

MOH, 2020d



COVID  
+ influenza  
29 March 2020

## Sadly, first death from COVID-19 in New Zealand

### Media release

29 March 2020

Sadly, New Zealand had its first death linked to COVID-19 on the West Coast early this morning.

The death was in a woman in her seventies who had initially been admitted four days ago with what was thought to be influenza complicated by a underlying chronic health condition.

As we have seen around the world, COVID-19 can be a deadly disease – particularly for elderly people, and those with underlying pre-existing health issues.

All of our thoughts are with the woman's family and loved ones at this time.

As a result of the initial diagnosis of influenza and then the subsequent confirmation of COVID-19 there was a period when staff treating the woman were using protective equipment suitable for influenza, but not COVID-19.

Once the diagnosis was confirmed staff took a range of measures to protect themselves and other patients, however as a precautionary approach, the DHB has placed 21 staff in self-isolation for the balance of 14 days from their last involvement in the patient's care.

Family members visiting the woman in hospital, who do not have symptoms, will also be in monitored self-isolation for the next 14 days.

Understandably, the family would like to take time to grieve, and they have asked for the media to respect their privacy.

Our health system will continue to do everything it can to help patients with COVID-19.

We have sufficient hospital capacity to manage our current and projected cases and we have plans in place to boost capacity – if needed.

This latest sad news reinforces the importance of our move to Alert Level Four, and the measures we are all taking to limit spread, break the chain of transmission and prevent deaths.

There were also 63 new cases of COVID-19 in New Zealand made up of 60 new confirmed cases and 3 probable cases. This is as at 9.00 am this morning.

There are 56 individuals that we can confirm have recovered.

We have nine people in hospital with COVID-19. There are 3 in Wellington Regional Hospital, 1 in Wairau Hospital (Blenheim), 1 in Nelson Hospital, 1 in Whangarei Hospital and 1 each in Waikato, Taranaki and Dunedin hospitals.

We have one person in ICU on a ventilator. For privacy reasons we won't be providing other details on these patients.

Our laboratories are working to process and report test results as quickly as possible. Taken over a seven-day period, our average daily test number is 1786.

Anyone who has been tested is expected to be in strict self-isolation until advised of the result of their test – that means effectively quarantining themselves from other members of their family.

We are still seeing a strong link to overseas travel, as well as links to confirmed cases.

Along with a number of clusters currently under investigation we are also investigating a cluster of cases, nine to date, in the Waikato town of Matamata

The combined total of confirmed and probable cases in New Zealand is 514.

So again, a reminder that we are seeking physical separation not social separation, so be supportive, reach out to people and most importantly be kind.

As Capital and Coast Intensive Care Specialist Dr Paul Young said today in the media: '...if New Zealand pulls together as a community and stays at home ... you will save more lives than I will in my entire career.'

## Media contact

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