

The Medical Journal of Australia • MJA

MEDIA RELEASE

TESTING OF ASYMPTOMATIC AT-RISK PEOPLE VITAL TO FLATTENING THE CURVE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FAILURE to test asymptomatic at-risk people and allow wider community testing will result in undetected transmission in the community and a bounce-back of the epidemic as lock-down restrictions are lifted, according to the authors of an article published online today by the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

Professor Raina MacIntyre and Associate Professor David Heslop, both from the University of New South Wales, wrote that “the only two countries to achieve sustained flattening of the curve to date are South Korea and China”.

“South Korea has achieved this with more targeted, short lockdowns along with extensive testing.

“The risk of a phased and gradual approach is continued epidemic growth, potential failure of the health system, and a far longer road to recovery.

“We have examples of countries which have failed and succeeded, which can guide such a response.

“Epidemic control is time critical, because epidemics rise exponentially.

“There is no real choice available between jobs and lives – failing to save lives now will result in more net job losses and a longer recession.

“In addition to expanded testing, key strategies to accompany a lockdown must be a financial aid package that is accessible and leaves no person in need; a mental health and domestic violence package with outreach capability; a communications and social engagement package; a physical fitness package and other required support.”

The article is available now at mja.com.au and is open access at the following URL:

<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2020/public-health-health-systems-and-palliation-planning-covid-19-exponential-timeline>

Please remember to credit *The MJA*.

The *Medical Journal of Australia* is a publication of the Australian Medical Association.

The statements or opinions that are expressed in the MJA reflect the views of the authors and do not represent the official policy of the AMA or the MJA unless that is so stated.