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Personal protective equipment on the way to general practice in Victoria

General practices in Victoria have started to receive personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect against contracting Influenza A 09 (swine flu) as general practice networks coordinate delivery across Melbourne.

The Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) CEO Mr David Butt said General Practice Victoria (GPV), which is coordinating the release and many general practice networks, had worked through the weekend to ensure practices received the equipment.

"The Network is well placed to deliver PPE to general practice. We talk to our practice members regularly and have the infrastructure to support delivery to practices and to work with them on pandemic planning, which we are now being supported to do," said Mr Butt.

GPV have coordinated an 'order form' for practices through local general practice networks. These orders have been placed with the Commonwealth stockpile and are being filled. Many general practice networks received their equipment during the weekend, others should receive it today (Monday) or tomorrow (Tuesday). PPE will be rolled out as the stockpile is made available.

"We anticipate the bulk of general practice will have their PPE from the stockpile by Tuesday. This process is only happening in flu hotspots around Melbourne because of the higher alert level. That is why the Federal Government released the stockpile last Friday night," Mr Butt said.

AGPN has been commissioned by the Federal Government to roll out pandemic plan development and PPE equipment use in collaboration with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

This training will be coordinated at a state level and will be rolled out across the country in the next four weeks, AGPN chair Dr Emil Djakic said.

"This is important work to ensure we stem the tide of Influenza A 09 (swine flu). This training for general practice will ensure all practices have a pandemic plan in place and are well prepared to help patients and contain the spread of the virus as we deal with the growing number of cases in Australia, along with the traditional winter flu season," Dr Djakic said.

While many practices in the region may have already gone through a process of pandemic planning, this training will be a welcome refresher for practice teams. It will also ensure all practices in the area have the same level of preparedness.

"General practice has an essential role in containing the spread of this disease as many people will present to their GP when they are first feeling unwell. This program will increase the skills of the whole practice team to cope with the long winter ahead," Dr Djakic said.

For media interviews please phone AGPN Communications Manager Frith Rayner on 02 6228 0819 or 0402 267 190