



15 September 2017

**Re: Updated advice from the NERVTAG subcommittee on facemasks and respirators**

Thank you for asking the NERVTAG sub-committee on the pandemic influenza facemasks and respirators stockpile to clarify the specific recommendation on eye protection that was given by us in June 2016.

At this time we recommended that eye protection is considered to be necessary and to be worn when in close contact with patients with pandemic influenza and that where possible integral masks/visors are preferable. In light of work done to assess this recommendation, which has included modelling, it has become evident that including eye-protection as standard in the pandemic influenza preparedness stockpile is unlikely to be cost-effective in reducing staff absences from work.

We have given further consideration to our original advice and have agreed the following;

1. We regard the ocular route of influenza transmission as plausible, but we also accept the evidence is thin. This lack of evidence includes having very little certainty about what the incremental benefit of eye protection worn routinely would be over facemasks worn routinely. Ocular protection is therefore a position of absolute risk minimisation although we cannot say that we are confident that the overall risk is decreased if eye protection is worn.
2. Having now been presented with the cost-effectiveness data, and the likelihood that adding in eye protection has almost no chance of being cost-effective (in terms of incremental cost-effectiveness), the sub-committee is prepared to alter its risk-assessment to remove eye protection from procurement for routine pandemic usage.
3. Instead we would advise procuring sufficient eye protection to allow for exceptional usage when facial exposure to body fluid is likely and of course when used with respirators during the performance of aerosol generating procedures (AGPs). This is in line with published infection control guidance - [http://ac.els-cdn.com/S019567011300279X/1-s2.0-S019567011300279X-main.pdf?\\_tid=fb9a4810-6e2d-11e7-8aa6-0000aacb361&acdnat=1500653123\\_4ba30f9973ee78c5ff37255f70b8fa1f](http://ac.els-cdn.com/S019567011300279X/1-s2.0-S019567011300279X-main.pdf?_tid=fb9a4810-6e2d-11e7-8aa6-0000aacb361&acdnat=1500653123_4ba30f9973ee78c5ff37255f70b8fa1f)

Yours sincerely,

Dr Ben Killingley

*Chair of NERVTAG subcommittee on facemasks and respirators*