

Blog: 30/08/21

Well, we knew another lockdown was on the cards especially with the Delta variant of COVID taking over around the world as the dominant strain, but who would have guessed so soon, or so fast?

Now two weeks into it, there is much more uncertainty than April 2020, many more infected and many more locations of potential spread.

Given the genomics traced the outbreak to a woman who rushed back to NZ after Sydney went into Lockdown, who already had COVID - so went into quarantine at the Crown Plaza. She was transferred from the Crown Plaza, initially to the Jet Park on August 2nd and then onto Middlemore Hospital. The first person to come forward for swabbing [on the 12th August] was the Devonport tradie who had been in Coromandel township for the weekend. This means there was a lot of hidden community transmission from 2nd to the 12th August. Other people must have been sick over this time but not swabbed. Some of this would have been because there is more asymptomatic transmission: that is, where someone doesn't have symptoms but still has the virus and is passing it on.

With Delta it is maybe 1:10 vaccinated people who can do this, and some who haven't been vaccinated at all but have very mild symptoms can do it too. Some spread unfortunately would have been caused by our increasing sense of complacency. Simply too many people did not go for a swab when they had symptoms, putting it down to 'just a cold'. We do know that covid starts with these non-specific symptoms; runny nose, cough, scratchy throat, headaches, fatigue, loss of taste and smell. It's the second week covid gets far more serious [and this is that week for a number of our quarantined cases so expect to see a sharp rise in hospital admissions and moves into Intensive Care Units – also known as High Dependency Units]. That's when the clots clog the lungs and the 'covid storm', the immune system in overdrive, start. Thankfully we have learnt a lot from those who have suffered overseas in the past 18 months and we can manage it better.

That window of opportunity was all Delta needed to spread widely, and getting into the younger population who move more around the community and go to bigger crowded venues as well as getting into our South Auckland church groups where poor housing, limited bathroom /toilet access and overcrowding facilitate the spread and has increased numbers significantly. Most of us had just got slack about checking into our Covid App at sites or even physically signing in when we visited too - which hasn't helped find the links in that critical 10 days of early August.

Towards the end of last week we're seeing the number of people seeking a covid swab drop and with levelling off of new cases plus the drop today Monday (which I hope doesn't just represent less places open on a Sunday to swab), maybe we are over the hump and the number of new cases will drop slowly. If so praise be! It could be a

long tail, like take 4-6 weeks before we get back to non-new community cases but that's to be expected after such a big incursion into the community. As long as those cases are traceable known contacts. Thankfully this virus has those typos every 5 cases on average which makes it easier to check this.

I keep saying eventually I will have something else to talk about other than COVID. I do. Over the past year we have experimented with being able to order 10 minute or 20 minute appointments. It has been a disaster as all of you who have had to wait for longer and longer for your booked appointment.

We have gone back to 15 minute booking slots though you can still book a double appointment if you have something complex or more than one main issue to discuss. It was disaster as sometimes what patients thought was just a minor issue [fatigue and headaches fall into this category] needs careful history taking and examination if we are not going to miss the albeit rare but serious cause. Other times people booked a short consultation designed for one problem and brought in a list. As a result our fees will adjust at the end of lockdown to the longer consultation time again but it will be fairer and improve waiting times.

Please, if paying for consults is a problem and we know these times are tough, talk with us about it as we set up APs paying off small but regular amounts, and sometimes we can access programs designed to help the hospital avoid seeing patients that can be managed by us much more cheaply than hospital appointments and admissions cost!

Be well and be safe, Jacqueline and this hardworking, fantastic, professional team at Tiakina Te Ora.