Public Questions

Public Question 1 - Bill Parker
Public Question 2 - Susan Rowlands
Dear Mr Parker

Thank you for your email of 20 May 2020, relating to Hywel Dda University Health Board’s procedure for monitoring patients in the community who have tested positive for COVID-19.

Where a patient tests positive for COVID-19, they are advised to self-isolate, along with members of their household, and self-monitor their symptoms. Should their symptoms of coughing, breathlessness or a fever deteriorate, they are advised to seek advice from their own General Practitioner or, 111 outside of working hours, who can assess the patient and admit the patient for acute hospital care, should it be required. If their symptoms have deteriorated to a level that requires emergency attention, 999 should be called.

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and in anticipation of a large number of patients presenting to our hospitals with symptoms of COVID-19, innovative opportunities were explored to allow the Health Board to optimise acute bed availability through the remote monitoring of COVID-19 positive and symptomatic patients on a ‘virtual ward’ in the community.

In line with our Health and Care Strategy, the 24/7 intermediate care community pathway in Carmarthenshire has been enhanced, funded by the Transformation Fund. The ‘virtual ward’ medical leads for the intermediate care community pathway, along with consultant physician colleagues in the acute hospital, determined the patient criteria for admission to the ‘virtual ward’, along with clear care management pathways.

Care and treatment is overseen by the intermediate care medical leads, in collaboration and agreement with the patient’s own GP, until such time that the patient is stable and well enough to be discharged from the ‘virtual ward’.

The virtual ward accepts referrals of COVID-19 positive patients who are being discharged from hospital and require ongoing oximetry monitoring. These patients will be identified by their hospital consultant and provided with a pulse oximeter, which measures the blood oxygen level.
The patient will then be contacted at an agreed frequency for an agreed period of time. The patient is also able to directly contact the doctor should they feel unwell or feel that they are deteriorating.

Additionally, GPs can refer COVID-19 positive, symptomatic patients, who they feel would benefit from additional monitoring, but are not severe enough to require acute hospital care. The patients will be monitored in the same manner and should the need for admission or re-admission of any of the patients arise, this will be arranged by the virtual ward.

The Health Board is evaluating this pilot and at that point will consider whether it should be expanded into Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion.

It is important to note that not all patients who test positive require hospital treatment. The Health Board encourages anyone who believes their symptoms are deteriorating, and they require further medical assistance, to contact their GP for assessment.

I trust this provides you with the information you were seeking.

Yours sincerely

Steve Moore
Chief Executive
Dear Susan

Re: Field Hospitals

Thank you for your email dated 10 May 2020, regarding the ongoing use of the established field hospitals, which was received via the Board Secretary.

Hywel Dda University Health Board had early discussions about how it might use its own field hospital capacity on a regional basis. However, a National group has since been formed, which is coordinating discussions on how the facilities may be used regionally. Consideration is also being given to a medium term plan, given that a number of the sites are only available temporarily.

The Health Board is continuing to review the modelling data and its own local experience to assess what the field hospital requirements may be as we go forward.

Please be assured that we appreciate your suggestion and that the National team managing this area of work will be looking at the opportunities for all of the facilities that have been developed.

Yours sincerely

Steve Moore
Chief Executive