

# NHS @home Operational Update



NHS England and NHS Improvement

## NHS @home update

Issue 7 – 07 December 2021

Welcome to this issue of the NHS @home operational update. Recent media reports on the potential impact of skin pigmentation on the accuracy of medical devices have been concerning for a number of reasons. In this Anaesthesia editorial, [Racial discrepancies in oximetry: where do we stand?](#) Dr Matthew Knight, Dr Christian Subbe and I review several studies, including their strengths and limitations, that have explored the accuracy of pulse oximeters and we highlight the need for more comprehensive regulation and classification of medical devices. Because of pulse oximeter inaccuracy in all patients we continue to advise that patients take a baseline, consider trends and remain alert to other symptoms. This is the best way of ensuring that people with COVID are supported to detect silent hypoxia.

Thank you to everyone delivering this service during such a busy time. We know that early detection of silent hypoxia and timely NHS treatment helps keep people safe and save lives. You can find more details on pulse oximetry for people with darker skin within this operational update. If you have any questions, please email [england.home@nhs.net](mailto:england.home@nhs.net).

### Professor Matt Inada-Kim

Consultant Acute Physician, Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust & University of Southampton

National Clinical Director Infection, Antimicrobial Resistance & Deterioration, NHS England and NHS Improvement

National Clinical Lead COVID Oximetry @home/virtual wards, NHS England and NHS Improvement

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### **Pulse oximetry for people with dark skin**

You may have seen that an [independent review is being launched](#) into the potential inaccuracies of medical devices such as oximeters and MRI scanners. The extent to which any inaccuracy may apply to COVID-19 patients, and those on home oximetry programmes, is unknown. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency ([MHRA](#)) is [not aware of any incidents](#) where skin colour has had an adverse effect on the use of pulse oximeters when providing effective clinical care.

Our advice is that wherever possible patients record a baseline oxygen saturation at onboarding and subsequent changes in saturation readings are then compared to this established baseline. Clinicians should remain vigilant for other signs of deterioration in all patients with COVID, use their clinical judgement and monitor trends of both oxygen saturation readings and symptoms. Patients should seek help if any of their symptoms get worse.

NHS.uk has information on [how people can look after themselves at home if they have COVID-19](#). This includes a section for people with brown or black skin with advice to continue to use an oximeter. We have asked the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) to commission rapid further research to definitively understand the accuracy of pulse oximeters for people with different skin colours. You can find a full briefing on this topic via the NHS @home FutureNHS platform [[SofS Brief on pulse oximeter use for people with darker skin](#)]

### **We want to hear from patients**

We are keen to hear from patients with dark skin who have benefitted from COVID Oximetry @home or COVID Virtual Ward services. It is important that all COVID-19 patients that could benefit have access to pulse oximeters to detect silent hypoxia. By showing a representative population using the service we hope it will continue to be widely offered and used as needed. Please contact [england.home@nhs.net](mailto:england.home@nhs.net) if you have a patient that would be happy to share their story and be contacted by one of the team.

### **COVID Oximetry @home wins HSJ award**

The COVID Oximetry @home service was awarded the [HSJ Patient Safety Award](#) on 18 November. This award reflects the work of lots of people across England who helped deliver this service and keep people with COVID-19 safe at home by allowing early detection of silent hypoxia and timely NHS treatment. With special thanks to project partners: The Academic Health Science Network, NHS England and NHS Improvement National Patient Safety Team and NHS Digital.

[Find out more about COVID Oximetry @home and COVID Virtual Wards](#) including how effective self-monitoring and self-escalation can keep people safe and support efficient use of clinical time. CCGs, trusts and ambulance services can continue to request oximeters free of charge from [england.home@nhs.net](mailto:england.home@nhs.net).

### **Blood Pressure @home update**

All 220,000 nationally available monitors have been allocated to CCGs. Monitors have been distributed to support people to manage their hypertension in their own homes to prevent heart attacks, strokes and unnecessary visits to general practice. The latest figures (October 2021) from CCGs and ICSs estimate more than 85,000 patients have now received a blood pressure monitor. Most CCGs expect the remaining monitors to be with patients by the end of December.

The Blood Pressure @home project has made a natural transition into the wider [Proactive Care @home approach](#), bringing the two together means we are able to provide ongoing and sustainable support to systems. Further information on this transition, including support from the AHSNs for blood pressure optimisation from January 2022 onwards is being sent to Blood Pressure @home leads. If you have any questions please contact [england.home@nhs.net](mailto:england.home@nhs.net).

### **New case studies from UCLPartners**

[Three new case studies](#) show how the UCLPartners Proactive Care Frameworks have been adopted by the primary care sector across England. Includes lifesaving stroke prevention initiative in North East London, a refreshed approach to long-term conditions in the East Midlands, and improving care for asthma patients in North West England.

### **In the media**

17 November 2021: [BBC Look East](#) coverage of virtual wards in Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital. [Video clip available on YouTube](#)

12 November 2021: [Blog piece from Iggy Patel](#) via the Coalition for Personalised Care covering Iggy's experience of NHS @home.

2 November 2021: Positive coverage in [The Express](#), [Sky News](#), [The Daily Mail](#) and others on how Blood Pressure @home is providing more than 200,000 free blood pressure monitors to help reduce heart attacks and strokes, and save lives.

27 October 2021: HSJ article from Dr Matt Kearney, GP and programme director at UCLPartners - [Doing things differently to help GPs transform care and reduce demand](#).

This piece discusses the expansion of NHS Proactive Care @home, and how the UCL Partners Proactive Care Frameworks assist to deliver optimised care for long term conditions. Also available via the [UCLPartners website](#).

### **Events and webinars**

There will be a Learning Network event on Virtual Wards in January 2022, that will be focused on patient experience. If interested in joining please email [england.home@nhs.net](mailto:england.home@nhs.net) for meeting details.

### **Recordings**

**GP webinar, 16 November 2021.** Matt Inada-Kim covered COVID Oximetry @home with a focus on updates to the standard operating procedure and the self-escalation and self-monitoring pathway. The slides and recording can be viewed via the [Primary Care Networks FutureNHS workspace](#).

NHS @home Team

**The Personalised Care Group**

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