

**To:** All clinicians involved in the treatment of COVID-19

**From:** Infection Prevention and Control & Antimicrobial Stewardship (IPCAMS) Committee

**Date:** 14 March 2023

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**Subject:** **Change in recommendations for the treatment options of COVID-19 infection**

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The Manatū Hauora - Ministry of Health COVID-19 Therapeutics Technical Advisory Group have recently issued some revised recommendations for the treatment of COVID-19.

**These recommendations are summarised as follows:**

- **Tixagevimab-cilgavimab (Evusheld®)** is **no longer recommended** for either pre-exposure prophylaxis or treatment of COVID-19. Evusheld® is predicted to have neutralising activity against less than 10% of circulating SARS-CoV-2 variants in New Zealand.<sup>1</sup>
- **Molnupiravir (Lageviro®)** is **no longer recommended** due to lack of demonstrable clinical benefit.<sup>2</sup> The original trial demonstrating a modest benefit was during the delta period in an unvaccinated population. However, a more recent trial (PANORAMIC) was unable to demonstrate benefit in a highly vaccinated population and against the less severe omicron variant.
  - Molnupiravir should only be used if recommended by an infectious disease physician or clinical microbiologist.
- **Budesonide (Pulmicort®) inhaler** is also **no longer recommended** for mild COVID-19 illness due to negligible absolute risk reduction for contemporary COVID-19 illness.<sup>3</sup>
- **Nirmatrelvir-ritonavir (Paxlovid®)** remains the first line oral therapy for COVID-19 in patients who meet the treatment criteria, with intravenous remdesivir a second-line option.

**References:**

- (1) Therapeutics Technical Advisory Group. Update for health professionals: Evusheld cannot neutralise current circulating variants. 27 February 2023
- (2) Therapeutics Technical Advisory Group. Update for health professionals: molnupiravir is no longer recommended by Therapeutics TAG due to lack of clinical benefit. 27 February 2023
- (3) Clinical Management of COVID-10 in Hospitalised Adults. NZ Ministry of Health. Updated 24 February 2023.