COVID-19 Policy and Disease Management Recommendations in the Post-Pandemic Era

Key Takeaways

With the expiration of national response protocols in the post-pandemic era, the care pathway for patients with COVID-19 has become increasingly unclear and fragmented – especially for those who are high-risk or at-risk.* **A more cohesive and comprehensive care strategy is urgently needed to effectively manage COVID-19 in the post-emergency phase.**

To identify policy recommendations based on best practices for COVID-19 disease management, a comprehensive assessment of the policy landscape in 2023-2024 across select countries, namely Canada, France, Germany, Japan, and Sweden, was completed.

The following recommendations were developed in partnership between members of leading patient and other advocacy organizations representing patient populations at most risk of developing severe COVID-19. Examples of best practices for sustainable policies from our assessment can be found in the accompanying policy paper.

Active Citizenship Network Cittadinanzattiva | ASrid | Cancer Patients Europe | EKPF European Kidney Patients' Federation – Uniting for Kidney Health: Empowering Lives, Enhancing Futures | Global Allergy & Airways Patient Platform | HTaP France | ifa | Japan Federation of Cancer Patient Groups

Summary of Key Takeaways and Policy Recommendations

VACCINATION AND TESTING

Vaccination is a critical tool in preventing and mitigating COVID-19, particularly in vulnerable groups. In a post-pandemic phase, it is important to ensure continued vaccination uptake by providing at-risk populations with timely information and access.

- **National Vaccination Schedule:** Align regional vaccination efforts with a national adult vaccination schedule to improve coordination and uptake.
- **Continued Access:** Ensure all high-risk populations have access to fully covered COVID-19 vaccines and testing.
- **Expanded Vaccinator Roles to Pharmacists and Nurses:** Broaden the authority of pharmacists and nurses to administer vaccines, thus increasing accessibility for vulnerable communities.

CARE GUIDELINES

Health care providers need clear guidelines to manage patients, especially those at higher risk for severe outcomes. These patients depend on coordination from primary physicians and specialists to receive adequate care.

- **Regular Guideline Updates**: Continuously update COVID-19 care guidelines to ensure health care providers have access to the latest evidence and can provide quality care to their patients.

TREATMENT ACCESS

COVID-19 remains an ongoing serious public health priority and a leading cause of death. Antiviral treatments offer protection for high-risk groups at risk of progression to severe COVID-19. However, access barriers remain as treatments are underutilized by patients who need them most.

- **Aligned Reimbursement:** Align treatment reimbursement policies with clinical indications to ensure widespread access to antiviral treatments.
- **Guideline Support**: Collaborate with professional societies to disseminate evidence-based treatment guidelines to health care providers.

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER AND PATIENT COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS

Effective public health communication is crucial to combating COVID-19 fatigue and influencing the behaviors of health care providers and patients. Timely, evidence-based messages from trusted sources educate about risk factors, disease burden, long-term impacts, and current prevention and treatment recommendations. This understanding can shape public health policies focused on prevention and support.

- **Stakeholder Knowledge Sharing and Consensus-Building:** Convene networks of health care providers and patients to create consensus on COVID-19 threats and necessary actions.
- **Seasonal Communications**: Promote integrated communication strategies that include COVID-19 along with influenza in respiratory season to support vaccine uptake.

SURVEILLANCE AND RESEARCH

Surveillance activities are vital for creating evidence-based policies and guiding public health interventions. They help monitor emerging COVID-19 variants and ensure the availability of prevention, diagnosis, and treatment tools. In addition, continued research into COVID's long-term effects can support and inform policies to mitigate the impact of long COVID.

- **Digital Health Infrastructure:** Invest in electronic health records and other digital tools to enhance COVID-19 reporting and tracking.
- **Regular Epidemiological Reporting:** Maintain regular reporting on COVID-19 to inform public health decisions and resource allocation.
- **Long COVID Research**: Increase investment in research on long COVID to understand its impacts and develop supportive policies.

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* High-risk: Individuals who are immunocompromised; At-risk: Individuals with chronic medical conditions that put them at greater risk for progressing to severe COVID-19 and individuals who are in the latter half of life