What we did

Aim
In late March 2020, as lockdown restrictions were first rolling out across Australia, a diverse coalition of peak health bodies came together to focus on clinical care for Australians with COVID-19. A first of its kind, the National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce was convened by Cochrane Australia to provide a trusted voice of cross-disciplinary evidence-based consensus in a time of great uncertainty to develop patient-focused recommendations for rapidly updated clinical guidelines.

Activities
A key challenge for anyone involved in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic is keeping up with the sheer volume of research being published. To continuously monitor and translate this research, the Taskforce employs a dynamic model that uses continuous evidence surveillance systems to identify relevant studies as soon as results are made available.

Evidence teams rapidly incorporate these data into summaries and present these to 16 expert guideline panels that meet weekly to update specific, patient-focused recommendations in ‘living’ COVID-19 Clinical Guidelines.

Collaboration
The National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce is now made up of over 260 leading experts from 32 national peak health organisations including Cochrane Australia, across primary, acute and critical care settings.
What we achieved

As of March 2021, with most lockdown restrictions now lifted and numbers of COVID cases low across Australia, prevention of future outbreaks has become a central focus for policymakers and clinicians.

In September 2020 Australia’s Health Minister announced a new partnership between the Taskforce and the Australian Government’s Infection Control Expert Group (ICEG). This partnership will provide living guidelines on specific infection control issues that are critical to ongoing response of Australia’s health system to the pandemic.

This represents a significant broadening of scope for the Taskforce, and is one of the many significant areas that has challenged Australia’s ability to navigate this global health crisis.

Looking to the future

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