
MEMO

To: Council Members

From: Judith Holmes, Chair

Date: 20 April 2020

Subject: **Chair's Report**

The Consumer Council met twice using Zoom online video conferencing in April. At the first, on 8th April, Dr Nick Baker, Chief Medical Officer NMH, gave a briefing on the NMH response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The briefing provided a pertinent and up-to-the-minute context for the questions that Dr Baker wanted to pose to the Council. The most important opinion that he sought concerned community opinion regarding the implications of deferring surgical procedures during Level 4 (and maybe consequent) Lockdowns. This had previously been debated by the Clinical Governance Committee. The Consumer Council discussion resulted in the unanimous recommendation to Dr. Baker and the Clinical Governance Committee endorsing the continuation of surgical procedures during Level 4 (and maybe consequent)restrictions with some caveats: namely, that patients needing surgery be given the choice as to whether to proceed at this time if they felt that their “bubble” could adequately support them post-operatively, that they felt safe seeking surgery at this time, that hospital visiting be either extremely limited or non-existent and that they would not lose their place on the waiting list should they decline until after the alert levels are lifted. The communities which the Consumer Council represents, are very aware of the pressures on resources of the DHBs and wish to proceed with surgeries albeit cautiously at this time.

Dr. Baker also raised the issue of misinformation circulating in the community regarding Covid-19. He asked the Council to support the work of NMH in dispelling myths and directing people to reliable sources of information, an important role for the Council in all the communities in which we operate. The Consumer Council had already been active in providing written feedback to Elle Coberger (Medicines Information Pharmacist/My Medicines Coordinator, Clinical Pharmacology Department Christchurch Hospital) on two brief papers “*Medicines for Treating Covid-19*” and “*Medicines that have been investigated for Covid-19*” as part of our efforts related to the current pandemic, so this request followed a theme close to the Council’s heart.

The Council met again on 20 April. We were given an update on the Models of Care programme. The Council’s main interest in this session was to discuss the projects that have accelerated or changed as a result of COVID-19, particularly the delivery of Virtual Health services. The Council was impressed to hear of the increased offering and uptake of Virtual Health appointments and is keen to support the ongoing expansion of this service. The Council sees Virtual Health service provision as a necessary and important service to grow as a way of dealing with the pressures on patient and clinician time, particularly in light of the widely dispersed nature of our geography.

It was noted by the Council that the NMB management of the COVID-19 response has been outstanding, as evidenced by the favourable position of low case numbers and zero cases of community transmission. The council members saw an opportunity for NMH to share positive stories in many media outlets and encourage the community to maintain the gains made to date.

Judith Holmes
Consumer Council Chair

RECOMMENDATION

THAT THE BOARD RECEIVES THE CHAIR'S REPORT.