



Statement by the Board of FEAM:

Protecting medical personnel from COVID-19

In a statement published today, the Board of the Federation of European Academies of Medicine (FEAM) joins its voice to call for the protection of the physical and mental health of medical workers in the frontline.

“If protection materials are available, good practice would be that hospitalized patients are treated as being potential COVID-19 infected on the ward and during investigations”, says FEAM President Professor George Griffin. The problem is that tests currently used to identify COVID-19 patients (RT-qPCR) search for the virus’ RNA genome. Because of this, the results of this test depend on whether the virus can be traced. A patient with COVID-19 can still get a negative result, for instance when the quantity of the virus is too low (which happens in some cases), or when the sample is not well-collected from the patient’ nose or throat.

“Medical personnel not well protected and feeling safe because of an initial negative (RT-qPCR) test in a patient can be at risk of contamination”. The same will happen with “other patients in the ward”, said Professor Stefan Constantinescu, who is also Vice-President of FEAM. This type of test is only useful at the time it is done and often needs to be repeated.

Also, because the test traces the virus, it cannot say if a person has had COVID-19 before. This is why antibody tests –which are based on the patients’ immune response—would be crucial to identify health care workers that are immune to COVID-19. However, such tests are still ongoing validation and approval.

The FEAM Board also emphasized the need to protect health workers’ mental health; many of them are working under extreme conditions and some are being forced to prioritize care for

patients with the highest probability to survive. Potential harm to the mental health of medical workers will also have important repercussions for already strained healthcare systems in the near future.

The full statement can be accessed [here](#).

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About [FEAM](#), The Federation of European Academies of Medicine

FEAM is the umbrella group of Academies of Medicine, Medical Sections of Academies of Sciences, and Academies of Pharmacy and Veterinarians.

FEAM promotes cooperation between national Academies and provides a platform to formulate their collective voice on matters concerning medicine, health and biomedical research with a European dimension. Its mission is to extend to the European authorities the advisory role that national Academies exercise in their own countries with the aim to improve the health, safety and wealth of European citizens.

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