

COVID-19 NPHEM Subgroup – Guidance and Evidence Synthesis – Report 4 – 13/04/2020

Report NPHEM meeting – 14/04/2020

Background

Following a recommendation from the COVID-19 National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHEM) on the 16th March 2020, a NPHEM subgroup responsible for Guidance and Evidence Synthesis has been convened. The **NPHEM Subgroup on Guidance and Evidence Synthesis** will report to NPHEM and facilitate information exchange on the public health and clinical guidance relating to COVID-19, currently in development and to be developed in Ireland. In addition, the subgroup will provide assurance to the NPHEM on coordination of surge evidence synthesis capacity to support the development of guidance relating to COVID-19 and to inform decision making by NPHEM and related bodies.

The subgroup will meet weekly, or more frequently as required. Each meeting will have an agenda, a short meeting note and a set of assigned actions.

Terms of reference and current membership of the subgroup are provided in Appendix 1.

1. COVID-19 NPHEM Subgroup – Guidance and Evidence Synthesis – Meeting 3

The Subgroup met again on 9th April 2020. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an overview and update of the various workstreams being undertaken by subgroup members and to enable information exchange. The meeting agenda (Appendix 2) is attached.

Proposed actions arising from this meeting include:

- DOH to circulate to the HPSC and AMRIC, once completed, the process document developed to help streamline the rapid development or update of guidance requested by NPHEM and/or involving contributions from multiple stakeholders.
- HIQA to share the rapid HTA on diagnostic testing with the subgroup once finalised.
- NPHEM Guidance and Evidence Synthesis subgroup members to submit observations on report tabled at COVID 19 NPHEM meeting 3rd April 2020 to subgroup Chair.
- HSE Research and Development Lead to discuss process for Evidence Synthesis reviews with HSE Library and Knowledge Service.
- HSE Library and Knowledge Service and HTA Unit, HIQA to discuss the process and share experience around the development of evidence synthesis reviews.
- DoH to generate a summary report on the database for both guidance and evidence synthesis, and upload onto the newly established Sharefile for information sharing with subgroup members.

2. Work Progress to date:

An overview of guidance and evidence synthesis work is provided in Appendix 3. Further details of work completed to date is provided in Appendix 4. Ongoing work, as follows:

- a) A process document is being developed to help streamline the rapid development or update of guidance requested by NPHE and/or involving contributions from multiple stakeholders. This document is due for circulation to relevant stakeholders by Tuesday 10th April 2020.
- b) A template for recording details relating to guidance/evidence synthesis, current, in development and planned, has been developed following input from the HSE, DOH, HPSC and HIQA and is being updated regularly. This will assist in establishing a communication between these groups with the database and a summary overview available to all on sharefile. Access to the sharefile will be provided beyond subgroup members on request to relevant parties in DoH and NPHE.
- c) A central online repository for Clinical Guidance developed by Clinical Design and Innovation in the Office of the CCO and HSE Research and Evidence went live on Tuesday 31st March 2020. The repository is open access across public and private providers and is mobile compatible. As this is a work in progress, a facility for the developers to receive feedback from users of the repository has been introduced on the website.
- d) A dedicated email address [COVID 19 Guidance Coordination@health.gov.ie](mailto:COVID_19_Guidance_Coordination@health.gov.ie) has been set-up as a single point of contact for all queries, relating to requests for guidance to be developed, coming through and arising from the DOH. Queries continue to be received and are triaged before forwarding to the appropriate group for action.
- e) Evidence synthesis support is being provided by the Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Directorate, HIQA to the HPSC and AMRIC. This has taken the form of an ongoing scan of public health guidance published, and review and identification of any differences or gaps with HPSC/AMRIC guidance. A daily update is provided to the HPSC and AMRIC which facilitates updates on changes in international guidance as well as collection of material to inform future guidance in development.
- f) The HTA Directorate, HIQA is providing ongoing evidence synthesis support to the COVID-19 NPHE Expert Advisory Group (EAG). Reports relating to four of these (Appendix 3) research questions were published on the HIQA website on Wednesday 1st April 2020.

An update was provided to the EAG on 8th April 2020 in relation to the following two questions which had been subject to a continuous systematic review process:

- I. What is the evidence for asymptomatic transmission of COVID-19?
- II. What is the viral load over the course of the infection (including in the pre-symptomatic phase), and the duration of infectivity?

Ongoing systematic review for these two research questions has now been paused.

- III. For individuals who have COVID-19, what clinical samples and collection sites are suitable for SARS-CoV-2 testing?

This review was provided to EAG on 8th April 2020.

Two further evidence summaries requested by AMRIC lead are underway:

- IV. Use of facemasks by healthcare workers when treating patients who do not have respiratory disease (also requested by EAG)
- V. Use of masks by healthy individuals in the community

An additional evidence summary requested by AMRIC lead will commence this week in relation to aerosol generating procedures in health individuals.

- g) Ongoing rapid evidence reviews are underway by HTA, HIQA at request of NPHET members on:
 - I. International public health restrictive public policy measures
 - II. Public health measures for vulnerable groups
- h) An update to the rapid review of international public health measures for residential care facilities is underway.
- i) Rapid HTA undertaken by HTA, HIQA in relation to alternative diagnostic testing approaches was tabled at COVID-19 NPHET meeting 10th April 2020 and will be published week commencing April 13th2020. This work will input to the development of a rapid European HTA by the European network of HTA agencies (EUnetHTA).
- j) Collaboration with the modelling subgroup is underway to ensure no duplication of effort and to facilitate access to the best available evidence to inform the model as it emerges.
- k) Work continues to develop a bank of international evidence synthesis sources to be leveraged. Information exchange processes are in development with international colleagues including NICE, EUnetHTA and EC DG Sante with regard to evidence synthesis and guidance work undertaken and in development.
- l) Offers of additional evidence synthesis surge capacity continue to be received and are welcomed.

Appendix 1:

Terms of Reference

1. To coordinate information to support the development of public health and clinical guidance relating to COVID-19.
2. To coordinate surge evidence synthesis capacity to support the development of public health guidance.
3. To coordinate surge evidence synthesis capacity to support the development of models of care and clinical guidance (as determined and prioritised by the NPHET and/or the HSE Office of the Chief Clinical Officer (CCO)).
4. To provide a mechanism to enable rapid evidence synthesis in response to the requirements of the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) reporting to the NPHET.
5. To ensure capacity for evidence synthesis to support the work of the NPHET as required.
6. To coordinate requests to HIQA for rapid Health Technology Assessment as required by NPHET
7. To provide weekly progress reports to the NPHET on the work of the NPHET Subgroup on Guidance and Evidence Synthesis.

Membership (to be expanded as necessary)

- Department of Health
- HSE, Office of the Chief Clinical Officer, Clinical Design and Innovation
- HPSC, Public Health Guidance Lead
- Expert Advisory Group reporting to the NPHET
- HSE, Head of Research and Evidence
- HIQA Health Technology Assessment
- HSE, National Clinical Lead Antimicrobial Resistance & Infection Control Team

3rd April 2020

Appendix 2:

**NPHET COVID-19 - Subgroup Guidance and Evidence Synthesis
Department of Health, Miesian Plaza, by Teleconference
Meeting 3: Thursday 9th April 2020 from 11am**

AGENDA

1. Welcome & Conflict of Interest declarations.
2. Minutes from previous meeting.
3. Matters Arising.
4. Public Health Update.
5. Update from NPHET.
6. Update on development of Public Health & Infection, Prevention and Control Guidance relating to COVID-19.
7. Update on development of Clinical Guidance relating to COVID-19.
8. Update on the National Health Library and Knowledge service activities
9. Update on Evidence Synthesis activity by HIQA
10. Update from DOH
11. AOB.

Date of Next Meeting: 16th April 2020 at 11am

Appendix 3

Table 1 below summarises the number of guidance documents and evidence reviews/summaries, etc. showing the status of each (as at 11/04/20).

Table 1: Summary of guidance development and evidence synthesis activities across contributing organisations.

	Awaiting approval	Completed	In development	Not yet commenced	Ongoing updates	Preliminary approval	Published	Published & under review	Archived or replaced	Total
Clinical care guidance	34		11	1		16	26		1	89
Epidemiology							1			1
Evidence Summary		1	5	2	3		3			14
Evidence Synthesis		6	9							15
Other			1		1					2
Public health/IPC guidance	3	2	5	1			58	4	25	98
Rapid Evidence Review		2	2		2					6
Rapid HTA			1							1
Research to inform communications approach					9					9
Total	37	11	34	4	15	16	88	4	26	235

Appendix 4:

Further detail on work completed to date:

1. Agreement has been reached between the DOH, HSE and HPSC on the process through which guidance relating to public health and clinical responses to COVID-19 will be monitored and information will be exchanged.
2. The HTA Directorate, HIQA has provided evidence synthesis support to the COVID-19 NPHET Expert Advisory Group (EAG) in relation to the following questions:
 - I. What evidence is available to indicate that children spread COVID-19?
 - II. What is the natural history of COVID-19 infection in children?
 - III. What is the average length of stay in ICU for affected persons?
 - IV. For individuals who have COVID-19, what clinical samples and collection sites are suitable for SARS-CoV-2 testing?
3. A rapid evidence review of international public health guidance on protective measures relating to vulnerable groups was undertaken by HIQA at the request of the NPHET subgroup on vulnerable people and informed the development of the “Guidance on cocooning to protect people over 70 years and those extremely medically vulnerable from COVID-19” published by HPSC on 27th March 2020.
4. Rapid reviews completed in relation to:
 - I. International public health measures for Residential Care facilities
 - II. International public health measures for workers
 - III. International guidance on use of masks by healthcare workers.