**Atypical COVID 19 presentations in Older People**

In the UK, the current triage for Covid-19 is based on the presence of **fever** (37.8 degrees Celsius and over), **cough**, **shortness of breath** and **fatigue**. In addition it is recognised some patients may have **anosmia**.

Ongoing review of frontline Covid-19 presentations has shown that many older people do not present with these typical symptoms. Furthermore, older people have also been recognised as having a greater risk of infection and death from Covid-19, so we must be more vigilant with this group.

Guidance from the Regional Geriatric Program of Toronto succintly summarises the atypical presentations in older adults:

-Only 20-30% of geriatric patients with infection present with fever

-Atypical COVID-19 symptoms include **delirium (hypo and hyperactive), falls, generalized weakness, malaise, functional decline, and conjunctivitis, anorexia, increased sputum production, dizziness, headache, rhinorrhoea, chest pain, haemoptysis, diarrhoea, nausea/vomiting, abdominal pain, nasal congestion, and anosmia**.

-**Tachypnoea, unexplained tachycardia, or decrease in blood pressure** may be the presenting clinical presentation in older adults.

-The threshold for diagnosing fever should be lower, i.e. 37.5°C or an increase of >1.5°C from usual temperature.

-Older age, frailty, and increasing number of comorbidities increase the probability of an atypical presentation.

-Older adults may present with mild symptoms that are disproportionate to the severity of their illness.

Also note that other symptoms may include **myalgia and arthralgia**, **rash**, **seizures**. **Hypoxia** is a common feature even in absence of breathlessness.

We therefore need to be vigilant and anticipate these more atypical presentations in the elderly. As symptoms may be unreliable, have a lower threshold for testing for Covid-19 and consider Covid-19 when there is a **delirium.** Furthermore if a first swab is negative and there is a clinical suspicion of Covid-19 then it is important that a repeat test is requested.

**SOAMHS Leadership and Governance Team**

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