



**NIIM**  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF  
INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

**ACNEM**

TRANSFORMING GLOBAL HEALTH

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Peak Integrative Medicine Bodies Urge Government to use their expertise in Fighting COVID-19**

Two peak healthcare bodies with expertise in disease prevention have urged the country's political leaders to implement preventative approaches to fight COVID-19, to decrease the need for emergency measures such as lockdowns which fail to address longer-term risks.

The National Institute of Integrative Medicine (NIIM) and the Australasian College of Nutritional and Environmental Medicine (ACNEM) said that a range of scientific, low cost measures could have a dramatic impact on prevention of the virus and its recurrence.

NIIM founder and director Prof Avni Sali AM said: "Lockdowns carry with them a range of health risks, including an escalation in mental health problems and delays in essential medical treatment for other conditions. It is crucial the government take a broader approach, including considering nutritional and integrative medicine, as extended lockdowns are simply not sustainable."

In September, NIIM called for a nationwide Vitamin D program, arguing it had significant potential to save lives. Professor Sali said evidence in support of such action was increasing, with promising data from recent studies in Boston and Dublin adding to the body of evidence. (1)

"Meanwhile in the last week we have seen ministers from both sides of politics in the United Kingdom urging their Health Secretary to act on a Vitamin D program. As northern hemisphere countries head into winter vitamin D deficiency increases, and there are clear signs this results in an escalation in case numbers and deaths."

ACNEM and NIIM recommend a broad preventative approach that incorporates appropriate supplementation with Vitamins C, D and zinc, maintaining a healthy lifestyle alongside hygiene, mask wearing and social distancing measures.

ACNEM President Ron Ehrlich said the organisations agreed with the COVID Medical Network, a campaign endorsed by hundreds of medical practitioners across a range of specialties, that the government ought to adopt a broader view of the health and socio-economic picture, and should establish an advisory committee with input from a broad range of medical and other experts.

Dr Ehrlich said: "Integrative and nutritional medicine approaches have been largely overlooked in the current response, to the community's detriment. An example of where these approaches would have a big positive impact is in the aged care facilities, which has suffered with hundreds of deaths of our community's most vulnerable. Every one of those aged care residents should

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/vitamin-d-deficit-link-to-covid-19-severity-considerable-1.4371795>;  
<https://www.bostonherald.com/2020/09/17/vitamin-d-can-help-reduce-coronavirus-risk-by-54-boston-university-doctor/>

have been assessed for vitamin D deficiency, with supplementation to boost their immunity and ability to fight the virus..” Over 50% of Australians are vitamin D deficient, and the statistics worsen amongst higher risk groups including the elderly and indigenous Australians.

Dr Ehrlich added that there were promising developments overseas recognising the importance of integrative medicine approaches to treating both the virus and what is being termed “post-COVID syndrome” or “long COVID”. “Many of the steps being taken internationally could also be useful in informing Australia’s response. It is possible to reduce the impact of COVID-19 without causing the level of harm currently being inflicted on our community, but this requires a willingness to look at options more broadly.”

“We urge the Government to use all of the scientific evidence to deliver the best possible outcomes with Covid-19.”

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