Date: December 17, 2021

To: ECC Director
    All ZEOCs and Zone Operational Leads

From: Karin Fluet, Senior Provincial Director, Infection Prevention and Control
      Dr. Oscar Larios, Interim Senior Medical Director, Infection Prevention and Control
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Cc: Mauro Chies, Vice President, Cancer Care Alberta & Clinical Support Services
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Re: Update - Patient Cohorting for COVID-19 (Including Variant Strains)

Although there are many unknowns about the Omicron variant, cohorting strategies will need to be in place to maintain operational capacity at AHS/Covenant acute care sites. The information below addresses cohorting in the context of both the emergence of the Omicron variant and the current laboratory testing protocols for COVID-19 variant strains.

**COVID-positive patients**
- All COVID-positive patients must be placed on Contact and Droplet precautions.
- All attempts should be made to use a private room for COVID-positive patients.
- Ideally, cohorting is based on the COVID-19 variant strain.
- When cohorting is necessary due to capacity challenges, patients with a COVID-positive result who have the following risk factors should be prioritized for private rooms:
  - Travel outside of Canada in the last 14 days.
  - Close contact of a person with acute respiratory illness who has travelled outside of Canada in the 14 days before their illness onset.
  - Close contact of a person with confirmed/probable COVID-19 infection due to a variant other than Delta in the last 14 days.
  - Associated with a COVID-19 outbreak (in any type of setting) due to a variant other than Delta in the last 14 days.
- Potential cohorting strategies should be reviewed with your site/local Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) team. This may include cohorting of COVID-positive patients prior to the availability of variant testing results.
Suspected COVID-19 patients (i.e. test pending and/or symptoms consistent with COVID-19)

- All patients suspected of having COVID-19 must be placed on Contact and Droplet precautions unless otherwise directed by the COVID-19 screening/assessment tools.
- Patients with pending COVID-19 tests should be managed as potentially COVID-positive.
- When capacity becomes an issue, cohorting decisions are to be made collaboratively between IPC and Site Operations/Leadership.

Recommendations about IPC management of COVID-19 in Acute Care will continue to be updated as the science base broadens, and the local and provincial epidemiology evolves.

Thank you for your ongoing collaboration and support. Please contact your local IPC team with any questions or concerns.