NEWS

Covid-19: roundup of latest news

Gareth Iacobucci

The BMJ

A&E departments lack proper isolation facilities, senior medic warns

The vast majority of NHS emergency departments in England don't have adequate isolation facilities for containing the spread of infectious diseases such as covid-19, one of the country's most senior emergency doctors told *The BMJ*. Chris Moulton, consultant in emergency medicine at the Royal Bolton Hospital and former vice president of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine, said he had visited and observed around 80 emergency departments in his current role as joint emergency medicine lead for the NHS's Getting it Right First Time (GIRFT) programme. He said, "I don't think I've seen a department that has a proper isolation cubicle with an anteroom where you can get changed, wash your hands, and then go into the main cubicle. We've been very lax on this." (For longer story see doi:10.1136/bmj.m953)

GP surgeries closed after because staff tested positive

The decision to close two general practice surgeries in Devon for almost two weeks was taken after practice staff tested positive for the virus that causes covid-19, *The BMJ* learnt. On 4 March Chelston Hall Surgery and its branch site Barton Surgery in Torquay said that they would be closed until at least 16 March to help "contain the spread" of the virus after advice from Public Health England. A spokesperson for NHS England and NHS Improvement told *The BMJ*, "The practice has closed after two further positive cases of coronavirus were confirmed among staff, meaning that all staff have been advised by Public Health England to self-isolate for 14 days." (doi:10.1136/bmj.m936)

Watchdog pledges to act against "rip-off" protective equipment

The Competition and Markets Authority pledged to act against any company deemed to be exploiting the covid-19 outbreak. The watchdog said it would consider any evidence that companies may have breached competition or consumer protection law, "for example, by charging excessive prices or making misleading claims about the efficacy of protective equipment." The authority vowed to take direct enforcement action if necessary and said it would assess whether to advise the government to consider regulating prices.

NHS seeks to guard against spread of "fake news"

The NHS in England said it was working with search engines and social media companies to help combat the dissemination of "fake news" about covid-19. Google has agreed to point people to verified NHS guidance first when someone types in "coronavirus treatments" or "coronavirus symptoms." The NHS has also worked with Twitter to suspend a false account posing as a hospital and putting out inaccurate information about the number of coronavirus cases. And it is working with Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to verify more than 800 accounts belonging to NHS organisations.