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March 25, 2020

To: All Clients

Re: New information for COVID-19

Please use this as your updated memo. We have eliminated a couple of things that are no longer valid in the testing for COVID-19.

We are encouraging everyone to please follow the CDC and state guidelines to ensure we are following the correct protocol for testing. Please make sure you are testing *only* patients that meet the criteria listed below. Also be mindful not to order this test on patients that really do not need it. We are still trying to conserve test kits for patients who really need to be tested.

Clinicians should use their judgment to determine if a patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 and whether the patient should be tested. These symptoms may appear **2-14 days after exposure** (based on the incubation period of MERS-CoV viruses). The following are some of the signs and symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Priorities for testing may include:

1. Symptomatic individuals such as, older adults and individuals with chronic medical conditions and/or an immunocompromised state that may put them at higher risk for poor outcomes (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, receiving immunosuppressive medications, chronic lung disease, chronic kidney disease).
2. Any persons including healthcare personnel who within 14 days of symptom onset had close contact with a suspect or laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient, or who have a history of travel from affected geographic areas within 14 days of their symptom onset. These areas include in state, out of state, and out of the country.

Frequently Asked Questions

➤ **SUPPLY SHORTAGE:**

Quest is now accepting Dry Swabs (non-calcium alginate and non-wood sticks) in a phosphate buffered saline solution for testing. We are currently creating kits using our BBL CultureSwab Plus Collection and Transport systems. The gel transport media is being thrown away. The swab is collected and placed in a sterile tube containing saline. These kits should be used for Oropharyngeal collections. They may also be used for Nasopharyngeal collections, but the collection may be uncomfortable because of the size and flexibility of the swab. We ask that you request saline tubes from us and use the BBL CultureSwabs that you currently have in your office. Secondly, if a patient has a productive cough and it can be collected in a “safe” area where patients/employees are not exposed. Please submit a sputum sample in a sterile cup. A good sample is not SPIT in a cup. Follow CDC guidelines for proper sputum collection. *There is a shortage of M4 media and Nasopharyngeal swabs globally.*

➤ **COVID-19 TESTING:**

We are currently sending COVID-19 to Quest. We have been told there **is no** shortage of reagent to continue testing. They have also opened up additional testing sites to help with the TAT. Current TAT is 72 to 96 hours. This info is relevant TODAY.

➤ **TEST ALONE:**

Patients should come alone for testing. If not possible, they will be asked to remain in their car for collection.

➤ **COVID-19 COLLECTION:**

We are not collecting for COVID-19. There have been special situations where a FLU test is needed and if negative will reflex to COVID-19. Flu test have a very short stability and should be collected at the Path Lab. In these special situations, we are collecting for FLU and COVID-19 to minimize exposure of the patient. Other than this situation, COVID-19 should be collected at the physician’s office.

➤ **REPORTING OF COVID-19 RESULTS:**

PL is calling both positive and negative results to clients. PL is reporting all positives to the State. We are also electronic reporting all positive and negative COVID-19 to the state. Clients do not need to do so.

➤ **HOURS OF OPERATION:**

Hours of operation currently remain the same.

➤ **DRIVE BY SERVICE:**

We continue to screen patients before they enter the Path Lab. If you have been sick, in contact with a known COVID-19 or person of interest or traveled out of the country in the last 14 days, you will be collected outside the building. We are also collecting patients outside who request us to do so.

Questions please call Nicole Leger 337-312-1256 or email nleger@thepathlab.com