government and DHBs with support from Civil Defence and even the military to set up testing stations.

[Read the media release.](#)

Radio New Zealand

Rural doctors are concerned that people opting to spend the lockdown period in holiday baches will put further pressure on rural health care providers.

[Listen to Dr Fiona Bolden.](#)

Coronavirus: Isolating at holiday homes could overload rural health services

Covid-19: Big numbers head to coastal baches

Also Read [Rural News](#)

WHAT THE EXPERTS ARE SAYING

Why we need better rural and remote health, now more than ever

As the world desperately attempts to mount a coordinated and effective response to the recent pandemic outbreak of COVID-19, it is becoming recognised that the greatest impact will likely be felt by the most vulnerable populations.

This includes people who live in rural and remote communities with less access to critical health services, writes Professor Paul Worley, Australia's Commissioner of Rural Health (This editorial was first published in Rural and Remote Health, March 24).

[Read more.](#)

Otago experts warn pandemic risks accentuating rural-urban health inequities

In New Zealand, rural towns represent many of our most vulnerable communities.

Residents of rural towns are overall poorer, older, more likely to be Māori and have poorer health outcomes than the cities.

These communities rely on rural health services (both primary and secondary), the majority of which are chronically understaffed, with limited specialist services and equipment. (media release Otago University)

Rural hospitals are made more vulnerable by their lack of "surge capacity". They are largely driven by acute need and are often at capacity in the winter months.

They do not have outpatient clinics or elective surgery that can be cancelled in order to create urgent additional capacity.

[Read more.](#)

OTHER COVID-19 RELATED NEWS

Coronavirus: New Zealand's new home guard prepares for virus fight

Health care workers are preparing to be on the front lines of the coronavirus outbreak in New Zealand, but for one doctor it's what she can do on the "home front" which has inspired a movement. (Stuff)

Auckland based Andrea Penman is currently a stay-at-home mum, but when she started seeing the impact of Covid-19 across the world, she realised she had medical knowledge which could be used in the event of an outbreak here.

[Read more.](#)

Resources available to help patients move to using telehealth

NZ Telehealth Services Centre and Virtual Navigators NZ have released information to help people begin to use telehealth more to access health services, i.e., secure email, phone, text, video and patient portals. (Scoop)

NZ Telehealth Leadership Group (NZTLG) chair and emergency doctor Waikato DHB Clinical Director Information Services and Virtual Healthcare Ruth Large says New Zealand has many good examples of using telehealth already, and now we need to scale this up.

[Read more.](#)

Government releases list of essential services

The Government has released a list of essential services which will continue to operate as New Zealand ramps up to alert level four. (ODT)

It comes after Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern raised New Zealand to alert level four.

[Read more.](#)

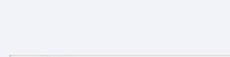
Not a member? Join the Network!

The Network is the only nationwide membership-based organisation in New Zealand representing the interests of rural general practice.

Visit our [website](#) and online application form or contact Rob Olsen on 021 472 556.



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Testimonial

"NZLocums has been instrumental in allowing me to fulfill my dream of relocating to New Zealand and working as a GP here. They offered me guidance from the earliest stages till the Orientation before starting work. I had a specific contact in NZLocums who helped at every stage and was very responsive to any queries I had. The Orientation material and programme were invaluable in getting me familiar with the workings of the NZ system. I cannot thank them enough."

Dr Nicole Yuen, Singapore



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Links

Ministry of Health dedicated Covid-19 [website](#).

The Royal New Zealand College of GPs dedicated Covid-19 [website](#).

ACC provider updates COVID-19 click [here](#).

Ministry of Health online bulletins, click [here](#).

Leaning on Fence Posts, Otago University rural research blog, click [here](#).

Health Workforce New Zealand stakeholder bulletin, click [here](#).

Mobile Health news, click [here](#).

Medline (USA rural health) click [here](#).

Death Documents Project (Ministry of Health), click [here](#).

Health Promotion Agency (HPA) SunSmart campaign, [Click here](#)

Health Quality & Safety Commission Implicit Bias (resource video), [click here](#).

TELL US YOUR STORY

We are looking for health sector-related stories from around rural New Zealand. People, places, achievements and challenges. If you have a good yarn to tell contact Network communications manager Rob Olsen, email rob@rgpn.org.nz or 021 472 556.