



The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

25 September 2020

Sent by email

Dear Prime Minister,

Definitions of Aerosol Generating Procedures

We write as the newly formed AGP Alliance, which brings together Royal Colleges, trade unions and professional bodies from across the health and care sector to call for an urgent review of the definition of Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGPs) involving the upper airways and gastrointestinal tract for the purposes of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). We strongly believe that current government guidance does not reflect the best available evidence on AGP and leaves health and care professionals, their patients and colleagues at increased risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Currently, a range of procedures, including the fitting of naso-gastric tubes and retention devices for drainage or feeding, assessment of safe swallowing, chest physiotherapy, cardiopulmonary resuscitation and associated procedures linked to advanced airway management particularly in the out of hospital environment, and gastrointestinal physiology investigations amongst others, are wrongly excluded from the list of AGPs in government guidance. This is despite the fact that they require close physical contact with patients (within one metre) for prolonged periods of time and induce coughing and sneezing. As a consequence, health services are not required to provide staff undertaking these procedures with full PPE including

disposable fluid repellent gowns, filtering face piece class 3 (FFP3) respirators and face shields.

There is substantial evidence that as part of these procedures, coughing and sneezing generate aerosols with significant viral load, creating a higher risk of transmission of COVID-19, which itself causes profuse coughing.

The current guidance from Government (Health Protection Scotland, PHE, NERVTAG) makes much of the distinction between droplet and aerosol generation as determinants of PPE level, but instead uses poor quality transmission studies to determine AGP status. It also ignores the huge weight of professional experience and expert opinion from during the COVID-19 pandemic that such procedures significantly increase transmission risk. A number of our members have already been forced to issue independent guidance to their members that contradicts Government advice and defines these procedures as AGP.

We have repeatedly asked Ministers and Department of Health officials to review this guidance and explain how and by whom decisions on AGP have been made. We have received an insufficient response, and have been unable to challenge the evidence behind the decision with the scientists or civil servants responsible. **The most recent review of AGP guidance, updated 16 September 2020, indicates that no new evidence has been considered, despite the wealth of evidence submitted by our members.**

As we head into the autumn and winter months, the health and care professionals we represent will be gearing up to respond to the second wave of COVID-19 cases. It is vitally important that they are able to do so as safely as possible. We would ask you to personally intervene to instigate an urgent review of AGP and provide transparency on how such guidance is determined. At the very least, the precautionary principle should be used and all healthcare professionals provided with appropriate PPE where there is any reasonable chance that a procedure is aerosol generating.

There is more detail in the enclosed position statement and we would be happy to brief a member of your team further if this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry Jones', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Barry Jones BSc, MBBS, MD, FRCP
Chair, AGP Alliance

British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition
Dr Trevor Smith
President

British Association of Stroke Physicians

Professor Rustam Al-Shahi Salman
President

British Dietetic Association

Andy Burnham
Chief Executive

British Society of Gastroenterology

Professor Ramesh Arasaradnam
Executive Officer

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

Natalie Beswetherick OBE MCSP MBA FCSP
Director of Practice & Development

College of Paramedics

Tracy Nicholls
Chief Executive
Professor Julia Williams
Head of Research and Development

Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association

Dr Claudia Paoloni
President

National Nurses Nutrition Group

Claire Campbell RGN
Chair

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

Kamini Gadhok MBE
Chief Executive

Unison

Unite the Union

Steve Thompson
Unite Executive Council member for the health sector
Frances Ridgway
Chair, SLT Organising Professional Committee

cc:

The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
NERVTAG & AGP Panel

Please reply to:

b.j.m.j@btinternet.com & a.burman@bda.uk.com & kamini.gadhok@rcslt.org

Enc.