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MEDIA RELEASE

## ***COVID Antivirals – they may be effective, but accessibility is vague***

Health consumers are still trying to understand how to access antivirals and navigate the five-day ‘window of opportunity.’

Health Issues Centre – Victoria's peak health consumer organisation – recently held two online antivirals forums led by guest presenter [Dr Anita Muñoz](#).

Three key barriers emerged to consumers accessing antivirals (see attached op-ed):

- low levels of familiarity regarding how to access the antivirals
- practicalities of physically accessing the antivirals, e.g. getting a GP appointment
- determining whether or not they are eligible, including confusion around the definition of ‘immuno-compromised.’

Dr Muñoz explained that to be effective, antivirals need to be taken within five days of symptom onset or COVID-19 diagnosis; if people wait until they are feeling really sick it will be too late. She acknowledged that people have had difficulty accessing the antivirals in the past, but stressed that if you are eligible, it is important that you get this treatment.

Consumers queried whether they were able to have antivirals on hand ahead of time but because of supply, shelf life and cost, this is not an appropriate option. Unless you are willing to pay the upfront cost ranging from \$1,100 to \$1,500, “you can’t obtain an anti-viral in advance of an illness.”

Participants particularly raised concerns about accessibility and the window of opportunity. “If you know you are at risk but are unlikely to get a GP appointment within 5 days to get a script, what can you do?” asked one consumer.

Dr Muñoz suggested, if eligible, “start the conversation with your GP early and create a plan for antivirals before you get sick.”

Overall, Dr Muñoz reiterated that although effective, “Antivirals are no substitution for vaccination nor are they a substitution for abandoning your COVID-19 precautions and safety measures.”

Dr Muñoz is Chair of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Victoria Council, RACGP Board Member, and sits on the RACGP COVID Committee – she is a GP in private practice in Melbourne’s CBD.

The Forums were supported by an Education Grant from Pfizer. They did not focus on any one antiviral.

A forum recording is available here: <https://youtu.be/sjzGej7vNUc>

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**WHO WE ARE**

[Health Issues Centre](#) is Victoria's peak health consumer organisation that has been operating for over 35 years. HIC is a registered charity and was formed to provide a voice for consumers from diverse backgrounds. We use the principles of human-centred design to make sure that health solutions address consumer needs and reflect consumer priorities.