

CLINICAL UPDATE

25th April 2020

COVID-19 – PHE Guidance on Chest Compressions and Defibrillation

Many of you will have been following closely the on-going discussions in relation to chest compressions and whether they are considered an AGP or not. As a Trust we have been consistent and taken our direction from PHE and NHSE, sharing this information and guidance with you on a regular basis. Yesterday further guidance was published by PHE:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/881242/COVID-19_Infection_prevention_and_control_guidance_complete.pdf

This is expert guidance issued by PHE and is based on an evidence review and consensus statement issued by the 'New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group' (NERVTAG). The conclusion is that **chest compressions will not be added to the list of AGPs.**

The PHE guidance goes on to say that first responders (any setting) can commence chest compressions and defibrillation without the need for AGP (level 3) PPE, while awaiting the arrival of other responders to undertake airway manoeuvres. It adds that healthcare organisations may choose to advise their clinical staff to wear FFP3 respirators, gowns, eye protection and gloves when performing chest compressions **but it is strongly advised that there is no potential delay in delivering this life saving intervention.**

I have been working closely with my ambulance service medical director colleagues through the ACE sub-group, NASMeD. We have explored all sides of the discussion and will continue to review any changes in evidence or guidance. Our agreed position for the ambulance sector is that we will continue to follow PHE guidance as it published; and therefore, our guidance remains the same:

Your safety and that of our patients remains our top priority. Where time critical interventions, such as chest compressions and defibrillation are required, any delay can be the difference between a positive and negative outcome. The national guidance in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic is clear; chest compressions and defibrillation are not considered to be AGPs and can be undertaken by a first responder wearing level 2 PPE and placing a surgical or oxygen mask on the patient. To both minimise any delay to time critical treatment, while at the same time reducing the risk to the responder of exposure. Secondary responders in level 3 PPE can take over and commence full advanced life support including where indicated AGPs.

Thank you for continuing to provide outstanding care to our patients in this unprecedented time.

Dr Tom Davis
Medical Director