18th March 2020

The Editor

The Irish Times Building

24-28 Tara Street

Dublin 2

Dear Editor,

We the undersigned, representing a broad cross section of the dental profession, have been forced to write this public letter as a matter of absolute urgency. This follows the extremely troubling, and indeed dangerous, advice we have received as a profession from the Chief Dental Officer of the Department of Health.

In correspondence from the Chief Dental officer dated 16th March we are “advised that dental practices can remain open and there is currently no need for change in practice.” In the same correspondence we are also informed we do “not need to avoid certain procedures.”

The procedures that would particularly concern us are those that generate aerosol spray, which effectively include most procedures carried out in dentistry. These have the potential to expose all patients and dental workers to significant risk of contracting COVID-19. Aerosol generating procedures are accepted as being the highest risk procedure to carry out in a patient affected by COVID-19, and the personal protection equipment (PPE) requirements are far in excess of those available in the typical dental setting.

Nevertheless the Chief Dental Officer advises us that “If a patient is asymptomatic the evidence is that aerosol equipment can be safely used in dental practice, as long as they are adhering to the Dental Council codes of practice.” There is in fact no such evidence whatsoever, as this is a novel virus. The very mechanism of transmission is still being debated.

Even more troubling, the evidence base is rapidly growing that asymptomatic transmission is not only possible, but likely. The statement made by the Chief Dental Officer in this regard is frankly reckless beyond belief. It endangers all patients, dental workers and our wider society, as dentistry could potentially end up a substantial route of transmission of this virus.

In contrast the HSE has in fact moved (correctly) to an entirely different protocol, with all their public clinics and hospital units ceasing all elective procedures. They are treating only the most urgent emergencies, and their dentists are advised to keep aerosol generating procedures to an absolute minimum.

Fortunately the vast majority of private dental practices have voluntarily suspended all elective procedures despite huge financial consequences, and are scrambling to upgrade their protective equipment as best they can to allow a very basic emergency service to operate. Many of us will endeavour to try and treat urgent emergencies such as swelling and bleeding to keep those patients out of our hospitals for as long as we can, even if by doing so we place ourselves in harm’s way. However some practices continue to operate as normal, reassured by the flawed advice we have received.

We need our Chief Dental Officer to step up and act decisively. Her advice is at complete variance with that from almost every other jurisdiction. Elective dental procedures must stop. Otherwise even more lives in our vulnerable and elderly populations in particular will be lost.

Yours faithfully,

Abigail Moore

Adrian Dillon

Adrian Loomes

Advan Moorthy

Ahmed kahatab

Aidan Burke

Aifric Ní Chaollaí

Aileen Louise Logue

Áine O’Sullivan

Aisling Cant

Aisling Donnelly

Aisling Lalor

Aislinn Machesney

Alaa Aljibouri

Alec Granville

Aleena Bhatti

Alexandra Nolan

Alison Browne

Alison Ryan

Alma Creaven

Ambrish Roshan

Ameerah Fakim

Amita Bhagwat

Anita Coleman

Ann Griffin

Ann Marie Julian

Anna Stuckenberg

Anne Elliott

Annette O’Donovan

Annie Hughes

Aodh Mac Gráinne

Aoibheann Wall

Aoife Diggin

Aoife Egan

Aoife Farrell

Aoife Flanagan

Aoife Healy

Aoife Kearney

Aoife O'Malley

Aoife O'Neill

Aoife Woods

Apryl O Halloran

Audrey Dore Geraghty

Aysha Akbar Khan

Barry Comer

Barry Patton

Bebhinn Kelleher

Brega Howley

Brian Corcoran

Brian Martin

Brian McCabe

Brian O Sullivan

Caitriona Begley

Caitriona Howley

Caitriona Kieran

Camille Ní Argáin

Caoimhe Fitzgibbon

Caoimhe Gibbons

Caoimhe O' Shea

Carla Hayes

Cathal Heavey

Cathal Mangan

Catherine Eager

Catherine Houlihan

Catherine Mc Dermott

Catherine McKinley

Catherine Vaughan

Cathy Clyne

Charlotte Mc Carra

Chloe Kelly

Chloe O’Beirne

Christine Smith

Cían Henry

Cían Lambert

Ciara Carroll

Ciara Cronin

Ciara Sweeney

Ciarán Devine

Ciaran Ryan

Claire Higgins

Claire O Keeffe

Claire O’Sullivan

Cliona O' Brien

Clodagh Cusack

Clodagh McMorrow

Colm Mac Cormaic

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Daniel Collins

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Dara Reynolds

Darryl Barry

Darshini Ramasubbu

David Cronin

David Finnegan

David Keenan

David Kelly

David Vard

Davina Graham

Dearbhla Ryan

Deborah O’Reilly

Declan Fuller

Deirdre Browne

Deirdre Coffey

Deirdre Coghlan

Deirdre O’Dwyer

Deirdre Toomey

Denise Bowe

Dervla Leavy

Diarmuid Twomey

Donal Carroll

Donnchadh O Morain

Dympna Reynolds

Eamon Nugent

Edel Woods

Edward OReilly

Edwina Meade

Eibhlín O'Leary

Eimear McEniff

Eithne Coyne

Elise O’Callaghan

Elizabeth Boland

Elizabeth Walsh

Elizabeth-Ann Ryan

Ellen Healy

Elzbieta Timmons

Emer Farrell

Emer Morgan

Emma McAleese

Emma Rose McMahon

Enea Nastri

Eoin Mills

Eoin Ó Móráin

Eoin O’Neill

Evelyn Crowley

Fergus Somers

Fernanda Mesquita

Fiachra Maher

Fiona Counihan

Fiona Crotty

Fiona O’Leary

Francesca Pili

Frank Rowe

Gavin Fitzgerald

Gavin Nugent

Geraldine Murray

Geraldine Tobin

Gerard Cuddy

Gillian Sherlock

Gillian Smith

Grace Daly

Greg Creavin

Gregg Barry

Hamna Maheen

Hannah Granville

Helen Walsh

Helen-Marie Lane

Henry Kaye

Ian Danaher

Ian Reynolds

Íomar Kearney

Jacqueline Clune

Jacqueline O'Brien

James Flood

James Morgan

James Tiernan

Jamie Cummins.

Janet Power

Jason Owens

Jennie Waldron

Jennifer Huston

Jennifer Kearney

Jennifer Maguire

Jenny Cotter

Jessica Rice

Jill Marshall

Jill McTernan

Joanne Devereux

Joe Durkan

John Ahern

John Burke

John Seward

Jolene Molloy

Joseph Mahon

Joyce Woods

Judy O’Meara

Kaelan O’ Shea

Karl Cassidy

Kate Ferron

Katie Gleeson

Katie O’Connor

Katie Reynolds

Keith Redmond

Kellie McConnell

Kevin O’Boyle

Kieran Daly

Kirsten FitzGerald

Laura Darby

Laura Fee

Laura Houlihan

Laura Mcatarsney

Lauren Mc Hugh

Leila Kingston

Liam Kane

Lian O'Dwyer

Linda Phelan

Lisa Boland

Lisa Lucey

Lisa Rawle

Lorna Mohan

Lucy O Hare

Lynda Elliott

Maeve O’Toole

Maher Kemmoona

Mairead O’Connor

Mar Cotter

Marc Sweeney

Margaret Tuite

Marian Mullane

Marie Nunan

Marie O’Neill

Marie Sanfey

Mark Condon

Mark Kelly

Mark McLaughlin

Martha Dempsey

Mary Freda Howley

Mary Gormley

Mary O Regan

Mary Reddy

Matthew Conway

Matthew Crinion

Mazin Mohamed

Meabh O’Brien

Meriem Abbas

Michael Hayes

Michael O’Halloran

Michael Quinlivan

Micheál McAuliffe

Michele Lynch

Michelle Connolly

Michelle Kenneally

Michelle ONeill

Miriam Bourke

Mollie Gallagher

Mollie-Ann Gallagher

Muriel Mulhaire

Mustafa Ahmad

Naoishe Gorham

Naomi Richardson

Neil Tully

Niall Cronin

Niall Vallely

Niamh Boyle

Niamh Molloy

Niamh Moore

Niamh Murtagh

Niamh Roe

Niamh Scanlon

Nicole Morgan

Nicolette Ravenscroft

Norma Kelleher

Norrie Moloney

Olivia Hanley

Olivia McGowan

Omar El Baradie

Orla Dunford

Orla Malone

Orla McGeary

Orla McPhillips

Pádraig Twomey

Pat Barry

Patrick O Connor

Paul Creaven

Paul Kielty

Paul Murphy

Paul O’Reilly

Piermichele Antonino

Rachel Birt

Raluca Dana Lica

Rawan Kahatab

Ray power

Rebecca Hogan Doyle

Rebecca Ngo

Regina Murphy

Richard Flynn

Richard Hannon

Richard Lee Kin

Riona Gorman

Robert Gleeson

Robyn Crowley

Rod Crichton

Róisín Brady

Roisin Meade

Ronan Allen

Rory Boyd

Rosin Brady

Ruaa Elhelali

Ruth Stokes

Sarah Behsangar

Sarah Kate Quinlivan

Sarah Mannion

Sarah Morrissey

Sarah Rymer

Seamus Ryan

Seosamh O’hUallachain

Shane Byrne

Shane Curran

Shane Duffy

Shawn Shelley

Sheila Galvin

Síle Lennon

Sinéad Barlow

Sinéad Emily O’Brien

Siobhan Coakley

Siobhan McGowan

Siobhan McMorrow

Sonya Williams

Susan O’Brien

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Susan O’Loughlin

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