

Mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations for all hospital workers and use of Rapid Antigen Testing to detect COVID-19 infection in hospital workers

POSITION STATEMENT

About SHPA

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is the national professional organisation for more than 5,200 pharmacists, pharmacist interns, students, technicians and associates working across Australia's health system. SHPA is the only professional pharmacy organisation with a strong base of members practising in public and private hospitals and other health services. SHPA members lead Pharmacy Departments and are in leadership and management positions in hospitals across Australia.

Mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations for all hospital workers

SHPA supports mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policies for all hospital workers, regardless of profession, to protect them from contracting COVID-19 and becoming seriously unwell, as well as minimising workforce impacts.

Outbreaks throughout the COVID-19 pandemic across various jurisdictions have included hospitals and health services becoming exposure sites, resulting in cumulatively thousands of hospital workers who have to isolate for 14 days after exposure to a confirmed COVID-19 case, or isolate until a negative test has been returned due to potential exposure.

This has had a significant impact on the hospital system's ability to provide the safe and high quality care Australians are entitled to, whilst expanding capacity to operate state and territory run COVID 19 vaccination clinics.

Unvaccinated hospital workers are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 and having a more serious infection than the vaccinated population. Supporting vaccination in hospital workers will protect themselves, their colleagues and their patients.

Rapid Antigen Testing to detect COVID-19 infection in hospital workers

SHPA supports the use of rapid antigen testing for hospital workers upon entering hospital premises in jurisdictions where COVID-19 is circulating in the community

Phase D of the [National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response](#) indicates COVID 19 will be present in the community. Whilst the risk of infection is reduced amongst vaccinated people, it is not eliminated, and people may be COVID-19 positive despite being asymptomatic.

Thus, in communities where COVID-19 is present, rapid antigen testing will assist with detecting unknown COVID-19 infection in hospital workers and presents another intervention hospitals can use to maintain patient safety, protect their staff and minimise impacts to their hospital operations to ensure continuity of high quality and safe care.

Given the possibility of false negatives and false positives from rapid antigen testing, its use is likely to be of negligible benefit in an environment where COVID-19 is not present.

Development of SHPA position

SHPA's position has been developed in consultation with its leading members, including the Board of Directors, Director of Pharmacy/Chief Pharmacist members, Branch Committee members and Specialty Practice Leadership Committee members.

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