

## COVID-19 - Australian Transplantation and Donation Rapid Response Taskforce Communique No.61 – 28 February 2023

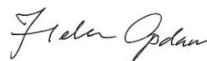
- Transplantation and donation update in Australia:
  - ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients in Australia; 3859 kidney transplant patients (159 deaths) and 5258 dialysis patients (516 deaths).
  - Nationally there are 39 confirmed COVID-19 patients in ICU, with 9 patients who are ventilated.
  - There are currently no issues with ICU capacity and Lifeblood Lab staff have no issues to report.
- Transplantation and donation update in New Zealand:
  - ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients in NZ; 580 kidney transplant patients (21 deaths) and 944 dialysis patients (71 deaths).
- Vaccination, research, and trials:
  - The Taskforce has updated the guidance on *Organ donation and transplantation from donors with a diagnosis of COVID-19*, with additional information on transplanting lungs from COVID PCR+ve donors. It is available on the TSANZ website. The *TSANZ Clinical Guidelines for Organ Transplantation from Deceased Donors* will reflect these changes in the next iteration (version 1.11).
  - The group discussed recent data on COVID-19 vaccine booster doses, noting that there doesn't seem to be much of a difference with patient responses to the original vaccination compared to newer vaccinations being offered. ATAGI released updated [booster advice](#) on the 8 February 2023, suggesting that bivalent mRNA booster vaccines are preferred over other vaccines and recommends that adults who have medical comorbidities aged 18-64 receive a booster dose.
  - See a recently published article in the NEJM, [Effectiveness of Bivalent Boosters against Severe Omicron Infection](#).
- Data:
  - COVID-19 epidemiological data was provided and is available [here](#). Australia has recorded and estimated 18,663 new COVID-19 cases in the last week (as at 28 February 2023).
  - Internationally, there have been 984,271 new cases reported in the past week, with 6,495 deaths. noting that international infection numbers are not reliable with countries not reporting cases.
- COVID-19 Taskforce update:
  - The group decided that meetings will change from bi-monthly to being held on an ad-hoc basis, following today's meeting. Communiqués to continue to be provided.



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Co-Chair of Taskforce



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## COVID-19 - Australian Transplantation and Donation Rapid Response Taskforce Communique No.60 – 13 December 2022

- Transplantation and donation update in Australia:

- ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients in Australia; 3265 kidney transplant patients (121 deaths) and 4403 dialysis patients (354 deaths).
- Nationally there are 2,622 COVID-19 patients in hospital, with 108 COVID-19 patients in ICUs, 26 of whom are ventilated.
- National figures show an overall increase of 5% in organ donation compared to the same time last year, although activity remains approximately 20% lower compared with the years immediately preceding the pandemic.
- There are currently no issues with ICU capacity and Lifeblood Lab staff have no issues to report.
- Transplantation and donation update in New Zealand:
  - ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients in NZ; 478 kidney transplant patients (16 deaths) and 819 dialysis patients (45 deaths).
- Vaccination, research, and trials:
  - The Taskforce has reviewed the guidance on 'Assessment of COVID-19 status in transplant candidates'. This advice is based on a number of recent studies showing outcomes of surgery after COVID-19 infection. The updated document is titled '(Re)Listing of Transplant Candidates after COVID-19 infection' with the addition of data, noting that if risks of waiting outweigh benefits patients could be transplanted/relisted after 4 weeks (previously 7 weeks). The guidance is available on our [website](#).
- Data:
  - Australia has recorded and estimated 108,071 new COVID-19 cases in the last week (as at 11 December 2022).
  - Internationally, there have been 4,050,417 new cases reported globally in the past week, with 9,407 deaths. Weekly cases reported include Singapore (8,652 cases and 2 deaths) and China (231,115 cases and 153 deaths).



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## COVID-19 - Australian Transplantation and Donation Rapid Response Taskforce Communique No.59 – 11 October 2022

- Transplantation and donation update in Australia:
  - ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients in Australia; 3004 kidney transplant patients (107 deaths) and 4098 dialysis patients (282 deaths).
  - Nationally there are 1,548 COVID-19 patients in hospital, with 45 COVID patients in ICUs, 18 of whom are ventilated.
  - National figures show a decrease in cardiothoracic transplantation, while kidney, liver and pancreas rates are modestly improved over last year although some variability between states is evident.
  - Evusheld has been anecdotally effective in immunocompromised patients, particularly in Victoria who have noted a decrease in mortality and hospitalisation. Repeated dosing of Evusheld was discussed – this

remains on the agenda of ATAGI and the Taskforce, however current evidence is insufficient to provide guidance and repeated administration has not (as yet) been approved by the Commonwealth.

- There are currently no issues with ICU capacity and Lifeblood Lab staff have no issues to report.
- Transplantation and donation update in New Zealand:
  - ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients in NZ; 426 kidney transplant patients (16 deaths) and 745 dialysis patients (30 deaths).
- Vaccination, research and trials:
  - Real world data suggests that evusheld has been effective at reducing severe infection (noting most data is from the USA and is from the general population). The variant BA.2.75 is increasing with variant BA.5 being prevalent around the world at this time. Evusheld seems to be effective against BA.5, noting evidence of differences in efficacy against other variants *in vitro* in one recent [publication](#), *Efficacy of Antibodies and Antiviral Drugs against Omicron BA.2.12.1, BA.4, and BA.5 Subvariants* (Takashita, Emi, Yamayoshi, Seiya, et al, N Engl J Med 2022; 387:468-470).
  - The Taskforce guidance on 'Assessment of COVID-19 status in transplant candidates' is under review and any changes will be advised.
- Data:
  - Australia has recorded and estimated 35,800 new COVID-19 cases in the last week.
  - Internationally, there have been 3,190,383 new cases reported globally in the past week, with 9,885 deaths. Increasing rates in Europe and also Singapore are concerning, with Singapore's weekly case numbers increasing by over 70% last week. Weekly cases reported include; Germany (562,403 cases and 471 deaths), France (375,320 cases and 310 deaths), Italy (296,484 cases and 369 deaths), Austria (97,611 cases and 68 deaths) and Singapore (97,611 cases and 68 deaths). Noting that the northern hemisphere is likely underreporting.



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Update provided 11<sup>th</sup> August 2022

## COVID-19 - Australian Transplantation and Donation Rapid Response Taskforce Communique No.58 – 9 August 2022

- Transplantation and donation update in Australia:
  - ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients in Australia; 2668 kidney transplant patients (88 deaths) and 3378 dialysis patients (172 deaths).
  - Nationally there are 4,611 COVID-19 patients in hospital, with 159 COVID patients in ICUs, 38 of whom are ventilated.
  - The main concerns mentioned were staff shortages that are attributable to COVID infection or seasonal flu as well as general staff resourcing issues as seen across all of Australia and New Zealand.
  - There are currently no issues with ICU capacity.
- Transplantation and donation update in New Zealand:

- ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients in NZ; 360 kidney transplant patients (11 deaths) and 675 dialysis patients (20 deaths).
- Vaccination, research and trials:
  - Real world data article from Israel, [Association between Evusheld administration and SARS-CoV-2 infection, hospitalization and mortality](#), was published on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2022, in Clinical Infectious Diseases that mirrors what has been done here in Australia. Noting evusheld standard prophylaxis dose 150/150 to severely immunosuppressed patients, during initial BA.1 (when evusheld would expect to be less active) and then BA.2 waves in Israel. Probably some bias as discussed for the control group who didn't take the opportunity to get evusheld, but 50% reduction in infection, and more importantly a large effect in reducing the severity of breakthrough infection and hospitalisation/death.
  - The Taskforce discussed the use of incidental SARS-CoV-2 donors, noting variations in acceptance of these organs and with the suggestion to inform the relevant Infectious Disease team of current data to assist with informing a decision.
- Data:
  - Australia has recorded and estimated 220,250 new COVID-19 cases in the last week with 470 deaths.
  - Internationally, there have been 577,423 new cases reported globally in the past 24 hours with 1,144 deaths.
  - Some of the countries with the highest reported vaccination rates include: Cuba – 94.94% (88.66% fully vaccinated), Portugal – 94.65% (86.48%), Singapore – 92.09% (91.69%), China – 91.08 (88.71%) and Vietnam – 90% (83.1%).



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Update provided 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022

## COVID-19 - Australian Transplantation and Donation Rapid Response Taskforce Communique No.57 – 14 June 2022

- Transplantation and donation update in Australia:
  - ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients in Australia; 1758 kidney transplant patients (63 deaths) and 2374 dialysis patients (134 deaths).
  - Nationally there are 2,855 COVID-19 patients in hospital, with 97 COVID patients in ICUs (43 in NSW, 27 in Vic, 9 in WA, 8 in SA, 5 in Qld, 2 in ACT, 2 in Tas and 1 in NT), 27 of whom are ventilated.
  - The main concerns mentioned were staff shortages that are attributable to COVID infection or seasonal flu, in particular the Lifeblood laboratories have had up to 18% of staff off sick at any one time.
- Transplantation and donation update in New Zealand:
  - ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients in NZ; 261 kidney transplant patients (8 deaths) and 521 dialysis patients (8 deaths).

- Immunisation status in Australia:
  - Australia currently has 83.9% of the total population vaccinated with 86.6% having received at least one vaccine dose, with 53.5% receiving the third 'booster' dose.
- Immunisation status in New Zealand:
  - New Zealand currently has 80.1% of the total population vaccinated with 83.7% having received at least one vaccine dose, with 52.7% receiving the third 'booster' dose.
- Vaccination, research and trials:
  - On the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022, the guidance, '[Organ donation and transplantation from donors with a diagnosis of COVID-19](#)', was updated. Following this, revisions to version 1.9, chapter 2 of the [TSANZ Clinical Guidelines for Organ Transplantation from Deceased Donors](#) were made (15/6/2022). Unpublished data presented at the ATC meeting in Boston last week reported substantial increases in safe and successful utilisation of organs from donors with COVID in the US. This US data provides support for the changes made to TSANZ Guidelines as above.
  - There is a limited supply of Evusheld available for pre-exposure prophylaxis. Evusheld will not be a substitute for vaccination, but rather an adjunctive prophylactic strategy for selected transplant recipients, for example, all organ recipients within the first 12 months of receiving their transplant. Jurisdictional differences in access to and administration of Evusheld are evident. The group will continue to provide updates once they are known.
  - Two preprint articles have been released (May 2022) on effectiveness of Evusheld in immunocompromised patients; <https://doi.org/10.1101/2022.05.17.22274980>, and <https://doi.org/10.1101/2022.05.28.22275716>.
- Data:
  - Australia has recorded 186,065 new COVID-19 cases in the last week.
  - Internationally, there have been 571,825 new cases reported globally in the past 24 hours with 1,082 deaths.
  - Some of the countries with the highest reported vaccination rates include: UAE – 99% (97.11% fully vaccinated), Portugal – 95.56% (87.2%), Cuba – 94.32% (88.08%), Chile – 93.58% (91.32%), Singapore – 92.02% (91.56%), China – 89.38 (87.05%) and Vietnam – 86.71% (81.03%).



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Update provided 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022

## 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 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022, the TGA provisionally [approved](#) AstraZeneca's combination therapy (Evusheld) for pre-exposure prevention (prophylaxis) of COVID-19.
  - On the 20<sup>th</sup> 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:
  - 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%).



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Update provided 14<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> March 2022, providing locally generated data demonstrating proof of principle.

- **Data:**

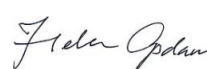
- Australia has recorded 47,730 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours.
- Internationally, there have been 7.45 million new cases reported globally in the past week with 26,812 deaths. Weekly rates are increasing in South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, France and Germany.
- Some of the countries with 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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Update provided 10<sup>th</sup> 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:**
  - 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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:**
  - 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 24<sup>th</sup> December 2021, ATAGI in consultation with the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) 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 (4<sup>th</sup> 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 24<sup>th</sup> December 2021, that severely immunocompromised patients – including transplant recipients are encouraged to receive a 4<sup>th</sup> 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:
  - 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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