CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) OUTBREAK

Background

The outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) virus and its impact on the healthcare sector and overall business both in the UK and around the world could reach an unprecedented scale.

This policy statement sets out IHEEM’s response to the current outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) but can be applied to any serious infectious disease pandemic that poses major health risks. It should also be considered in line with IHEEM’s Business Continuity Policy within the Standard Operating Manual.

IHEEM will frequently monitor the situation as nationally reported by Public Health England (PHE) and other reputable information sources and will use this to inform any subsequent reaction to this policy.

Head Office Staff

The Head Office team is small and the office space in Portsmouth is self-contained and not shared with any other organisations. Wider contact with others during working hours is therefore extremely low. Additional precautions will be taken to ensure staff follow the two-metre minimum spatial recommendation set out by PHE to minimise the spread of infection.

Any Head Office staff member who feels unwell or suspects they may have the virus should stay at home, seek advice from NHS111 and follow the self-isolation guidance issued by the NHS: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/  IHEEM will look to introduce remote working from home for Head Office staff if required to do so.

IHEEM Formal Meetings

Internal Meeting (including Council and Committee Meetings)

These meetings, usually organised by Head Office, typically involve a significant number of attendees from across a wide geographical area so they could be considered high-risk. Therefore with immediate effect, all meetings, even those deemed to be business critical, must be deferred or the option of holding the meeting via video or teleconference should be explored and implemented where viable.

Branch Meetings/Technical Platforms (TP)

These meetings, which are usually arranged locally by the relevant Branch or TP, should now be deferred or conducted by video or teleconference where possible.
External Events Where IHEEM Staff & IHEEM Members Are Invited Attendees

The default position is not to attend any external meetings and keep public travel to an absolute minimum. However, it is recognised that limited attendance may be required. In these exceptional circumstances, Head Office staff should discuss any agreed commitments or invitations with their line manager before attending. In all other cases anyone with plans to attend a meeting as a representative of IHEEM should refrain from doing so until further notice.

IHEEM Planned Events (Seminars, Conferences)

The COVID-19 situation will be closely monitored and each event will be reviewed and actioned accordingly. This may result in deferral of an event to a later date or cancellation as a last resort. Contingency plans with a focus on rescheduling will be developed where possible to ensure IHEEM’s commitment to delivering events that support its membership is maintained.

The Institute takes its corporate responsibility to the healthcare industry very seriously and is mindful that during critical times it should not draw its members away from their vital roles within the NHS and wider efm healthcare community where their skills, knowledge and expertise is vital to staff and patient care.

The operational policy above attempts to achieve the right balance in terms of business continuity against risk to individuals during this period of uncertainty. IHEEM acknowledges that individuals will be both anxious and concerned at this time and that they will have their own views as to appropriate actions to take. The Institute recognises that people need to be comfortable with their own decisions but at no point will IHEEM pressure staff, members or volunteers to attend meetings or events if they are unwell or have concerns around travel and being in public spaces. However, we urge everyone engaged in IHEEM business to take all necessary personal precautions over and above any decisions and advice provided by the Institute or that of Public Health England.