Guidelines for COVID-19 Testing for a Person Under Investigation

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Note: These guidelines have been updated on March 17, 2020 to reflect recent changes to the CDC guidelines and test availability.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is regularly updating their Interim Guidelines for Collecting, Handling, and Testing Clinical Specimens from Persons Under investigation (PUIs) for 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCov)[2]. These now include the recommendation that "(h)ealth care providers should contact their local/state health department immediately to notify them of patients with fever and lower respiratory illness who they suspect may have COVID-19. Local and state public health staff will determine if the patient meets the criteria for testing for COVID-19. The state and local health department will assist clinicians to collect, store, and ship specimens appropriately, including during afterhours or on weekends/holidays".[2]

State and local health labs are the primary test sites for PUIs. Health care providers should contact their local/state health department for information on how to proceed with reporting a PUI and submitting a sample for testing.

Providers now have options for testing a wider group of symptomatic patients through testing authorized by the Food and Drug Administration under Emergency Use Authorization (EUA)[3]. Several national reference labs offer SARS-CoV2 testing, although regional restrictions may exist. Warde Medical lab can assist in coordinating SARS-CoV2 testing by sending to one of the major reference labs (check with Warde client services to get the latest testing information). Currently, the CDC recommends testing on an upper respiratory nasopharyngeal (NP) swab in viral transport media[3]. Oropharyngeal (OP) swabs are lower priority and should be combined in the same tube as the NP. Turn-around times are laboratory dependent. Continue to work with your local state and health departments to determine if SARS-CoV testing is warranted.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has published a Standard Operating Procedures document[4] for providers in the state of Michigan. Health care providers in Michigan should visit the MDHHS website[5] for the latest version of this document and additional information on 2019-nCoV/COVID-19.

Warde/MCL Laboratory **DOES NOT** currently perform COVID-19 diagnostic testing. However, in accordance with CDC recommendations that "(t)esting for other pathogens by the provider should be done as part of the initial evaluation but should not delay testing for COVID-19"[2], Warde will accept PUI specimens for PCR testing of **other** respiratory pathogens **AFTER** the appropriate local/state agency has been notified.

Our Respiratory Virus Panel (Test Code RPCR)[6] detects the presence of adenovirus, influenza A, influenza B, parainfluenza virus 1, parainfluenza virus 2, parainfluenza virus 3, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), rhinovirus, and enterovirus using real-time PCR. We provide next day results and conduct this panel on a

variety of specimen sources. If VTM is in short supply Warde accepts the following samples in IATA-approved containers - broncheoalveolar lavage/wash, sputum (undiluted), nasal aspirate, and nasal wash. In keeping with CDC recommendations, Warde will not perform a Virus Culture on a specimen from a 2019-nCoV/COVID-19 PUI.

Warde does not recommend ordering the comprehensive viral detection (CVD) panel to rule out other respiratory pathogens, as this will delay results in comparison to the running of the dedicated respiratory panel (RPCR). Furthermore, clients should NOT test specimens other than those specifically considered acceptable for the respiratory virus panel. Viral testing orders for other samples (such as whole blood) will not include respiratory pathogens, as this would not provide clinically useful information, and are not usually indicated in the workup of respiratory viral illnesses.

Please contact the Warde Client Services line at (800) 760-9969 with additional questions regarding 2019-nCoV/COVID-19 or RPCR testing.

[1] On February 11, 2020 the World Health Organization named the disease COVID-19, short for "coronavirus disease 2019." The Coronavirus Study Group of the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses now designates the virus name as SARS-CoV-2. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html

[2] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html

[3] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-criteria.html

[4] https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdhhs/nCoV_SOP_680668_7.pdf

[5] https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71550_5104_53072---,00.html

[6] http://www.wardelab.com/test_page.asp?test=RESPIRATORY+VIRUS+PANEL+%28PCR%29