

19<sup>th</sup> August 2020

## **Enough is Enough. Public Health decisions must always have a sound scientific basis**

Recent comments made by an MTA Director instructing establishments how to circumvent Legal Notices meant to protect the public's health is one of many examples of how certain lobbies are continuously attempting to undermine the efforts made by public health professionals to bring this pandemic under control.

This is just the tip of the iceberg of constant attacks against the public health profession whose only interest is the public's wellbeing. If public health professionals continue to be undermined and labelled fearmongers, they cannot be made responsible for the failure of the government to prioritise the population's wellbeing over the short-term economic interests of the few.

Public Health Medicine doctors, together with many others, have been working tirelessly day and night, 7 days a week, and away from their normal duties for the last 6 months to attempt to control this pandemic. Their advice based on scientific evidence has been proven to be effective, since the pandemic was well under control in the beginning of summer. To make the most of this success, Public Health experts proposed a transparent framework based on an evidence-based risk assessment with clear thresholds to follow which would allow certain establishments and activities to restart with mitigation measures. This was meant to be a dynamic system which would react quickly to changes in the number of new cases allowing for the maximum benefit to the population whilst remaining safe. Instead of following this plan, government decided not to publish it and go against all reasonable public health advice.

The result is that we are now witnessing a resurgence in cases which is worse than we had in April and May which requires further restrictive measures to bring the situation under control once more. This virus is not something that we can wish away, or trick into submission. It is a real threat against our way of living, and unless we control it using tried and trusted public health measures, we will continue to lose control and end up in an even worse situation than we are in now.

To highlight this issue, doctors working within the COVID-19 Response team which includes Public Health Medicine specialists, Specialist Trainees and Foundation Doctors will be protesting against the government's handling of this pandemic by striking between 8am-9am on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020 with the exception of doctors working at the Testing Centres.

Unless the public health authorities are allowed to function without undue influence and pressures, there will be consequences on the population's wellbeing which none of us wish to even dream of.