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UEMO Statement on Covid-19

UEMO, the European Union of General Practitioners, states the following facts.

The Covid-19 pandemic is causing significant impacts upon and damage to

- Public health
- Premature death rates
- Economic activity both within member states and between them

The consequences of these impacts vary in different countries, but the over-riding principles remain the same.

Health policies must be directed towards

- the prevention and management of the infection
- the protection and safety of the population
- The protection and safety of health care professionals
- Consistent availability and adequate re-supply of materials and equipment, **particularly PPE**. This should be sourced within Europe and of accredited European standard
- the finance and resources sufficient to accomplish these policies

We acknowledge the loss of life that has occurred in our countries and mourn our professional colleagues who have died while providing health care to our populations.

We demand recognition of Covid-19 as an Occupational Disease in all European and other member countries in order to protect our colleagues and their families. General Practitioners are in the frontline of this pandemic and are suffering accordingly. They are and will be the first contact for almost all infected patients and bear the risk of that position.

We seek acknowledgement of the speed at which general practice is transforming its consulting modes into a remote telemedicine service while endeavouring to maintain the continuity of care that is its significant characteristic, and we ask for substantial help in supporting these changes.

We demand sufficient and appropriate protective equipment for family doctors and their staff so that they may continue their important work in safety. Without the support of GP staff, general practice would not have been able to function as it has.

We expect and demand, of governments and society at large, recognition that the most vulnerable people and the socio-economically disadvantaged groups in our societies have suffered the most and that public health measures must not make access to care more difficult.

General Practitioners/Family Physicians are the only medical group who know their patients and their families from cradle to grave and who treat not only the disease in a person, but also the person with the disease. General Practitioner/Family Physician presence and expertise is essential in all health care planning and we demand the inclusion of General Practitioners in all policy-making and organisational health care committees so that they can inform health care policies.

We demand consideration of the needs of family doctors and recognition of the impact of managing this outbreak has on their physical and mental wellbeing. This relates both to their unremitting workload and to the distress they suffer over the illness and deaths of their colleagues and their patients.

It is entirely unacceptable in civilised society that doctors have been abused by some members of the public and stigmatised, by higher insurance costs, by the financial services industry.

We demand from governments financial recognition to compensate for the significant reduction in income of many GPs during this pandemic at a time when family physicians are continuing to provide a more intense service to patients and that we expect that family physicians should be treated as least as equally as other businesses and individuals who have suffered financially. As a Minimum we demand that excess costs of operation, since many GPs had to purchase their own PPE and meet other expenses, must be met.