

## **Academy Statement Regarding Covid-19**

While small in number within the entire healthcare system the impact of the work of Medical Scientists in this global crisis has been central to the diagnosis and management of patients and to helping to curtail the spread of the disease.

The Academy is proud of the proactive and professional way its Fellows, Members and all scientists working in clinical laboratories have responded to the challenge that Covid-19 brings.

The Academy is here to support the Department of Health, The HSE and the National Pathology Programme in their efforts to identify and treat all our people infected with this virus efforts which include procurement of testing reagents and instruments on an ongoing basis.

### **Developing and delivering testing capacity.**

The speed with which our laboratories have prepared to deliver testing has been impressive by any standards. This was spearheaded by the staff in the NVRL who, having acquired the sequence of the virus, used this to develop and validate 'in house' assays in advance of the arrival of any commercial diagnostic kits. They have played a vital role in the early detection of cases. They have been rapidly followed by the major centres of Cork, Galway, Limerick, Letterkenny and Waterford while in Dublin The Mater, St James, St Vincents, Tallaght, Rotunda and Beaumont are either delivering or expected to deliver analysis by the end of this week. Other hospitals are also seeking to introduce laboratory diagnostic testing.

### **Blood gas analysis is also important in patient management**

Patients with Covid-19 infection develop interstitial pneumonia. Blood gas analysis is important in their management. The HSE together with the National Pathology Programme is procuring additional blood gas analysers and an Academy Point of Care Advisory Team have coordinated a guide for their rapid verification prior to release.

### **Routine laboratory service needs to continue for all patients, whatever the illness**

While most emphasis has been on the development of Covid testing capacity and the other diagnostics relating to acute respiratory illness the routine laboratory services have a vital role to play in the management of this disease also through providing many important tests used in patient management.

### **Challenges**

We all face the challenge of delivering a quality diagnostic service to support these patients and the other patients of our hospitals. This may involve redeployment of scientists from other disciplines and those with more office based roles back to the frontline at the bench. This virus does not sleep and so we may need to provide extended service over extended hours during this crisis time.

The Academy has compiled, is updating regularly and requests further input for its database of retired Medical Scientists willing to return to help, in addition to a database of other scientists and laboratory aides willing to give their service (mail@acslm.ie). The Academy is also seeking to arrange

that the graduate class of 2020 can enter the workforce now and complete their studies when the crisis is over.

### **Professional and Ethical Concerns**

The Chair, and the CEO, of CORU have contacted each registrant acknowledging and appreciating their role at this unprecedented time. They encourage you to follow the guidance of the code of professional conduct and ethics and the information available on the HSE website.

The Chair of the Medical Scientists Registration Board issued the following to all Medical Scientists via the laboratory managers on Monday:

*'As chair of the Medical Scientists Registration Board I wish that you would convey to all your staff my admiration and appreciation for the way they have stepped up in this crisis. I am so proud of all of you, keep up the good work and stay safe.'*