ALEXANDRIA HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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HEALTH Update 6: COVID-19 Situational, First COVID-19 cases identified in Virginia, DC, and Maryland

March 10, 2020

Dear Colleague:

Thank you for your partnership in responding to the public health threat of COVID-19.

SITUATION UPDATE:

COVID-19 is continuing to spread globally. Community spread (spread of an illness for which the initial source of infection is unknown) is being detected in a growing number of countries and in the US.

- **Countries with widespread or sustained community spread of COVID-19 include China, Iran, Italy, Japan, and South Korea**.
- **As of March 10, 2020, states with community spread include California and Washington**.
- **The current risk of COVID-19 infection to the American public is still considered low. As of today, March 10, 2020 at 7:00 a.m. there are five (5) presumptive positive COVID-19 cases in Virginia.**

CLINICIAN INFORMATION CALL:

We will discuss the latest information about COVID-19 and answer your questions with a teleconference for providers. We will have two sessions:

Wednesday March 11 at 1:00 pm

Thursday March 12 at 1:00 pm

Dial: 703.746.3009
Enter code: 479000#

OFFICE PREPARATION:

- Screen patients upon arrival for travel and respiratory illness
- Educate patients about handwashing and respiratory etiquette
    - Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
    - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
    - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough
- Advise your staff to stay home when sick

- Explore options for telehealth with your patients
- Think ahead: Provide additional training to staff that includes:
  - Cross training employees to ensure coverage in case people need to stay home when sick.
  - Process for employees to identify themselves as sick and be sent home as soon as possible
- Maintain a clean environment; clean frequently touched surfaces such as telephones, keyboards, and doorknobs

EVALUATION OF PATIENTS FOR COVID-19

1. **Please do not direct patients to call or visit the Alexandria Health Department directly**
   - The health department phone numbers on this document are for providers only
   - COVID-19 testing is not available at the health department
   - The health department only coordinates testing in conjunction with healthcare providers and not with individual patients

2. **Collect all relevant information**
   - Dates and location of travel
   - If the patient was a close contact of a known COVID-19 case
   - Signs and symptoms of illness
   - Day of symptom onset
   - Was the patient tested for influenza?

3. **For patients at home who have mild symptoms and do not require further medical evaluation, but meet COVID-19 testing criteria (see below):**
   - Instruct the patient to stay at home
   - Consult with the Alexandria Health Department

4. **For patients in the office:**

   - Use the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
     - For Provider: Face shield or goggles, N-95 respirator, Gown, Gloves
       (if no access to N-95, use facemask, maintain distance from patient when possible, and do not do any aerosol generating procedures such as NP/OP swab collection)
     - For Patient: Facemask
     - *Prepare a kit with all the necessary PPE ahead of time, so when a patient comes in all the PPE is in place to protect all your employees.*
   - Evaluate the patient for **ALL** possible diagnoses based on their symptoms (e.g. influenza, Strep throat), not just COVID-19
   - Consider whether the patient meets COVID-19 testing criteria (next page)

5. **If your patient meets testing criteria or you need further consultation**
   - Call the Alexandria Health Department:
     - During business hours: 703-746-4951.
     - After Hours: 571-259-8549
     (**Please note that these numbers are for healthcare providers only—do not provide to patients**)

   - The Health Department helps coordinate testing:

- The NP and OP swabs used for rapid flu testing are not the same swabs used for COVID-19. We can provide the correct swabs
- We will make sure you are protecting yourself with the correct PPE
- If you are not testing through a commercial laboratory we will facilitate specimen transport to our state public health laboratory.
- It is anticipated that Quest and LabCorp will have testing kits available this week. To obtain testing kits please call Quest or Labcorp directly.

If you do decide to test a patient for COVID-19 through a commercial laboratory please alert the health department the same day when the specimen is collected by calling 703-746-4951

COVID-19 TESTING CRITERIA:
"Criteria to Guide Evaluation of Persons under Investigation (PUI) for COVID-19" (revised March 4, 2020)

Criteria for Testing

Clinical Features		Epidemiologic Risk
Fever[1] or symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing)	AND	Any person, including health care personnel[2] , who has had close contact[3] with a laboratory-confirmed[4] COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset
Fever[1] AND symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing) AND tested negative for influenza[5]	AND	A history of travel to a country with a Level 2 or 3 Travel Advisory OR an area with confirmed ongoing community transmission, within 14 days of symptom onset
Fever OR signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough or shortness of breath) AND tested negative for influenza[5] AND a respiratory virus panel negative for all pathogens AND without an alternative explanatory diagnosis	AND	A history of residing in a nursing home or long-term care facility within 14 days of symptom onset

*The above criteria serve as guidance for evaluation. In consultation with public health departments, patients should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

There is currently no recommendation to test
- someone with symptoms who was in contact with an asymptomatic person who was in contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case

[1] Fever may be subjective or confirmed.
[2] For healthcare personnel, testing may be considered if there has been exposure to a person with suspected COVID-19 without laboratory confirmation. Because of their often extensive and close contact with vulnerable patients in healthcare settings, even mild signs and symptoms (e.g., sore throat) of COVID-19 should be evaluated among potentially exposed healthcare personnel. Additional information is available in CDC's Interim U.S. Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure in a Healthcare Setting to Patients with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html).
[3] Close contact is defined as— a) being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period; close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a healthcare waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case – or – b) having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19

case (e.g., being coughed on) while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment (PPE) (e.g., gowns, gloves, NIOSH-certified disposable N95 respirator, eye protection).

[4] Documentation of laboratory-confirmation of COVID-19 may not be possible for travelers or persons caring for COVID-19 patients in other countries.

[5] Includes rapid and confirmatory influenza testing

For CDC Clinician webinars and updates for clinicians please visit:
https://emergency.cdc.gov/coca/calls/index.asp

For the latest travel alert information: www.cdc.gov/travel

For more information on COVID-19:
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus
https://www.alexandriava.gov/Health
http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/surveillance-and-investigation/novel-coronavirus/

Sincerely,

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