

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%).



A/Professor Helen Pilmore
Co-Chair of Taskforce



Professor Steve Chadban
Co-Chair of Taskforce