

COVID-19 - Australian Transplantation and Donation Rapid Response Taskforce Communique No.56 – 10 May 2022

- Transplantation and donation update in Australia:
 - ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients in Australia; 1264 kidney transplant patients (51 deaths) and 1921 dialysis patients (95 deaths).
 - Nationally there are 3,168 COVID-19 patients in hospital, with 123 COVID patients in ICUs (55 in NSW, 34 in Vic, 14 in Qld, 8 in WA, 6 in SA, 5 in ACT and 1 in Tas), 37 of whom are ventilated.
 - Concerns raised were; (1) nursing staff shortages attributable to COVID infection or exposure and loss of nurses from the profession; (2) patients who have recovered from COVID but remain PCR/RAT(+) and have difficulty in accessing outpatient treatment; (3) patients with COVID who received antiviral treatment early after diagnosis but deteriorated after completion of therapy and required hospitalisation; and (4) concerns that potential donors with COVID may not have all suitable organs retrieved for transplantation because of undue concern about infection transmission risk (see updated guidance below).
 - Organ donation is up 16.1% overall, as compared to 2021, year to date.
- Transplantation, donation and update in New Zealand:
 - Nationally there have been 53,186 cases reported in the past week with 99 deaths.
 - ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients in NZ; 165 kidney transplant patients and 397 dialysis patients, including 12 deaths.
- Immunisation status in Australia:
 - Australia currently has 86.4% of the total population vaccinated with 83.6% having received at least one vaccine dose, with 52.3% receiving the third 'booster' dose.
- Immunisation status in New Zealand:
 - New Zealand currently has 83.7% of the total population vaccinated with 79.9% having received at least one vaccine dose, with 52% receiving the third 'booster' dose.
- Vaccination, research and trials:
 - Following the updated guidance, '[Organ donation and transplantation from donors with a diagnosis of COVID-19](#)', the *TSANZ Clinical Guidelines for Organ Transplantation from Deceased Donors*, version 1.9 are being released in the next week. They will be circulated to members as soon as they are available.
 - On the 5th April 2022, the TGA provisionally [approved](#) AstraZeneca's combination therapy (Evusheld) for pre-exposure prevention (prophylaxis) of COVID-19.
 - On the 20th April, 2022, the NEJM published an article in relation to an Evusheld trial (this included a small number of immunocompromised people) [Intramuscular AZD7442 \(Tixagevimab – Cilgavimab\) for Prevention of COVID-19](#), (M J. Levin, et al).
 - A limited supply of Evusheld is available for pre-exposure prophylaxis, with further supplies due to arrive. Evusheld will not be a substitute for vaccination, but rather an adjunctive prophylactic strategy for selected transplant recipients. The group will advise of any further updates once known.
 - The Taskforce would like to thank the ATAGI Chairs for responding to our letter and advising that they continue to monitor the evidence relating to immunocompromised populations including considering the duration of COVID-19 vaccine protection and risks from variants of concern and have welcomed further updates on the progress of our locally generated data study.

- Data:

- COVID-19 epidemiological data was provided and is available [here](#). Australia has recorded 48,015 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours.
- Internationally, there have been 3.617 million new cases reported globally in the past week with 15,064 deaths.
- Some of the countries with the highest reported vaccination rates include: UAE – 99% (96.82% fully vaccinated), Cuba – 94.2% (87.94%), Chile – 93.28% (90.93%), Singapore – 91.93% (91.37%), China – 89.04 (86.62%) and Canada – 85.88% (82.31%).



Professor Helen Pilmore
Co-Chair of Taskforce



Professor Steve Chadban
Co-Chair of Taskforce



Dr Helen Opdam
Organ and Tissue Authority

Update provided 14th April 2022

COVID-19 - Australian Transplantation and Donation Rapid Response Taskforce Communique No.55 – 12 April 2022

- Transplantation and donation update in Australia:

- ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients in Australia; 1038 kidney transplant patients (45 deaths) and 1633 dialysis patients (including 71 deaths) – please note this is likely to be a significant under-estimate due to delays in reporting.
- Nationally there are 3,147 COVID-19 patients in hospital, with 118 confirmed COVID patients in ICUs (72 in NSW, 12 in Vic, 12 in SA, 10 in Qld, 7 in WA, 3 in Tas and 2 in ACT), 34 of whom are ventilated.
- Staffing shortages, either with Covid-19 or being a close contact, remain a serious issue for many units.
- The BA.2 Omicron subvariant has become the dominant strain, and given *in vitro* resistance of this strain to sotrovimab, molnupirovir has become the dominant therapy for outpatient management.
- Organ donation activity has been strong in April, particularly in NSW, yielding modest national increases in transplantation rates for most organs for 2022 as compared to 2021, year to date.

- Transplantation, donation and update in New Zealand:

- Nationally there have been 72,336 cases reported in the past week with 106 deaths.
- ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients in NZ; 132 kidney transplant patients and 369 dialysis patients, including 7 deaths.

- Immunisation status in Australia:

- Australia currently has 82.9% of the total population vaccinated with 86.2% having received at least one vaccine dose, with 50.9% receiving the third 'booster' dose.

- Immunisation status in New Zealand:

- New Zealand currently has 79.5% of the total population vaccinated with 83.6% having received at least one vaccine dose, with 51.4% receiving the third 'booster' dose.

- Vaccination, research and trials:

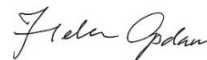
- The Taskforce have updated guidance on the suitability assessment of donors with recent or current SARS-CoV2 infection and these are available on the [TSANZ website](#). The *TSANZ Clinical Guidelines for Organ Transplantation from Deceased Donors* are being updated and will be included in version 1.9 of the Guidelines later this month.
- On the 9th March, 2022, the NEJM published an article [Resistance Mutations in SARS-CoV-2 Delta Variant after Sotrovimab Use](#) (Rockett R, et al).
- There is limited supply of the antiviral Remdesivir, as well as Evusheld that is used for pre-exposure prophylaxis. Evusheld will not be a substitute for vaccination, but rather an adjunctive prophylactic strategy for selected transplant recipients who have failed to develop protective immunity following vaccination. The group will advise of any updates on access once known.
- The Taskforce continues to advocate “ring” vaccination for all household members and wrote to the Chairs of ATAGI on the 25th March 2022, providing locally generated data demonstrating proof of principle.
- Data:
 - COVID-19 epidemiological data was provided and is available [here](#). Australia has recorded 47,730 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours.
 - Internationally, there have been 7.45 million new cases reported globally in the past week with 26,812 deaths. Weekly rates are increasing in South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, France and Germany.
 - Some of the countries with the highest reported vaccination rates include: UAE – 99% (95.3% fully vaccinated), Portugal – 95.02% (92.57%), Singapore – 91.58% (90.46%) and Canada – 85.65% (81.39%).



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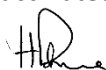
Dr Helen Opdam
Organ and Tissue Authority

Update provided 10th March 2022

COVID-19 - Australian Transplantation and Donation Rapid Response Taskforce Communique No.54 – 8 March 2022

- Transplantation and donation update in Australia:
 - ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients in Australia; 792 kidney transplant patients (38 deaths) and 1280 dialysis patients (including 49 deaths).
 - Nationally there are 1,788 COVID-19 patients in hospital, with 101 COVID patients in ICUs (46 in NSW, 17 in Vic, 20 in Qld, 9 in SA, 2 in ACT, 2 in NT and 4 in TAS), 44 of whom are ventilated.
 - ICU resources are sufficient to support deceased donation and activity has modestly improved from 2021.
- Transplantation, donation and update in New Zealand:
 - New Zealand are currently experiencing an outbreak of cases.
 - Nationally there have been 154,181 cases reported in the past week with 9 deaths.
 - ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients in NZ; 142 cases: 23 kidney transplant patients and 119 dialysis patients.
- Immunisation status in Australia:

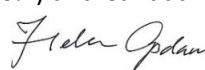
- Australia currently has 79.6% of the total population vaccinated with 85.7% having received at least one vaccine dose, with 46% receiving the third 'booster' dose.
- Immunisation status in New Zealand:
 - New Zealand currently has 77.4% of the total population vaccinated with 83.3% having received at least one vaccine dose, with 48.6% receiving the third 'booster' dose.
- Vaccination, research and trials:
 - On 1 March 2022, *Transplantation* published a [paper](#) *Solid Organ Transplantation From Donors With COVID-19 Infection*, by Boan, Marinelli, and Opdam. The authors, all members of this Taskforce, describe the evolution of acceptance criteria for deceased donors who have evidence of SARS-CoV2 infection. Comparison between international Guidelines and recently reported practices is provided, and the authors provide some rationale for relaxing existing guidelines. The requirement for more research is noted.
 - Following further review of evolving international practice, the Taskforce will provide updated guidance on the suitability assessment of donors with recent or current SARS-CoV2 infection via the TSANZ website within two weeks. This will continue to be monitored and will be updated as required.
 - On the 24 February 2022, the TGA granted [provisional approval](#) to AstraZeneca for Evusheld (tixagevimab and cilgavimab) for pre-exposure prophylaxis (prevention). The Australian Government has a limited supply. This is not a substitute for vaccination. This group will advise of any updates on access once known.
- Data:
 - COVID-19 epidemiological data was provided and is available [here](#). Australia has recorded 31,537 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours.
 - Internationally, there have been 10.7 million new cases reported globally in the past week with 50,072 deaths. Weekly rates are increasing in Iceland, New Zealand and South Korea.
 - Some of the countries with the highest reported vaccination rates include: UAE – 99% (95.3% fully vaccinated), Portugal – 95.02% (92.57%), Singapore – 91.58% (90.46%) and Canada – 85.65% (81.39%).



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Update provided 14th February 2022

COVID-19 - Australian Transplantation and Donation Rapid Response Taskforce Communique No.53 – 8 February 2022

- Transplantation and donation update in Australia:
 - ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients; 1615 cases (including 67 deaths): 615 kidney transplant patients (including 33 deaths) and 1000 dialysis patients (including 34 deaths).
 - Nationally there are 3586 COVID-19 patients in hospital, with 229 COVID patients in ICUs (129 in NSW, 42 in Vic, 39 in Qld, 12 in SA, 2 in ACT, 3 in NT and 2 in TAS), 123 of whom are ventilated.
 - Positive outcomes within individual transplant units were reported at the meeting, suggesting that a combination of triple vaccination, strong ICU support and use of sotrovimab for treatment of transplant patients that have tested positive to COVID-19 may be contributing to anecdotally low mortality rates in kidney and cardiothoracic programmes of approximately 5%, lower than most case-fatality rates that have been reported internationally.

- An increasingly common challenge is managing patients on the waitlist that have had COVID-19. The Taskforce has provided guidance on waitlisting and transplantation of candidates with evidence of previous SARS-CoV-2 infection. The document is available [here](#).
- Immunisation status in Australia:
 - Australia currently has 78.7% of the total population vaccinated with 84.6% having received at least 1 vaccine dose, with 34.7% receiving the third 'booster' dose.
- Vaccination, research and trials:
 - On 20 January 2022, the TGA [provisionally approved](#) Novavax COVID-19 vaccine NUVAXOVID for all people aged 18 years and over. This protein vaccine is included in the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG) for active immunisation to prevent COVID-19 in individuals 18 years of age and older.
 - NUVAXOVID is provisionally approved for primary vaccination only. Studies for use of NUVAXOVID as a booster dose and in paediatric patients are ongoing and these indications do not yet have regulatory approval. No transplant-specific data is available for Novavax.
- Data:
 - COVID-19 epidemiological data was provided and is available [here](#). Australia has recorded 28,202 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours.
 - Internationally, there have been 20.07 million new cases reported globally in the past week with 74,920 deaths. Weekly rates are increasing in Denmark and Israel; with Denmark lifting all domestic COVID restrictions despite an increase in cases. The following weekly cases reported include; UK (1.34 million cases and 2,634 deaths), Israel (366,387 cases and 455 deaths), Denmark (294,827 cases and 146 deaths), and Canada (89,736 cases and 997 deaths).
 - Some of the countries with the highest reported vaccination rates include: UAE – 99% (93.6% fully vaccinated), Portugal – 94.5% (90.89%), Cuba – 93.5% (86.98%), Brunei – 92.19% (91.36%), Chile – 91.83% (88.44%), Singapore – 90.39% (87.77%), Malta – 90.27 (88.3%), China – 87.69% (85.05%), Spain – 87.62% (81.99%), South Korea – 87.1% (86.03%), Canada – 85.15% (79.92%), Italy – 83.73% (77.3), and Denmark – 83.36% (81.47%).



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Update provided 12th January 2022

COVID-19 - Australian Transplantation and Donation Rapid Response Taskforce Communique No.52 – 11 January 2022

- Transplantation and donation update in Australia:
 - ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients; 487 cases (including 38 deaths): 217 kidney transplant patients (including 16 deaths) and 270 dialysis patients (including 22 deaths).
 - Nationally there are 3869 COVID-19 patients in hospital, with 342 COVID patients in ICUs (175 in NSW, 112 in Vic, 27 in Qld, 22 in SA, 4 in ACT and 2 in NT), 99 of whom are ventilated.
 - Hospitals are seeing an increase in COVID+ patients with hospital pressure being projected to peak in the next week or two.
 - Main issue is staff being furloughed with the policy on close contact criteria changing regularly.

- Despite resourcing issues around the country deceased donation is continuing.
- Waitlisting and Transplantation of candidates with evidence of previous SARS-CoV-2 infection: as more candidates become infected, criteria for re-listing and transplantation are required. The Taskforce and TSANZ are preparing clinical guidance that will be release with the next communique.
- Immunisation status in Australia:
 - Australia currently has 77.2% of the total population vaccinated with 79.6% having received at least 1 vaccine dose, with 14.2% receiving the third ‘booster’ dose.
- Vaccination, research and trials:
 - On the 22nd December 2021, the NEJM published [data](#) from a trial that involved non hospitalised patients with Covid-19 who were at high risk of severe disease. They found that following a 3-day course of remdesivir there was an 87% lower risk of Covid-19 related hospitalisation or death from any cause by day 28 (Robert L. Gottlieb, et al, NEJM Dec 22, 2021). We will be monitoring any changes that are brought forward following this trial.
 - On the 24th December 2021, ATAGI in consultation with the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCI) provided an [update](#) on recommendations in relation to COVID-19 vaccine in immunocompromised people, including; people over 18 years of age or older who have already received three primary doses are now encouraged to receive a booster (4th dose) four months after their third dose.
 - On 5 January 2022, Transplantation Journal published important, real-world evidence on the effectiveness of two doses of COVID-vaccine, either Astra-Zeneca or Pfizer, in organ transplant recipients (including a [special article](#), Chapman, J.R, Wigmore, S.J, Jan 4, 2022). By linking four national data-bases, the authors (Callaghan et al) were able to study every transplant recipient in England from September 2020 through August 2021, and determine whether they were vaccinated and when, whether they were diagnosed with COVID-19, and if so whether they died within the next 28 days. It suggests that two doses of COVID vaccine does not provide sufficient protection for transplant recipients – they need at least 3 doses and likely 4. This is consistent with [advice](#) provided by ATAGI released on the 24th December 2021, that severely immunocompromised patients – including transplant recipients are encouraged to receive a 4th booster dose to maximise their immune response.
 - The Taskforce continues to support and advocate “ring” vaccination for all household members as well as strongly recommending use of public health measures including hand washing, mask wearing and social distancing. We recommend transplant recipients reach out and seek expert advice on prevention and management of COVID from their transplant specialist.
 - The Taskforce continue to meet regularly to monitor the current environment and review local and international evidence around the on-going protection of transplant recipients.
 - The New Zealand Ministry of Health has also approved booster vaccination 4 months after the initial course of vaccinations.
- Data:
 - COVID-19 epidemiological data was provided and is available [here](#). Australia has recorded 66,825 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours.
 - Internationally, there have been 16.9 million new cases reported globally in the past week with 44,643 deaths. Weekly rates are increasing in the US, France, Italy and Spain; however, case mortality rates are not. The following weekly cases reported include; UK (1.25 million cases and 1,310 deaths), Spain (870,161 cases and 529 deaths), Canada (294,437 cases and 411 deaths) and Denmark (142,237 case and 99 deaths).
 - Some of the countries with the highest reported vaccination rates include: UAE – 99% (91.7% fully vaccinated), Brunei – 91.9% (90.8%), Portugal – 90.6% (89.9%), Singapore – 87.7% (86.6%), Chile – 90.5% (86.6%), Cuba – 92.6% (85.9%), Malta – 87.2% (84.7%), South Korea – 86.5% (83.9%), Spain – 85.5% (81.4%), Denmark – 82.9% (79.7%), and Japan – 80.3% (78.9%).



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TSANZ

The Transplantation Society of Australia and New Zealand

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A/Professor Helen Pilmore
Co-Chair of Taskforce

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Chadban'.

Professor Steve Chadban
Co-Chair of Taskforce