

**Written Evidence Submitted by
Royal College of Physicians
(C190007)**

Last week the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) asked its members questions about being off work and COVID-19 testing. We are sharing [findings of this survey](#) which we hope will be helpful for your committee's inquiry on UK science, research and technology capability and influence in global disease outbreaks inquiry.

The figures below are based on over 2,000 responses, the vast majority of which (1,932) were from people in England. 21% were in London, 11% in the north west and 10.5% the west midlands. 69% were consultants, 11.5% higher specialty trainees and 5% physician associates.

Testing

- 31% of our members are able to access COVID-19 testing for themselves if they have symptoms, but there was wide geographical variation across the UK: 40.5% in London, and from 9.5% in East of England to 63% in our Northern region
- The overwhelming majority, 88% report not being able to access testing for a symptomatic household member
- 12% report that they are currently unable to test patients as per the current testing guidance
- 75% report that other clinical staff they work with are unable to access testing and 71% that key non-clinical staff are also unable to access testing. Again, there was wide geographical variation, from 94% in East of England to 44% in the Northern region (clinical staff).

Off work

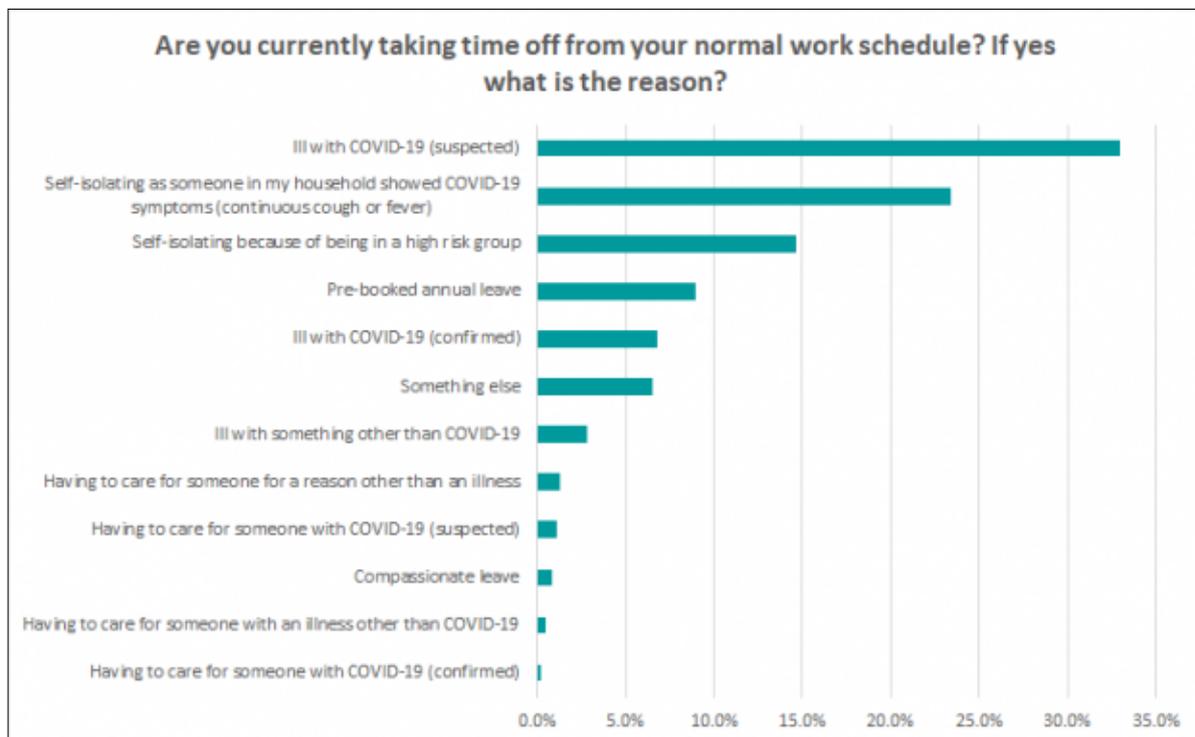
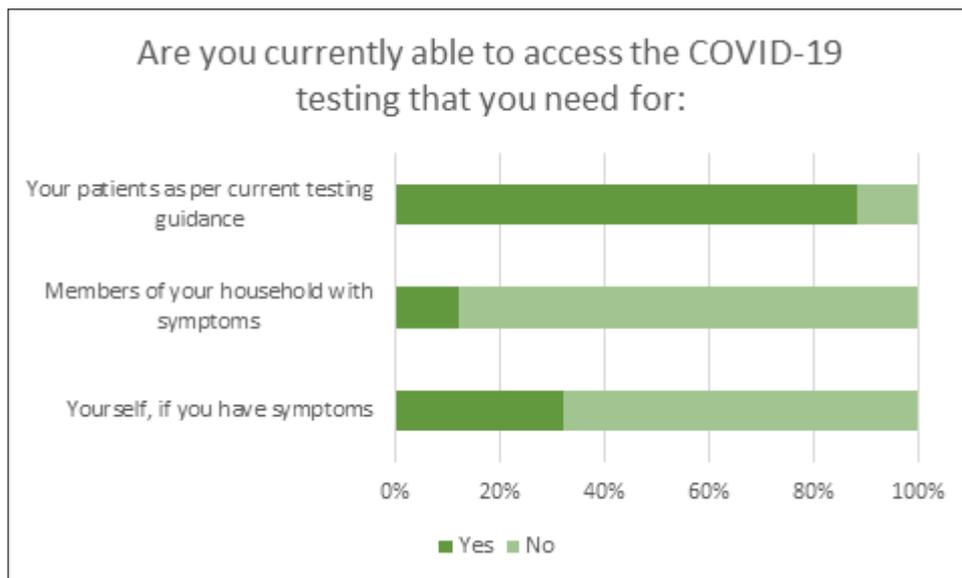
- Currently 21.5% of RCP members in London and 18.3% in the rest of England are off work
 - Of those almost one third (33%) of clinicians said they are currently taking time off work due to having suspected COVID-19
 - 23.4% of clinicians said they are currently taking time off self-isolating as someone in their household showed COVID-19 symptoms
- For the preceding weeks 30.4% of RCP members in London and 25.8% in the rest of England have had to take time off work. This has been more in the non-consultant grades (29.3%) compared with consultants (25.8%).

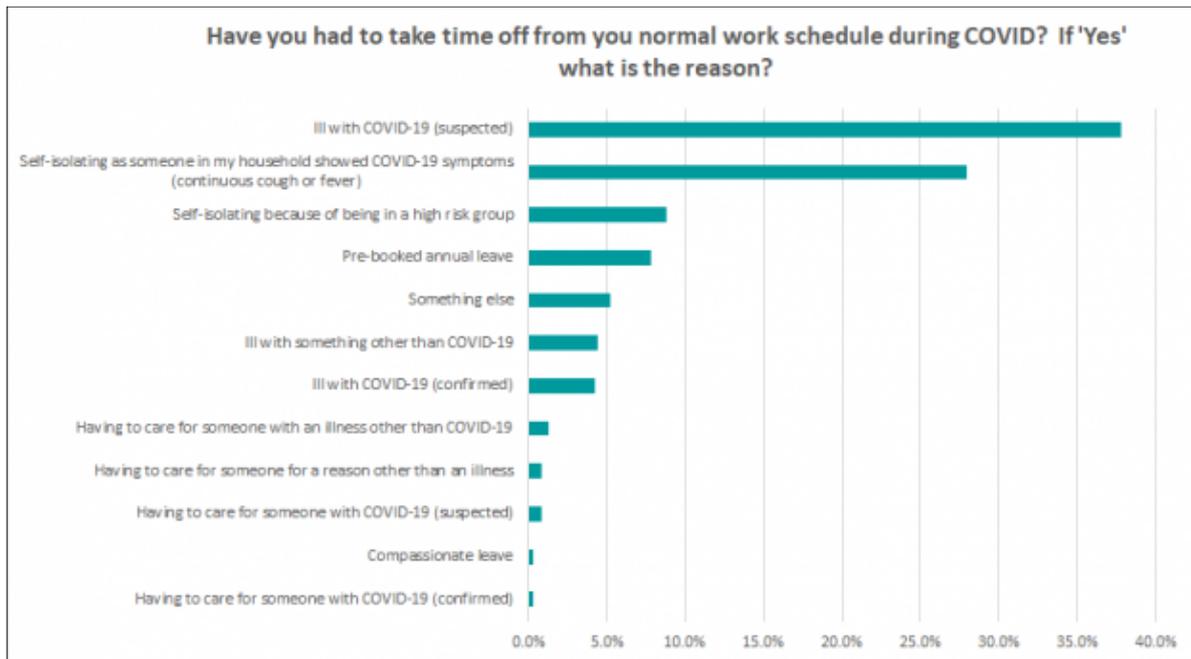
From what we have seen so far it looks like there are significant issues in delivering a testing strategy which supports NHS staff to return to the workforce as quickly as possible. We are also concerned about the impact this problem will be having on social care.

We welcomed the government's recent announcements that they will be ramping up testing by the end of April. However, NHS and social care staff and their households need access to testing now, and progress has been far slower than the system requires. We believe that the government must publish its testing plan, timeline and the challenges it expects if it wants to build confidence.

We are planning to repeat this survey every 2-3 weeks for the foreseeable future. We are happy to share the findings with you as they become available. If there was a question or area that the committee would like us to consider in a future survey, please let us know. I have also enclosed a breakdown of some of the key questions and answers from the survey in appendix 1 in case it is of interest.

Appendix 1: Breakdown of key questions and answers





(April 2020)