COVID-19 Nursing Homes Expert Panel

On foot of a NPHET recommendation, on 23rd May a COVID-19 Expert Panel on Nursing Homes was established, to examine the complex issues surrounding the management of COVID-19 among this particularly vulnerable cohort.

The purpose of the Panel is to examine the national and international responses to the COVID-19 crisis, and to examine the emerging best practice. The main objective of the Panel is to provide immediate real-time learnings and recommendations in light of the expected ongoing impact of COVID-19 over the next 12-18 months. COVID-19 is a new disease, which can present atypically in the frail elderly, and new evidence and best practice in its management are constantly emerging.

Terms of Reference

1. Provide assurance that the national protective public health and other measures adopted to safeguard residents in nursing homes, in light of COVID-19, are appropriate, comprehensive and in line with international guidelines and any lessons learned from Ireland's response to COVID-19 in nursing homes to date;

2. Provide an overview of the international response to COVID-19 in nursing homes utilising a systematic research process;

3. Report to the Minister for Health by end June 2020 in order to provide immediate real-time learnings and recommendations in light of the expected ongoing impact of COVID-19 over the next 12-18 months.

Panel Members

CHAIR: Professor Cecily Kelleher, Principal of the College of Health and Agricultural Sciences at University College Dublin. She is Full Professor of Public Health Medicine & Epidemiology and a Former Dean of Public Health at UCD.

Professor Cillian Twomey graduated in medicine from UCC in 1970 and worked for 31 years as geriatrician in Cork University and St. Finbarr’s Hospitals, Cork. He is a member of the Board of SAGE Advocacy (2017 to date).

Ms. Petrina Donnelly, Group Director of Nursing, RCSI Hospitals Group. Petrina previously spent two years, as Director of Nursing for a Private Healthcare Group, having responsibility as person in charge in opening and operationalising a new state of the art Residential Care Home. This role included setting up approved processes and procedures meeting National Regulatory Standards whilst ensuring a safe and homely environment welcomed residents and staff.

Public Representative Brigid Doherty Brigid worked as a Patient Advocate from 2010 until her retirement, providing direct advocacy support and guidance to individuals who believed they have had an adverse outcome as a result of an experience within the Irish healthcare system.
Consultation

As part of the Expert Panel’s work, it is undertaking rapid consultative processes to engage with a range of stakeholders through various means.

As part of this process the Expert Panel has invited interested parties to participate in a concise, focused engagement process by establishing a public call for written submissions. The consultation process is open until Thursday, 18th June. Details available here:


The purpose of this engagement is to receive input, perspective and experiences in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on nursing homes, with a particular focus on planning further responses with regard to nursing homes over the next 18 months.

Facilitated by HIQA the Panel is also sending a direct invitation to all registered nursing homes to submit a consultation form.

Finally, the Panel is having direct engagements with a number of national organisations to hear their perspectives.