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AMA welcomes new guidelines to protect frontline workers against COVID

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) today welcomed the release of updated guidelines on the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect health care workers against aerosol transmission of COVID-19.

The Infection Control Expert Group (ICEG) developed the guidelines in collaboration with the National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce Infection Prevention and Control Panel and the Commonwealth Minister for Health in September last year after the AMA expressed its concerns over the lack of protection for health care workers from the risks of aerosol transmission of COVID-19.

AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said the updated guidelines did much to address the concerns of the medical profession and they were much more explicit on the need for health care workers to be provided with N95/P2 masks when managing patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 to protect them against the risks of aerosol transmission.

“Too many health care workers in Australia have been placed at risk of COVID-19 because of the lack of adequate PPE and these new guidelines could not have come soon enough, particularly as Australia still remains at significant risk of outbreaks.

“The new guidelines will help improve safety for health care workers, including those in hotel quarantine, and reduce the risks of future lockdowns caused by staff transmission to the community as we have seen over the past few months.

“With better PPE and the vaccination of frontline health workers they will now feel much safer at work and no longer worry about passing on this virus to their family and friends.”

The National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce Infection Prevention and Control Panel was formed to give specific expert advice on infection control and prevention in health care workplaces and brought together experts in their fields, including workplace health and safety.

ICEG was established well before the COVID-19 pandemic and was never set up to provide advice on what has always been a workplace safety issue. This collaboration has allowed it to draw on much-needed expertise, particularly around workplace risks of transmission.

The updated ICEG guidelines follow the release by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care of an update to its Preventing and Controlling Infections Standard, which were reviewed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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