

St John Ambulance has and will continue to treat and transport all patients throughout the COVID-19 outbreaks in New Zealand

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In a recent article in the *New Zealand Medical Journal* by authors Nixon et al¹ about rural doctors and COVID-19, there is an incorrect statement about St John Ambulance policy which, having now been reported elsewhere, has propagated confusion and misinformation. The authors reported that one of their interviewees stated:

“...[St John] was initially just saying that they weren’t going to transport anyone where there was a respiratory problem... anyone who’s needing any kind of respiratory support... I know it was raised at a national level, because it was St John’s policy. I think one of the things that was very difficult was that this was unilaterally declared by St John to the DHB and to us all, so there was no balancing of risks, it didn’t seem to us”

This is incorrect. St John Ambulance has and will continue to treat and transport all patients throughout COVID-19 outbreaks in New Zealand, including individuals with respiratory problems, COVID-19-positive patients and those with symptoms of the virus. It has never been St John’s policy to refuse to treat and transport patients. All St John ambulance personnel are trained in infection control practice and regularly treat patients with infectious diseases all year round. To limit the risk of infection and to protect the public and St John staff, frontline ambulance personnel follow specific clinical guidelines and take universal precautions, including routinely wearing Ministry of Health-recommended personal protective equipment (PPE) and changing these between patients.

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Competing interests:

Nil.

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REFERENCES

1. Nixon G, Blattner K, Withington S, Miller R, Stokes T. Exploring the response to the COVID-19 pandemic at the rural hospital–base hospital interface: experiences of New Zealand rural hospital doctors. *N Z Med J.* 2021;135(1545):11-21.