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AMA DEMANDS P2 OR N95 MASK MANDATE

The AMA today demanded that healthcare workers treating known, or likely COVID-19 patients, must be provided with P2 or N95 particulate filter respirator masks, rather than standard surgical masks.

AMA Federal President, Dr Omar Khorshid, demanded the mandated use of filter respirator masks for COVID-19 patient care, in response to guidelines issued today recommending filter respirator masks in areas of community transmission for care of patients with challenging behaviours only.

“The Infection Control Expert Group’s new advice to clinicians is P2 or N95 masks are not mandatory for all COVID-19 patient care,” Dr Khorshid said.

“The guidelines infer a surgical mask is sufficient for doctors and nurses working with patients who likely have the virus, unless those patient’s demonstrate challenging behaviours.

“A surgical mask works to protect a patient.

“Surgical masks are not designed to shield the clinician from illness.

“P2 or N95 masks filter and best prevent virus transmission. If a doctor or nurse is caring for a patient with, or likely to have, COVID-19, P2 or N95 masks are essential, regardless of the presence of potential challenging behaviours.

“The revised guidelines on use of masks by healthcare workers in areas of COVID-19 community transmission do not assure sufficient clinician safety.”

In calling on the Infection Control Expert Group to strengthen its mask guidance for COVID-19 patient care, Dr Khorshid also called for greater effort to assure healthcare worker safety.

“Governments must commit to zero healthcare worker deaths. Doing so requires sufficient supply of appropriate personal protective equipment,” Dr Khorshid said.

“It may be that supply constraints of P2 or N95 masks is behind the reason to not mandate their use in COVID-19 patient care.

“Supply constraint can not be an excuse when it comes to healthcare worker safety. The right type of personal protective equipment for doctors and nurses must be guaranteed at all times.”

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