

COVID-19 Airborne Transmission Alliance to seek justice for health workers at UK COVID Inquiry

The COVID-19 Airborne Transmission Alliance (CATA), which comprises a group of leading healthcare professional bodies and experts representing 64,000 healthcare workers, has been granted core participant status in Module 3 of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry.

BAPEN, as a key and founding member of CATA, will be able to directly represent the views of nutrition healthcare professionals which BAPEN represents, including dietitians, doctors, nutrition nurses, gastroenterologists, hepatologists, and pharmacists.

The coalition has campaigned relentlessly to protect healthcare workers and their patients from both catching and transmitting the virus. The lack of acceptance of airborne COVID-19 transmission by the Government has led to dangerous policies, decisions and practices that deprived healthcare workers of the correct Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) and put them and their patients at risk of illness and death.

CATA will seek to ensure that its knowledge of the existing and developing scientific evidence base for the aerosol transmission of COVID-19, its understanding of the legal framework, and the lived experiences of its members, are made available to the Inquiry. In addition, it seeks to also address wider concerns about the effective management and impact of respiratory risks in healthcare across acute and community settings through the pandemic.

As core participants, CATA has appointed Saunders Law to represent it at the Inquiry.

Dr Trevor Smith, BAPEN President, commented:

“BAPEN has been fighting since the start of the pandemic for the safety and protection of healthcare professionals in all settings. The Government at the time did not act adequately to ensure this protection, from not recognising that Covid transmission is airborne, to failing to provide respiratory protection to all healthcare workers outside of Critical Care and for so-called aerosol generating procedures (AGPs). I am pleased that BAPEN, through CATA, can be a voice for nutrition healthcare professionals at the independent Covid Inquiry.”

Dr Barry Jones, CATA Chair and Chair of BAPEN Faculty commented:

“We are looking forward to supporting the 4 nation Inquiry as a core participant in Module 3. We will be highlighting our primary concerns around the failure to recognise the airborne route and its proper mitigation across all healthcare settings.”

Kamini Gadhok MBE, CATA Vice Chair and Chief Executive of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, commented:

“CATA represents a wide range of healthcare workers, experts and patients, who have often been ignored by the Government in the pandemic. We have fought for so long for the safety of others and this feels like the final hurdle to being heard. Our primary aim all along has been to protect those on the frontline and we look forward to making our case for change.”

Cyrlia Knight, Partner at Saunders Law and Head of Public Inquiries commented:

“Saunders Law is pleased to be supporting both CATA and the Covid Inquiry through our involvement representing CATA as a core participant. We are committed to ensuring that the

Inquiry appreciates and adequately investigates CATA' core concern about the fundamental importance of Covid 19 being transmitted by an airborne route, and the implications that this has had, or should have had, in the UK's response to the pandemic."

Further information, please contact: bapen@mandfhealth.com.

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Notes to Editors

CATA is a voluntary and collaborative forum of professional organisations and healthcare charities representing over 65,000 members. It also includes several experts in their respective fields.

Organisations CATA represents include Association for Respiratory Technology & Physiology, British Association for Parenteral & Enteral Nutrition, British and Irish Association of Stroke Physicians, British Dietetic Association, British Occupational Hygiene Society, British Society of Gastroenterology, College of Paramedics, Doctors Association UK, National Nurses' Nutrition Group, Patient Safety Learning, Queen's Nursing Institute (representing Community Nurses), and Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

CATA was formed as a response to the UK Covid-19 inquiry by the COVID Airborne Protection Alliance (CAPA). CAPA itself was originally known as the Aerosol Generating Procedures Alliance (AGPA) and formed in August 2020 due to concerns organisations and individuals had on then UK Government policy. It changed its name to CAPA in September 2021.

Aerosol transmission can occur when small respiratory aerosols containing the virus remain in the air and can be inhaled by another person. This puts healthcare workers at particularly high risk when caring for infectious patients or service-users.