

Milan, 4 March 2020

Dear friends,

At this moment in time, we believe it is important to share our first impressions and what we have learned in the first ten days of the COVID-19 outbreak.

We have seen a very high number of ICU admissions, almost entirely due to severe hypoxic respiratory failure requiring mechanical ventilation.

The surge can be important during an outbreak and cluster containment has to be in place to slow down virus transmission.

*We are seeing a high percentage of positive cases being admitted to our Intensive Care Units, in the range of **10% of all positive patients**.*

We wish to convey a strong message: Get ready!

We also want to share with you some key points from our experience:

- Get ready now - with your ICU's networks - to define your **contingency plan** in the event of an outbreak in your community
- Don't work "in silo". Coordinate with your hospital management and other healthcare professionals to prepare your response
- Make sure your hospital management and procurement office have a **protocol** in place about **which personal protection equipment (PPE) to stock and re-stock**
- Make sure your staff is trained in **donning and doffing procedures**
- Use **education, training and simulation** as much as possible
- **Identify early hospitals** that can manage the initial surge in a safe way
- **Increase your total ICU capacity**
- Get ready to **prepare ICU areas** where to cohort COVID-19 + patients - in every hospital if necessary
- Put in place a **triage protocol** to identify suspected cases, test them and direct them to the right cohort
- Make sure you **set clear goals** for care with the patients and their families early on

With our best regards

*Prof. Maurizio Cecconi
President elect, ESICM
Humanitas University, Milan*

*Prof. Antonio Pesenti
University of Milan*

*Prof. Giacomo Grasselli
University of Milan*