TO: Vermont Health Care Providers and Health Care Facilities
FROM: Laura Ann Nicolai, Deputy State Epidemiologist

Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Provider Update

SUMMARY – An outbreak of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China continues to grow. People with 2019-nCoV infections have been identified in China and a growing number of international locations, including the United States. Person-to-person spread has been reported in the U.S. and other countries. Globally, reported illnesses in people with 2019-nCoV have ranged from mild to severe, including death.

This guidance supersedes a January 23, 2020 Health Department Health Advisory and provides recommendations and requested actions for health care providers for the management of patients suspected to have 2019-nCoV infection.

REQUESTED ACTIONS

Identify:
- Ask all patients about travel in the previous 14 days. If they traveled to China, document the last date they were in China and call the Health Department at 802-863-7240 (24/7).
- Ask all patients who have traveled to China in the previous 14 days about respiratory symptoms. Instruct patients with respiratory illness to wear a face mask at triage.
- Ask about known contact with anyone diagnosed with 2019-nCoV.
- Use the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Person Under Investigation (PUI) guidance to evaluate the patient for 2019-nCoV risk and testing.

Isolate:
- Separate people with suspected 2019-nCoV from other people in the waiting area. Provide easy access to respiratory hygiene supplies (60-95% alcohol-based hand sanitizer, tissues, no touch receptacles and face masks) and a well-ventilated space at least 6 feet from others.
- Triage and place patients with suspected 2019-nCoV in an airborne infection isolation room (AIIR) with the door closed.
- If there is no AIIR and the patient requires hospitalization, transfer patients to a facility with an AIIR.
- If there is no AIIR and the patient is stable and can be discharged home, keep them in a single room with the door closed wearing a mask until they can be discharged.

Inform:
- Report suspect cases immediately to the Health Department by calling 802-863-7240 (24/7).
- Report suspected cases to your infection preventionist.
2019-nCoV Testing:

- Consult the Health Department at 802-863-7240 (24/7) to determine if testing is recommended. If indicated, the Health Department will coordinate shipping specimens to the Vermont Department of Health Laboratory.
- Collect upper and lower respiratory specimens. Detailed guidance for collecting, handling, and testing clinical specimens is available from the CDC.
- Collect specimens as soon as possible once a Patient Under Investigation is identified, regardless of time of symptom onset.
- Evaluate patients for other causes of respiratory infection as clinically indicated. Testing for other respiratory pathogens should not delay specimen collection for 2019-nCoV testing.
- For biosafety reasons, it is not recommended to perform virus isolation in cell culture or initial characterization of viral agents recovered in cultures of specimens from a Patient Under Investigation for 2019-nCoV.

Infection Prevention:

- CDC recommends the use of eye protection and adherence to standard, contact, and airborne precautions.
- Encourage people with respiratory symptoms to follow respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette (placing a mask over nose and mouth) and hand hygiene while they are in the health care facility.
- Consider posting information to remind people with respiratory symptoms to wear a mask, practice respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette and hand hygiene.

Clinical Management and Treatment:

- Interim clinical guidance is available from the CDC. This will be updated as more information becomes available.
- Clinical presentation among reported cases of 2019-nCoV infection varies in severity from asymptomatic infection or mild illness to severe or fatal illness.
- Some reports suggest the potential for clinical deterioration during the second week of illness.
- No specific treatment for 2019-nCoV infection is currently available. Clinical management includes prompt implementation of recommended infection prevention and control measures and supportive management of complications, including advanced organ support if indicated.
- Corticosteroids should be avoided unless indicated for other reasons (for example, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease exacerbation or septic shock per Surviving Sepsis guidelines), because of the potential for prolonging viral replication as observed in MERS-CoV patients.
Discharge Planning:

- Before discharging a Patient Under Investigation, consult with the Health Department to assure that any post-discharge public health follow-up has been arranged. The decision to monitor a patient in the inpatient or outpatient setting should be made with the Health Department on a case-by-case basis.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES and INFORMATION – Recommendations are likely to change as the situation develops. We encourage providers to consult the resources below for additional information.

- 2019 Novel Coronavirus (CDC)
- Flowchart to Identify and Assess 2019 Novel Coronavirus (CDC)
- Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Confirmed 2019 Novel Coronavirus or Persons Under Investigation for 2019-nCoV in Healthcare Settings (CDC)
- What Healthcare Personnel Should Know about Caring for Patients with Confirmed or Possible 2019-nCoV Infection (CDC)
- Interim Clinical Guidance for Management of Patients with Confirmed 2019 Novel Coronavirus Infection (CDC)
- Interim Considerations for Disposition of Hospitalized Patients with 2019-nCoV Infection (CDC)
- Hospital and Healthcare Professionals Preparedness Checklists (CDC)
- Interim Guidance for Implementing Home Care of People Not Requiring Hospitalization for 2019 Novel Coronavirus (CDC)
- Interim Guidance for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Systems and 911 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPS) for 2019-nCoV in the United States (CDC)
- Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of N95 Respirators (CDC)

If you have any questions, contact the HAN Coordinator at 802-859-5900 or vthan@vermont.gov.

HAN Message Type Definitions

Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation may not require immediate action.

Health Update: Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Info Service Message: Provides general correspondence from VDH, which is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.