



The Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain and Ireland

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Dear Members

RE: ACPGBI Priorities during COVID-19 Pandemic

Hope you are all safe. Know many of you have been ill and hopefully are recovering. Also that all are facing pressures at work in looking after patients and at home in keeping families safe.

Our ACPGBI priorities in fronting up to the challenges of COVID-19 are:

- ensuring appropriate personal protective equipment for all healthcare workers
- safe surgery practices during COVID-19
- maintaining EGS services
- minimising impact as much as possible on patients with colorectal problems, including cancer and IBD
- supporting surgeons and trainees in new roles
- ensuring dissemination of accurate up-to-date information and avoiding misinformation
- promoting high quality research projects about COVID-19
- maintaining morale across our workforce and membership

- supporting each other and our peers, trainees and colleagues through the crisis
- preparing for recovery phase and the pressures on endoscopy, cancer and surgical services that will follow.

Executive is now meeting weekly in order to ensure that we address your needs. We have also arranged monthly updates for Council. Many thanks to all our Members who have been in contact with information, messages of support and requests for information. Remaining connected is ever important in such troubling times.

The most frequently asked question this week has been about appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) in the operating theatre, and several members have been in touch saying that they are not receiving the level of PPE recommended by Public Health England. In view of this, ACPGBI has produced a letter of support for Members which we would encourage you to use locally to ensure your own safety first and foremost. If healthcare professionals fall sick, they cannot look after patients.

Here is the content of our letter addressed to Medical Directors about PPE in General Surgery:

PPE in operating theatres

The most frequent question asked by ACPGBI Members this week has been about appropriate personal protective equipment in the operating theatre. The Intercollegiate Surgical Royal Colleges have worked with ACPGBI on safe practice in General Surgery. Through the Royal Colleges of Surgeons of England and Edinburgh, we fed into the recently updated and revised Public Health England advice <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>.

We have now been made aware by some of our Members that their institutions are not following this advice or interpreting it differently. In summary, the appropriate PPE in the “higher risk acute care area with possible or confirmed case(s)” of COVID-19 is:

- *disposable gloves*
- *disposable plastic apron*
- *disposable fluid-resistant gown*
- *filtering face piece respirator*
- *eye and face protection*

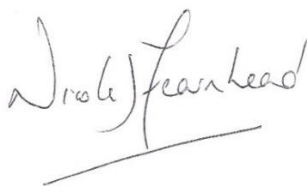
Any operating theatre where aerosol generating procedures (AGPs) are carried out is designated a higher risk acute area and the PHE guidance does not place a time limit on how long the risk remains. Their recommendation is intended for the protection of all staff in the operating theatre and not just those carrying out intubation. It is recognised that there are aspects of surgery which are also potentially AGPs and overall risk in the operating room environment is high.

The updated Intercollegiate General Surgery Guidance on COVID-19, to which ACPGBI contributed, fully endorses the position on level of PPE required in the operating theatre: <https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/coronavirus/joint-guidance-for-surgeons-v2/>. We would be grateful for your help in assuring that all theatre personnel involved in delivering general surgical procedures in your institution during the COVID-19 pandemic receive the level of protection recommended by the combined Public Health agencies of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

If you are not receiving the support you need locally in obtaining either authority for, or the supplies needed of the correct PPE, please do let us know by emailing info@acpgbi.org.uk.

Stay safe, and stay connected, and hoping you get a chance to rest over the Easter weekend,

Yours sincerely



Miss Nicola Fearnhead
President, ACPGBI

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