

COVID-19 - National Transplantation and Donation Rapid Response Taskforce Communique No.28 – 14 January 2021

- Transplantation update in Australia:
 - Nationally, the total number of COVID-19 cases since February 2020 is 28,614.
 - There are 40 COVID-19 patients in hospital with 1 patient in ICU being ventilated.
 - ANZDATA has reported the following COVID-19 cases among dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients; 33 (25 recoveries): 20 kidney transplant patients (19 recoveries and 1 death) and 13 dialysis patients (6 recoveries and 7 deaths).
 - There are no issues with ICU capacity.
- New COVID-19 Strains:
 - There are currently two new, well characterised COVID-19 variants; one that has been derived from the UK (lineage B.1.1.7) and one from South Africa (lineage 501.V2).
 - Public Health UK has reported that the B.1.1.7 variant is more transmissible, based on reproduction and attack rates from immunological studies, but does not appear to be more virulent with complication and mortality rates comparable to the primary strain.
 - This variant is the dominant virus in the UK and is now being seen in other regions of the world.
 - The efficacy of vaccination in protecting against variant strains is pending. Pfizer has reported a study of serum derived from a small number of immunised patients (n=20) and found evidence of anti-viral activity in in vitro plaque inhibition assays. This study looked at only one spike protein mutation. Data is expected from AstraZeneca and Moderna from similar studies.
 - There is less information on the 501.V2 variant but it has been reported that this lineage has become dominant in South Africa. Data is pending on the mutation in the spike protein E484, which could be problematic for vaccination, but nothing has been confirmed.
 - COVID variants and vaccine responses are an extremely active area of ongoing research.
- Vaccination Strategy:
 - The Federal Government is coordinating an implementation strategy that will include the mechanism of delivery of the vaccination – we await details.
 - This group will be advocating to the Federal Government for further consideration for transplant recipients and their families to be included in the first phase of vaccine distribution (priority 1b).
 - There will be a communication strategy in place for patients and practitioners when we have more information on the vaccination implementation strategy.
- Data:
 - Current COVID-19 epidemiological data was provided and is available [here](#). Australia recorded 20 new cases in the last 24 hours, with 14 of those being overseas acquired in returned travellers in hotel quarantine, 6 locally acquired (5 in NSW part of known clusters).
 - Globally, there were 5 million cases reported in the last week. The US has passed 22 million cases since February 2020. Weekly case numbers are high and increasing in the UK, Israel, Sweden, Switzerland, Portugal, Ireland, and Japan.
 - Newly published data has demonstrated excellent short-term efficacy of the mRNA-1273 (Moderna) in a multicentre US study (Baden LR, et al, NEJM Dec 30, 2020).



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