

Internal Memo

Date: Thursday, February 27, 2020

To: HHS leaders and physicians

From: Kirsten Krull, VP Quality and Performance & CNE
Dr. Dominik Mertz, Medical Director, Infection Control

Subject: **Updated Provincial Case Definition – COVID-19**

We are applying the [revised provincial case definition](#) for COVID-19 in our screening questions for patients coming to HHS following the increased spread of cases in Europe and across Asia. However, there are still **NO** cases reported at HHS or in the Hamilton area, and the risks remain low for Ontarians.

The changes in the impacted areas or countries (in addition to mainland China) include: **Iran, South Korea, Italy, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Japan.**

The screening questions for patients coming to HHS have been updated to reflect the new situation.

- **Staff at all entry points to HHS now need to ask patients about travel to areas and countries impacted by COVID-19 (including, but not limited to, China, South Korea, Hong Kong, Italy and Iran) when screening them for potential exposure.**

A travel history to countries not mentioned above, does not warrant testing for COVID-19 unless there was exposure to infected patients. Testing may be indicated depending on changes in the spread of the infection. Updated federal travel advisories listing countries with a heightened risk for COVID-19 are [available here](#).

If anyone entering our hospital system meets the updated criteria, they should be managed in Airborne/Droplet/Contact Precautions in a negative pressure Airborne Infection Isolation Room if available, or single room with Hepa filter. If there are questions please contact infection control on call (available 24/7). The on-call Infectious Disease physician and Infection Control Practitioner should be contacted for cases that meet definition.

We are planning to deal with a possible pandemic resulting from COVID-19 and to respond to more patients who may require testing in our EDs and elsewhere. This includes being prepared should COVID-19 start resulting from community transmission and lead to increased demand on our already stretched healthcare system.

More information is [posted on the Hub](#) about our preparations and actions. Employees are reminded of our communicable disease protocols and those who have travelled internationally are asked to report their itinerary to Employee Health Services. See the [memo issued on February 26](#), 2020.

Thank you for your collaboration.

Kirsten and Dominik