



Coronavirus (COVID-19)

See our [daily updates](#), our [training and research resources](#), and our [latest guidance](#) (updated Friday 3 April).

RCS statement on latest Public Health England PPE guidance

18 Apr 2020

Professor Neil Mortensen, President-elect of the RCS said:

“We are deeply disturbed by this latest change to PPE guidance, which was issued without consulting expert medical bodies. After weeks of working with PHE and our sister medical royal colleges to get the PPE guidance right, this risks confusion and variation in practice across the country.

“The new guidance implies that, even in the operating theatre, surgeons and their teams may not require proper PPE. This is simply unacceptable. Whilst we appreciate that waterproof laundered gowns may still be available in many operating theatres, the proposed alternatives to fluid repellent gowns or coveralls are wholly inadequate for an operating theatre environment.

“Theatres are high risk areas where surgical teams are inevitably exposed. Like all doctors, surgeons are committed to their patients. We know many will put themselves in the firing line. However, if fluid repellent gowns or coveralls are not available, then surgeons should not risk their health.

“We must not forget either the desperate needs of thousands of patients who still require life-saving surgery - road accident victims, people with severe appendicitis or those needing urgent cancer operations. If these operations can't go ahead, many will die. We are calling on government to ensure that the depleted PPE supplies that remain, are used to maintain the most urgent and emergency services.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

- The new PHE guidance this statement refers to is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control/managing-shortages-in-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>
- RCS have published a good practice guide for surgeons through the COVID crisis, available here: <https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/standards-and-research/standards-and-guidance/good-practice-guides/coronavirus/>
- The Royal College of Surgeons of England is a professional membership organisation and registered charity, which exists to advance surgical standards and improve patient care. <https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/>
- For more information, please contact the RCS press office: pressoffice@rcseng.ac.uk; out-of-hours media enquiries Tel. 020 7869 6056

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