

Date: September 13, 2021

To: ECC Director
All ZEOCs and Zone Operational Leads

From: Karin Fluet, Senior Provincial Director, Infection Prevention and Control

Cc: Mauro Chies, Vice President, Cancer Care Alberta & Clinical Support Services
Dr. Mark Joffe, Vice President & Medical Director, Cancer Care Alberta, Clinical Support Services & Provincial Clinical Excellence

Re: Update - Patient Cohorting for COVID-19 (Including Variant Strains)

Variant COVID-19 strains have created management challenges. The updated recommendations are as follows:

COVID-Positive Patients

- All COVID-positive patients must be placed on Contact and Droplet precautions.
- Cohorting is based on the COVID-19 variant strain.
- The table below describes when cohorting of patients with confirmed COVID-19 infection can occur.

COVID-19 Strain	Can be cohorted with
Wildtype/Non-variant	Wildtype or B.1.1.7
B.1.1.7/Alpha	Wildtype or B.1.1.7
B.1.351 / Beta	B.1.351
P.1/Gamma	P.1
B.1.617	Do not cohort
B.1.617.2/Delta	B.1.617.2
Other variants	Consult IPC
Unresolved	Consult IPC

All attempts should be made to use a private room until strain confirmation results are available. If 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 strain other than B.1.617.2/Delta in the last 14 days.
- Associated with a COVID-19 outbreak due to a strain other than B.1.617.2/Delta at any healthcare unit/facility, congregate living or other workplace or social gathering in the last 14 days.

Please review possible cohorting strategies with your site/local IPC team. Options to be considered may include cohorting of COVID-positive patients prior to the variant testing result.

Memorandum

Suspected COVID-19 patients (i.e. test pending)

- All patients suspected of having COVID-19 must be placed on Contact and Droplet precautions.
- Patients with pending COVID tests should be managed as potential COVID-variant positives until proven to be COVID negative (*i.e.* variant infection is not ruled out until COVID-19 is ruled out).
- If/when capacity becomes an issue, cohorting decisions are to be made collaboratively between IPC and Site Operations/Leadership.

Recommendations about Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) management of variant 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.

Sincerely,

Karin Fluet
Senior Provincial Director
Infection Prevention and Control

Dr. Uma Chandran
Medical Lead
AHS IPC Provincial COVID-19 Response

Dr. Oscar Larios
Interim Senior Medical Director
Infection Prevention and Control