



## Information Update CORONAVIRUS Date 25/03/2020

### Practical Advice for First 5 GPs in Current COVID-19 Pandemic

Last month when I started out as a newly qualified GP, I anticipated my biggest challenges would be switching to a new area, integrating into a new community and learning new referral systems. What I didn't bargain for was the unprecedented change and demand on the whole healthcare service with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic into the country. My initial concerns have now paled into insignificance; now we are all navigating such uncharted territory.

News is flooding in about the devastating impact this has had in countries like China and Italy and we are understandably anxious. Some factors are out of our control. However, as GPs who have qualified in the last 5 years, we are the ones practice staff, patients and relatives turn to for advice. We will be the first port of call for guidance on managing uncertainty, preventing spread, staying as healthy as possible and developing policy.

Here are some practical ways we can do this:

#### 1. Keep up to date

Guidance has been changing so quickly; it's hard to keep up! Especially whilst trying to do the day job and managing our other commitments. With so much information out there, it is easy to suffer with information overload. Here are the NHS and RCGP websites that are informing us on the most current guidelines for primary care:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/primary-care/>

<https://www.rcgp.org.uk/policy/rcgp-policy-areas/covid-19-coronavirus.aspx>

If you feel less confident in telephone triage, it may be worth reading this:

[https://egplearning.co.uk/quick-telephone-consultation-tips-for-primary-care/?fbclid=IwAR2TiXyKG-FnF8UAzoSU3pmCx3XZIDkdcFlwyC5Trx2\\_3ZuDQPCO43EXeol](https://egplearning.co.uk/quick-telephone-consultation-tips-for-primary-care/?fbclid=IwAR2TiXyKG-FnF8UAzoSU3pmCx3XZIDkdcFlwyC5Trx2_3ZuDQPCO43EXeol)

#### 2. Stay safe and keep others safe

Know the guidelines on when protective equipment and isolation rooms are needed. Find out what PPE you have, where it is located and when to use this. Practice with other staff putting on and taking off this equipment, as exposure is most likely when removing PPE and disposing of it. If you are unwell and need to self-isolate, do it and don't feel guilty! Advise others to ensure they have a thermometer. Share the signs to look out for that someone may need hospital admission.

#### 3. Seek support and support others

These are tough times. Patients are upset, angry and scared. Seek advice from colleagues even if everyone seems busy or distracted. Offer support to those around you. If you are a locum, keep in touch with local contacts and practices to stay updated and support each other. Share experiences with your First5 peers. Be part of online GP communities. Seek counsel from local mentoring schemes. Access support from the GP Health Service.

#### 4. Raise concerns

If your practice is working in a way you think is unsafe or not following current guidelines, raise it. Now is not the time to be worried about what people think of you. Having rational discussions early on avoids regret later.

The information provided in this document is correct at the time of publication.  
Please see the Derby and Derbyshire LMC website for any revisions.



## 5. Prioritise wellbeing

Look after yourselves and your loved ones. Tell your friends and family you love them. Do the things that make you happy (isolation allowing). Laugh with friends, read a book, cook a tasty meal, practice mindfulness, exercise (maybe try a HIIT video if you are stuck indoors), videocall/phone far away relatives, practice good sleep hygiene.

I pursued a career in General Practice to help, guide and support families in times of need. Now, more than ever, we can do this. Be kind, look after each other and know you are making a huge difference.

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