

28 May 2020

Dear colleagues,

SHIELDING ISSUE AFFECTING SOME RHEUMATOLOGY PATIENTS

I wanted to make you aware that there has been an error during the national identification process for some rheumatology patients who were advised to shield as they were being treated with a biologic.

It was originally believed that the patients concerned were at very high risk from illness from coronavirus because of the biologic prescribed. Further analysis should have been carried out to identify if the patients were taking any other medications, or had other comorbidities which would in combination with the biologic medication significantly increase the risk of infection. Due to miscommunication, this further analysis was not carried out.

A rigorous process has now been completed with input from NHSGGC clinicians, and others, to complete appropriate checks to ensure accurate identification of the group of patients who now **do not need to shield**. The intention is that the Scottish Government will write to these patients apologising. A copy of the letter is attached. **We understand that the letter to patients will be issued from today**. The issue affects patients attending rheumatology at Glasgow Royal Infirmary and Stobhill Hospital.

Should any of the patients attend any of our services I wanted to alert you to the fact that the shielding alert/code on the acute TrakCare system has already have been removed. The code in GP information systems has not been removed and we are in discussions with Scottish Government about how to manage this issue. Patients affected may contact you or their rheumatology team directly over the next few days. As always, GPs know their patients best and so on balance, if you or their rheumatologist feel that the patient should continue to shield, you or the rheumatology team can add the patient to the shielding register again by supplying their CHI to COVIDShielding@ggc.scot.nhs.uk For those rheumatology patients who do not receive such a letter and are concerned by media coverage, please reassure them that they should continue to shield.

I'm very grateful to practices for all that you are doing at this time. I appreciate that shielding is an immensely complex, time-consuming and anxiety-provoking activity and that this issue will result in confusion for some patients and additional work for practices. If you have any enquiries about this matter then please contact the COVID Shielding Team mail box COVIDShielding@ggc.scot.nhs.uk in the first instance.

Please stay safe.

Yours faithfully,

John

John O'Dowd

Clinical Director

On behalf of the NHSGGC COVID Shielding Group

Enc CMO letter to selected rheumatology patients who no longer need to shield (embargoed)