



Date: 20. 3. 2020

EQUIP STATEMENT FOR FAMILY DOCTORS/GENERAL PRACTITIONERS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMICS

Dear members of EQUIP, dear family doctors of Europe!

In the past weeks, we have been dealing with the largest crisis in the last 100 years. Family doctors and their teams found themselves in the first frontlines and their safety has been endangered. In many countries, they were left to act on their own, without clear guidelines from their governments.

We wish to express our solidarity with the 120,000 family doctors and their teams in Europe during this difficult time of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Many doctors and their teams are exhausted by their additional workloads and clinical pressures, pressures that are different than their normal way of working with patients and making clinical decisions. Many family doctors are doing telephone triage, telephone consultations and clinical risk management in a different way. This generates new challenges and new risks to medical practice. Patients who are not so accustomed to waiting for assessment have to get used to the fact that this will be the norm in healthcare for the foreseeable future. This can increase patient anxiety and worry.

Some doctors and health care workers have died due to their exposure to the coronavirus while treating and assessing patients. Some have died due to lack of personal protective equipment. Our thoughts are with their bereaved families and colleagues.

We wish to share our opinion with our family doctors colleagues and their teams throughout Europe that professional health and safety is as much a priority as patient safety.

We appreciate how patients have helped family doctors and their teams by reducing the demands on family medicine in recent weeks. We will try to continue to be creative in how we can meet the medical needs of our patients in the coming weeks.

We urge all family doctors and their teams in Europe to:

1. **Stay informed** from reliable professional sources. Avoid information from doubtful resources, such as social media. Turn to professional sites such as WHO, CDC, ECDC etc.
2. **Stay safe.** The safety of health professionals at work is equal priority as safety of patients. Health professionals can get infected in their community, and if health professionals work with patients without personal protective equipment and infection control they will be infected at work. Demand personal protective equipment from your governments.
3. **Stay connected.** Nurture your families and your loved ones. Use telephones, mobiles and social media to keep connected, to give and receive support. Watch out for colleagues who may be at risk of professional isolation or burnout phenomenon as a result of chronic intensive stress at work.
4. **Share positive, happy experiences.** Keep a sense of humour, use exercise, music, art and literature to boost natural psychological defences. Share examples of humanity, altruism and special moments. Superheroes are everywhere, they are the people in the public implementing the official guidance on safe human interactions and they are not putting others at risk. There are Superheroes in family medicine also.

“Ní neart gur cur le chéile”, is Irish for “There is no strength until we come together”.