

Were outsourced cleaners super spreaders?

Now largely off the headlines the Covid Inquiry continues...

With a new witness, Counsel returns to the issue of the dangers of administering CPR during a pandemic.

The patient survival rate is as low as 8% out of hospital.

Whether those administering CPR should have protective clothing on is an issue.

It is now clear that CPR generates aerosols which spread infection. PPE was readily available [*at least in the later stages of the pandemic*] in hospitals but in the community, staff did not usually have protective clothing easily at hand. Public Health England said that PPE was not essential in this setting but other experts disagreed.

Counsel also returns to the issue of “Do not administer CPR orders” which were

used extensively in some hospitals. Getting consent was not easy when face to face conversations with relatives was not possible. Another expert explained that 50% of mothers going to theatre for a section would not recover and see their baby. “I wish I had not asked that question,” said Lady Hallett.

Another serious question related to migrant and outsourced workers. Did they have access to PPE?

Were they briefed by their employers? If they were cleaners, they would have moved around the hospital working in areas in which vulnerable patients were being cared for. Could they have been super spreaders?

As one expert put it

“The failure to heed the warnings of front-line migrant workers put patients, the public and the workers themselves at great risk”.

They were reluctant to complain. If they did not



turn up for work, they would not be paid and would put their work visas at risk.

Disabled groups argued much the same. They were dealt with as an afterthought, one claimed.

Finally, the economic module has started so we can expect lots of evidence from the Treasury, business groups and economists. Just three points from the opening statements:

The economic impact of Covid was disproportionately concentrated on the more deprived groups and children.

Poor messaging meant that people were not sure what they were entitled to and what they would lose if they transferred to Universal Credit.

Long Covid had created a new cohort of disabled people.

I shall keep dipping in to the Inquiry. We can learn as we go. We do not need to wait for the final report.