

Tuesday 22 August 2023

COVID-19 update The virus has been back in the headlines recently, and you've been posing questions to us on everything from the new variant, to testing policy. Here's what we know:

- What can you tell us about the new variant?

The new variant of COVID-19, nicknamed Eris, is currently classed as a 'variant of interest'. It is responsible for an increasing number of COVID cases and some increase in hospitalisation. However, numbers are not anything close to those seen at the height of the pandemic, and the overall public health risk is low.

- Will there be a 'flu and COVID-19 vaccination programme this year?

Yes, the autumn vaccination programme will soon get underway. All health & social care staff will be offered a 'flu jab; those of you who come into direct contact with patients/clients as part of your role will also be offered a COVID-19 jab. We'll have much more information on this later in the week.

- Will masks be coming back?

Any decision to reintroduce the blanket use of FRSMs (Fluid Resistant Surgical Masks) across NHS hospitals will be taken nationally. Masks should continue to be used, as appropriate, for wider infection control according to the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual (www.nipcm.scot.nhs.uk).

In the event of COVID-19 outbreaks in care homes, the Health Protection team may recommend mask usage as a short-term control measure.

- What are the rules on testing and self-isolation for staff?

New guidance on testing and self-isolation has been prepared and we will be sharing more on this later in the week.

For enquiries regarding patient testing, please contact Infection Prevention & Control – gram.infectioncontrol@nhs.scot For enquiries relating to staff health and wellbeing, please contact Occupational Health – gram.ohs@nhs.scot As per standard practice, where there are two or more cases of staff and/or patients linked in time and place with the same infectious symptoms, please contact IPC for support.

RAAC surveys As previously confirmed, specialist surveys to determine if RAAC (reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete) is present in our buildings are taking place in Aberdeen this week. The survey team have confirmed they will visit the properties identified in Moray next week (w/c 28 August) and then Aberdeenshire the following week (w/c 4 September). These visits are being co-ordinated with colleagues in Estates and should, we hope, cause minimal disruption. Your ongoing support is appreciated. If you haven't had a chance to read the RAAC FAQ sheet, it is available here: [raac-faq-03-08-23.pdf \(nhsgrampian.org\)](#)

Datix surgeries – your questions answered The next Datix surgeries take place on Thursday (24 August), 1-2pm and 2-3pm. These events take place on Teams and you are not required to stay for the full time; as soon as you have your answer you can leave the virtual room. [Booking is via Turas](#) (requires log-in).

Order-Comms requests To raise a request for a patient via Order-Comms, users must select an appropriate episode of care on TrakCare. When the patient has no current episode, some users have been selecting a previous episode from the Episode List menu. Doing so means the fields in Order-Comms are completed using the details from that episode, meaning test results may be sent to the wrong clinical team. If a patient does not have an appropriate episode to select, users should create an outpatient appointment using a specialty specific ad hoc clinic and request any required tests from the newly created appointment. The [adhoc clinic video - how to book](#) shows you how to do this. If your service does not have an ad hoc clinic, this can be requested by [Raising a Request via the Helpdesk](#). One to one training is available via the [EPR Training Support Channel on Teams](#).

Top-up degree study skills sessions We are working with Robert Gordon University to run two study skills sessions for candidates planning to apply for the next cohort of the Top-Up Degree (BSc Professional Practice). These will take place on Thursday 5 October, 1-4pm and Monday 9 October, 9.30am - 12.30pm; please note you should attend both sessions. If you would like to take part, please contact gram.topupdegree@nhs.scot.

NoSCAR NMAHP research seminar series The next seminar in this series, on Grant Writing, will be held via Teams on Tuesday 19 September from 1.30 to 2.30pm. The seminar will include:

- Introduction to the world of research grants & fellowships
- Top 5 tips for writing a successful application
- Understanding how a funding panel makes decisions
- Learning from lived experience of success and failure

There's no need to register, [simply use this link to join the meeting](#). All welcome!

Tune of the day We're in the business of saying hello and goodbye today. Greetings first – a warm welcome to the newly qualified pharmacists who are starting work at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary over the next couple of weeks. Karen and the team look forward to you joining them and have asked for Katrina and The Waves' [Walking on Sunshine](#). Onto the farewell, John Pittman is leaving the procurement team for a new post with NHS Lothian. His final day is tomorrow, Carol and colleagues have asked for Green Day and [Good Riddance \(Time of your Life\)](#) (EP)

If you want to request a tune, follow up on items included in this brief, or suggest an item for sharing, drop us an email via gram.communications@nhs.scot