

COVID-19 Impacts on Healthcare Providers and Support Staff

As the World Health Organization stated this week, our healthcare providers are “modern heroes in an unexpected war against a difficult enemy. In the near future, they will have no choice. They will have to follow the same rules that health-care workers are left with in conflict and disaster zones.” The contrast is that in conflict zones we do not send members in without protective gear and the resources for a war, but that is exactly what we are asking of our colleagues: inadequate testing, inadequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), inadequate hygiene (water or alcohol), inadequate treatment capabilities (hospital beds, ICU beds, ventilators).

The entire health system needs to assure HCP are protected and safe during COVID-19, not only to prevent infection spread, but to prevent their infections. When healthcare providers are infected, they not only can contaminate others, but they will be out of service, creating greater difficulties and shortages of skilled labour. In China 3300 HCP were infected and 22 died. To date 20% of healthcare provider in Italy have been infected. Healthcare provider in Low- and Middle-Income Countries often work without formal employment contracts. If quarantined they will not work and will not receive remuneration.

Governments and their ministries of health must implement strategies that ensure the well-being of their healthcare provider during this COVID-19 crisis (and beyond). Health care workers also provide care for family members, children, siblings and parents. Providers have turned to social media to identify new means of obtaining or producing PPE (#findmePPE). In some cases, these are viable options from companies that have legitimate equipment.

Research has shown that healthcare provider should NOT use cloth masks, but faced with no alternative they are being used broadly. Healthcare providers are reusing PPE, rinsing PPE, and using less effective protection when superior means are needed.

The Centers for Disease Control outlines the [steps to consider when resources are limited](#).

[WHO recommendations](#) say to not reuse single use masks, which has been found to be impossible in the current resource-limited settings.

About FIGO

FIGO is a professional organisation that brings together obstetrical and gynecological associations from all over the world.

FIGO's vision is that women of the world achieve the highest possible standards of physical, mental, reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing throughout their lives. We lead on global programme activities, with a particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia.

FIGO advocates on a global stage, especially in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pertaining to reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and non-communicable diseases (SDG3). We also work to raise the status of women and enable

their active participation to achieve their reproductive and sexual rights, including addressing FGM and gender based violence (SDG5).

We also provide education and training for our Member Societies and build capacities of those from low-resource countries through strengthening leadership, good practice and promotion of policy dialogues.

FIGO is in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) and a consultative status with the United Nations (UN).