ISCRR Institute for Safety, Compensation and Recovery Research

A joint initiative of WorkSafe Victoria and Monash University

ISCRR COVID-19 SCANNING

LAST UPDATE: 30TH APRIL 2020

Given a small shift in Australia's focus towards 'What next?', the COVID-19 updates this week look at how our workplaces may change once restrictions have lifted.

Symbols

 Economy

 Health

 Industry

 Potential opportunity

Government updates and policy responses

Australian Government Department of Health – update

This website provides an update of COVID-19 statistics across Australia (29/4)

Australian government department of health Link: https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-current-situation-and-case-numbers

Comparison of responses to level 4 alerts across countries

A NZ study has mapped the COVID curve across 25 different countries according to how they responded with various lockdown measures. Overall, those that went into stricter restrictions sooner (e.g. NZ, Australia) reduced the rate of infection more effectively than those that were slow to respond (e.g. US, Italy).

Link: https://www.tepunahamatatini.ac.nz/2020/04/22/effect-of-alert-level-4-measures-on-covid-19-transmission/

WHO update – situation report (#100)

The current WHO situation report (20/4) provides update on COVID-19 information.

- > 3 million cases globally
- Links to a technical guidance document 'Strengthening Preparedness for COVID-19 in Cities and Urban Settings' to support policy makers
- Links to misleading sources and areas of concern in 'Subject in Focus'

WHO highlights a rising 'infodemic' (overabundance of false or misleading information) on COVID that threatens response efforts and public health.

WHO Link: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200429-sitrep-100-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=bbfbf3d1_2

Impact on Australia's economy

Impact on health system

Using a Monte Carlo simulation model, researchers estimated resource use and direct medical costs per COVID-19 infection in the US population. For each person, there was a median cost of $3,045 for direct medical costs. If 80% of the US population were infected, they estimated a median of 44.6 million hospitalisations, 10.7 million ICU admissions, 6.5 million ventilators required, and 249.5 million hospital bed days (total $654 billion over the course of the pandemic). In contrast, if the number of infections could be limited to 20% of the population, costs would be reduced to $163.4 billion. (Bartsch et al. Health Affairs, 23 April)

https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00426

Impact on health and safety

Development of vaccines

Many different COVID-29 vaccines are being developed worldwide, but are still to be tested in appropriate trials.

Link: https://www.yourlifechoices.com.au/health/covid19/vaccine-ready-for-human-trials?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=volume%2020%20issue%2083%20daily%20enews%20friday%2024%20april&utm_content=volume%2020%20issue%2083%20daily%20enews%20friday%2024%20april+version+a+cid_ae92e0cc806619105239ec6c45bb7255&utm_source=campaign%20monitor&utm_term=very%20optimistic%20about%20being%20successful

Treatments for COVID-19

Anti-viral therapy: A systematic review of the evidence using antiviral therapy to manage COVID-19 reported insufficient evidence of benefit (Yousefifard et al. Arch Acad Emerg Med April 6)

Link: https://plus.mcmaster.ca/COVID-19/Article/Details/32309809

Similar uncertainty was found in a systematic review on antiretroviral drug LPV/r (Ford et al. J Int AIDS Soc April 23)

Link: https://plus.mcmaster.ca/COVID-19/Article/Details/32293807

Corticosteroid treatment: Corticosteroids have been used widely in outbreaks of SARS. A systematic review and meta-analysis of 15 studies (N=5270 patients) reported a higher risk of mortality in patients prescribed corticosteroids. However, it is also more likely that they are prescribed to patients with severe conditions. (Yang et al. J. Infect April 10)

Link: https://plus.mcmaster.ca/COVID-19/Article/Details/32283144

Anti-parasitic drug – Ivermectin: An existing FDA-approved anti-parasitic drug, with broad-spectrum activity, has effectively limited infection related to several viruses: Dengue, West Nile, Venezuelan equine encephalitis and influenza. Recent in vitro evidence from Monash University showed that Ivermectin demonstrated a 5000-fold reduction in COVID-19 within 48 hours in culture. Given that Ivermectin is available worldwide, it has potential to be re-purposed for COVID. However, while it is safe for human use, trials are needed to determine the appropriate dose.

Link: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0166354220302011?via%3Dihub

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Personal protective equipment for workers

A systematic review and meta-analysis of personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare staff managing patients with highly infectious diseases showed that greater coverage of body parts provided better protection; but increased the time and difficulty of 'donning and doffing' and was less comfortable for the user. Specifically, more breathable types of PPE had similar risks of contamination, but were more acceptable. Factors that reduced risk included: use of tabs for removal, guidance/instructions during procedures, glove disinfection and face-to-face training (vs self-guided training). Overall, evidence was based on low quality studies. (Verbeek et al. Cochrane Database of systematic reviews, April 15)

Link: https://plus.mcmaster.ca/COVID-19/Article/Details/32293717

Impact on industry and workplaces

Re-designing employment services

This discussion paper outlines a new approach to support for employment, particularly in view of the increased unemployment associated with COVID-19. The paper suggests that the current model of service provision (jobactive model) had insufficient capacity and capability to manage the high caseloads *before* COVID-19; and with the recent large increase in jobseekers meant the service providers could do little more than provide basic servicing. The authors also suggest that while the Government's proposed 'New Employment Services Model' was an improvement, it failed to provide sufficient investment in the needs of those who were most at risk of long-term unemployment.

Per Capita Link: https://percapita.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Redesigning-employment-services-after-COVID-19_FINAL.pdf

Return to work

The Business Council of Australia outlines a set of 'considerations' for how current restrictions can be lifted in a staged, risk managed way. They propose re-opening the economy and allowing return to work by implementing the following elements:

- Keeping employees, customers, and suppliers safe – enhanced workplace safety standards
- Rebuilding confidence – partnership between governments and industry
- Economic support must transition from 'life-support' to 'acceleration'.

Business Council of Australia Link: https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/bca/pages/5185/attachments/original/1587298623/BCA_-_Working_together_for_the_national_interest_-_COVID-19_next_steps_-_200420.pdf?0=

Health and safety of healthcare workers

This report describes the experiences of healthcare workers in the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic. It provides evidence of a need for immediate action by the Government and the health care system to address the health, mental health and welfare needs of the healthcare workforce. Importantly, 20% of respondents indicated that they were more likely to leave the healthcare profession since COVID-19. In particular, workers were seeking five core guarantees:

1. Safety (e.g. adequate PPE);
2. Accommodation (e.g. hotel stay to protect family)
3. Mental health (e.g. priority access to therapy)
4. Pay (e.g. full pay for period of illness)
5. Care (e.g. child care or other care commitments)

Institute for public policy research (UK) Link: https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2020-04/apo-nid303424.pdf

Impact on digital technology

ABI Research provides on-demand webinars that discuss the ramifications of COVID on digital technology companies and those that invest in technology to enhance their business. This webinar discusses how COVID has transformed markets; the need for innovative technologies (e.g. artificial intelligence, robotics, virtual reality); the impact of 5G (adoption, supply) and how data traffic may change across networks.

ABI Research Link: https://go.abiresearch.com/lp-covid-19-impact-on-key-technologies?utm_campaign=Virtual%20Tradeshow&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=86861558&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--dkfXed3sCsv9RmV9n892ZRJpbTx5MQAxGthXCMq-Xb_TdSIsk9DmMWUH0lLMQgB-egXHObrrfHOkVJsEu_6xuoay21w&_hsmi=86861479

Internet of Things (IoT) market

COVID has created variations in the supply chain for many products and services. This on-demand webinar discusses visibility and tracking of assets, infrastructure needs in changing times and technologies related to security in a new environment that relies on contactless services.

ABI Research Link: https://go.abiresearch.com/lp-what-will-drive-the-iot-market-through-2020/?utm_campaign=Virtual%20Tradeshow&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=86861558&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--dkfXed3sCsv9RmV9n892ZRJpbTx5MQAxGthXCMq-Xb_TdSIsk9DmMWUH0lLMQgB-egXHObrrfHOkVJsEu_6xuoay21w&_hsmi=86861479

Change in office spaces

Although open-plan offices have been criticised (e.g. lack of privacy, too much distraction, less productivity), they have also contributed to improved cooperation and communication. However, the next version of open-plan may involve more space between desks, or increased barriers (cubicles). If more people continue to work from home post-COVID, fewer workers in the office will make ongoing social distancing between workers easier to manage.

Some downsides to working remotely include the loss of personal interaction and social cues, lack of eye contact and face-to-face interactions that are more persuasive than virtual meetings. Other changes may include touch-free technologies for lifts, doors and lighting.

The Conversation Link: https://theconversation.com/goodbye-to-the-crowded-office-how-coronavirus-will-change-the-way-we-work-together-137382