

Special citizens' groups referred for Covid19 testing

For reasons of public health and strengthening the control in the community against the spread of SARS –CoV2, the Council of Ministers at its meeting today approved the proposal presented by the Minister of Health Mr. Constantinos Ioannou, by which laboratory testing for the disease COVID-19 is made possible for specific categories of citizens and patients, sponsored by the Ministry of Health.

A relevant programme is already under way by the Ministry of Health since 30 April 2020, through a procedure that provides for the referral of these persons to Public Health Clinics by their personal doctors. Up until 15 May 2020 samples have been taken from 1,100 individuals island-wide.

In the follow up to the above programme and having assessed the conditions prevailing in recent days, the epidemic indicators and the data from the Advisory Scientific Committee, the special groups of the population, which are deemed as necessitating molecular examination for the SARS-CoV-2, are categorized as follows:

- 1. Groups of citizens before being accepted into residential premises, homes and shelters** in order to prevent the virus from being transmitted to them.
 - Elderly people before being accepted into old people's homes,
 - Abused persons (adults and children) before being accepted into homes,
 - Drug addicts before being accepted into rehabilitation clinics,
 - Women victims of trafficking before being accepted into shelters,
 - Children/adolescents before being accepted into care homes
 - Handicapped persons before being accepted into homes or institutions,
 - Detainees before entering the prison, and
 - Mental patients before entering psychiatric clinics or undergoing institutionalized treatment.

- 2. Special groups of patients before receiving treatment or in-hospital medical care:**
 - Persons before being operated upon under general anaesthesia (preoperative evaluation),
 - Expectant women before labour,
 - Patients who undergo bronchoscopy or gastroscopy, and

- Patients before starting immunosuppressive treatment (chemotherapy, organ transplant, biological factors, immunotherapy, high dosage of corticosteroids).

It should at the same time be stressed that individuals falling under category 2 above and **only for the reasons stated** shall be referred for control with the aim of safeguarding and protecting Public Health. The Advisory Scientific Committee does recommend the obligatory laboratory testing in cases other than the above, and therefore if this is requested by the personal doctor, the cost shall be borne by the citizens.

Finally it should be noted that persons who display the coronavirus symptoms must **contact their Personal Doctor**, who will evaluate their clinical situation and provide guidance on the steps to be taken. If deemed necessary, the Personal Doctor shall make appointments through the Epidemiological Surveillance Unit with the Public Health Clinics for further examination of the patient with regard to the coronavirus.