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■ 102 new cases ■ Mary Lou backs tough measures

# MEDICS PLEAD FOR STRICTER QUARANTINE

By **Niamh Griffin, John Lee** and **John Drennan**

THE Government needs to implement stricter quarantine laws urgently to prevent the spread of coronavirus, senior Irish doctors working in the area of infectious diseases have warned.

The call comes as 102 new cases were confirmed last night, bringing the total to 785.

And Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou McDonald, writing in today's Irish Mail on Sunday, has backed the pleas by the experts in virus control, as she warned that the 'fight to slow coronavirus is compromised - fatally perhaps'.

She writes that workers ask 'why it is that, in this race against time, the Government has not yet introduced full measures to protect them, to give full effect to social distancing? They worry

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**EXCLUSIVE**

## PRINCE ANDREW AND THE GREAT EPSTEIN COVER-UP

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# Young must lo

Whole areas must be shut down... as the appeal to keep apart did not get through to some

By **Niamh Griffin**

THE Government needs to urgently put stricter quarantine laws in place to prevent the spread of coronavirus, according to the Irish doctors who are best placed to know of its dangers.

The warning came as medical experts and politicians warned about the shortage of medical staff in our health service, despite the huge response to a plea for retired doctors and nurses, and for emigrants, to come home and help fight the disease.

Dr Eoghan de Barra, of the Infectious Diseases Society, said last night that they supported the Government measures to date but were calling for more stringent measures.

'It is clear to us that the best way to limit the spread of a disease is to limit contact, we certainly support the Government and we will support them if they take things further.'

The Beaumont Hospital consultant suggested new laws to allow whole areas to be shut down if people are gathering there may need to be implemented.

Dr de Barra said: 'It seems around the country the message has not really got through in some sectors. Some parts of society are more sociable but they need to play a role and limit their contacts.'

'I think a lot of people have taken this on board, but this is an issue of equity across generations.'

**'We are seeing an increasing number of health staff affected'**

We are looking for the young to look after the old at this stage.'

He said doing more testing is vital, and stressed: 'I am quite sure we still do not know the full extent of the cases.'

Referring to a report by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre on case numbers, this week, he said: 'We are seeing increasing numbers of healthcare workers who are affected and out of the system, we are seeing concerns over shortages of personal protective equipment and over testing kits. We are concerned.'

Actions taken to limit the spread of any diseases take five to seven days to show an effect, he added.

Meanwhile, experts predict pressure will fall on all healthcare workers not just ICU staff, as the crisis worsens. This is based on the Italian and Chinese experience.

This week, even as about 50,000 volunteers and former medical workers offered to join the HSE in response to the emergency, stark figures emerged about the impact on health workers.

The Health Protection Surveillance Centre said that around a quarter of Irish cases are healthcare workers. Over two-thirds were infected here, including at their workplaces.

In Italy, where another 800 deaths from the virus were reported yesterday, a report published this week showed that 8.3% of cases are health staff, about twice the percentage in China. Professor

Anthony Staines, chair of Health Systems Research at Dublin City University, said: 'It speaks to the generosity of spirit in the health services that so many are coming back. They are needed, the pressure points are everywhere.'

He said health workers are a priority for testing if they show symptoms, but it is taking three to four days for results, during this time they cannot work.

He said: 'You can't do surgery from your kitchen table. Nurses will be out, so everybody else is correspondingly busier.' Ventilators are vital to keep critically ill patients alive as coronavirus brings on a severe type of pneumonia.

Prof. Staines said it's not just about having enough machines but training more doctors to know when and how to put a sick person on a ventilator. He added: 'It is far from obvious how to best ventilate someone, that is a specialised skill.' And

he was shocked this week to read that Italian doctors are now ventilating two patients per machine, which is unheard of in everyday medicine.

He said: 'The rise in positive tests we see in Ireland was predicted. In Korea they were seeing 300 to 400

positives a day, now that is at 50 to 60. The number of new cases is falling and that is where we need to be. It's Mother's Day today, if you love them then please don't visit them.'

Fine Gael TD for Cork Colm Bourke, previously the party's Seanad spokesman on health said:

'Retired nurses would have a lot of skills, they would back up the nurses on the frontline. We will need more health assistants. This isn't just about medical needs.'

Mr Bourke said that an influx of patients means beds must be made and changed, trolleys moved



**1** Christopher Hanna pours the pints – Guinness is the top choice – in time-honoured fashion after receiving the order over the phone

**2** The four pints are carefully placed in a carrier ready for delivery to the customer

**3** As arranged, the pints are placed for collection on the roof of the customer's car, ensuring no personal contact

**4** The delighted customer collects the pints, thus avoiding the connoisseur's curse of canned beer

## GUINN-IUS! A TAKEAWAY PINT

A DUBLIN publican has come up with a novel way to make sure regulars can continue to have their pint of plain despite the Covid-19 lockdown.

Mark Grainger owns Grainger's Hanlon's Corner on the North Circular Road and the Manor Inn bar in Swords. Both have off-licences and a food delivery service, so they have decided to set up a pint delivery service.

The Dublin publican explained: 'I got a call the other day from a man I didn't know from Adam and he asked would I deliver four pints to him. I thought about it and that's when I came up with the idea. We have the licences and we

know we are not breaking any law. One of my daughters put it up on Facebook and the place hasn't stopped since. We have seven lads on the road. It's unbelievable.'

Customers must order a minimum of four pints. In order to ensure social distancing the delivery men leave the order on the doorstep or on the customer's car.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Simon Harris has issued a warning to a small number of other pubs flouting Covid-19 restrictions by letting customers in. He said the Government would not hesitate to use new emergency powers to shut pubs if they did not heed advice.

## Gardaí deployed to reassure elderly

COMMUNITY gardaí around the country have been directed to identify the vulnerable and elderly in their locality and let them know they are there to assist when needed.

Sources have told how the focus is on 'high visibility' and 'community engagement'. Contingency policing plans are continuing around the country as gardaí prepare for the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Every chief superintendent and superintendent around the country has also been asked to evaluate how they can run on a skeleton staff in the likely

event members on the ground get sick or have to self-isolate.

Plans are being put in place to ensure Garda districts can continue to operate effectively when numbers begin to deplete.

One Garda division is already down 10% in manpower as members with symptoms have had to self-isolate. One source said: 'We need to prioritise frontline staff and get rapid testing started.'

Meanwhile there has been a 'very slight increase' in burglaries on businesses over the last few days.'



# ok after the old



**5** Libby Jones relaxes at home ready to savour her freshly pulled pint which has been poured and collected in line with social distancing guidelines

## Top consultant tells women hospitals are safe for new arrivals

By **Niamh Griffin** and **Valerie Hanley**

**MATERNITY** hospitals have isolation wards ready for women who develop coronavirus, and a leading consultant has reassured women that hospitals are ready and safe.

This comes as figures from the Department of Health this week show an Irish baby less than one year old has Covid-19, and there has been one case in London of a baby diagnosed with the virus at birth.

However, Chinese research accepted in Ireland and the UK shows mothers do not transmit the illness to babies during pregnancy.

Dr Cliona Murphy is head of the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and a consultant at the Coombe maternity hospital in Dublin.

She said: 'The message I want to get out for women is hospitals are preparing, they are safe and will continue to be safe. What I've been saying to patients is that hopefully they won't get it, but even if they do get it, they should be OK.'

About 5,000 babies are born in Ireland every month, meaning the longer this crisis goes on, the more likely it is a mother will give birth while sick with Covid-19.

A spokeswoman for the Coombe said it has an isolation strategy already in place. The hospital has enough breast milk supplies, if needed, for premature babies, she said.

The Rotunda has a separate



**REASSURANCE:** Dr Murphy says isolation wards already set up

delivery area for women who have coronavirus, with a 'red zone' for postnatal care. An 'orange zone' is for symptomatic patients who are not confirmed as ill. Both outpatients and the emergency rooms have separate areas for women in either situation.

Dr Murphy said a key issue was reducing the number of people who come into hospitals. This sadly includes limiting the time partners of pregnant women spend in hospitals.

Patients have been creative in working around the restrictions, she said. Many women shared having a scan on video app Facetime to partners outside the hospital.

Medics strongly advise new parents to continue social distancing after taking their baby home, meaning doting grandparents are for now only

visible on screens. 'It is a sacrifice for them,' Dr Murphy said.

Advice on breastfeeding and skin-to-skin contact has not changed for women without respiratory symptoms, she said.

Guidelines recommended by the institute, issued in the UK and based on the Chinese experience, indicate no risk of transmitting the disease through breastmilk.

The National Maternity Hospital is advising women with Covid-19 that they can breastfeed but should wear a face mask.

Online pregnancy groups have discussed home births as an alternative. However, Dr Murphy warned this was not suitable for all women.

Meanwhile, the MoS has learnt that eight key medical staff at Dublin's National Maternity Hospital are in self-isolation for two weeks after a pregnant woman who was thought to be free of coronavirus later tested positive.

The frontline workers were sent home last week after they were exposed to a patient they had been told had tested negative for Covid-19.

The expectant mother was being treated in an isolation unit and staff were already taking precautions while they waited for a test result from the National Virus Reference Laboratory.

The incident shows the real pressure that frontline medical staff are under.

The National Maternity Hospital in Dublin, would not comment on the case.

around by porters and everyone must be fed.

'One concern raised with me is many of these nurses re-applying are coming from the nursing home sector. There could be attractions in a pension, better benefits. But we know if this virus gets into nursing

homes it will be devastating. Nurses are needed everywhere.'

He said there are about 135,000 full and part-time workers in the HSE but the home help systems need to change.

He said: 'This is a risk situation now. A carer might go into five or

six houses, they will need to be briefed on coronavirus but should also have sanitisers and protective clothing.'

Maternity hospitals are worried about staff shortages.

Dr Cliona Murphy, head of the Institute of Obstetricians and

Gynaecology said: 'We are conscious as obstetricians there are not that many of us, and we are hugely dependent on our midwifery colleagues. One of our big worries

### 'Home carers are visiting five or six houses'

is if our midwifery colleagues become sick that would cause potential issues.'

The Rotunda is considering using retired staff to answer helplines, working remotely.

And a spokeswoman for the Coombe said: 'We have received offers of help from some retired Coombe staff, for which we are very grateful.'

Dr Murphy said consultants are already doubling up for weekend

on-call duty so if one person becomes ill there is someone to answer emergency calls.

She said at least one maternity hospital already has a full Covid-19 team.

GPs are the first port of call for people wanting a test.

Dr Michael Harty, previously a TD for Clare said: 'We are settling into a new reality. Patients have to make appointments now. If they just turn up, we ask them to wait in the car.'

He said access to testing is an issue but that is improving as more centres open up.

On one day this week he needed to order four tests.

He said: 'Ordering the tests is relatively simple, however there are 2,500 GPs in the country and if every GP orders just four then you have 10,000 a day. I don't know if the HSE has the capacity for this.'

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## Joe's big Mother's Day mission



THIRD-generation flower seller Joe Duffy, left, is on a heroic mission to save Mother's Day this weekend by making sure Irish mummies can still feel loved even if they can't hug their offspring due to social distancing.

The father of two was working last night at the old Dublin Flower Market.

Joe's own grandfather sold flowers at the old Smithfield Flower Market, right, during the Spanish flu epidemic a century ago.

