



**Date:** May 20, 2020  
**To:** North Zone, North Zone Physicians, Nurses, Unit Locations  
**From:** Microbiology Section, Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) and *DynaLIFE* Medical Labs  
**Re:** Expansion of Rapid COVID-19 Testing to Emergency Department Patients at QEII

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**PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE**

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**Key Message:**

- Effective **May 21, 2020**, requests for rapid COVID-19 testing on specimens submitted from **Emergency Department (ED) patients** at Queen Elizabeth II Hospital (QEII) and surrounding rural hospitals will be performed using the rapid GeneXpert® nucleic acid test (NAT). **All inpatients** that meet criteria for rapid testing and have rapid testing ordered will continue to have the GeneXpert® test performed.
- Specimens will be transported to QEII by routine courier.
- Acceptable specimens include nasopharyngeal swabs or throat swabs (polyester or cotton) in Universal Transport Media (UTM), sterile saline or eSwab™ media, endotracheal tube aspirates, and bronchoalveolar lavages.
- Specimens collected from patients in assessment centres and in the community will continue to be forwarded to the APL – Public Health Laboratory.

**Why this is Important:**

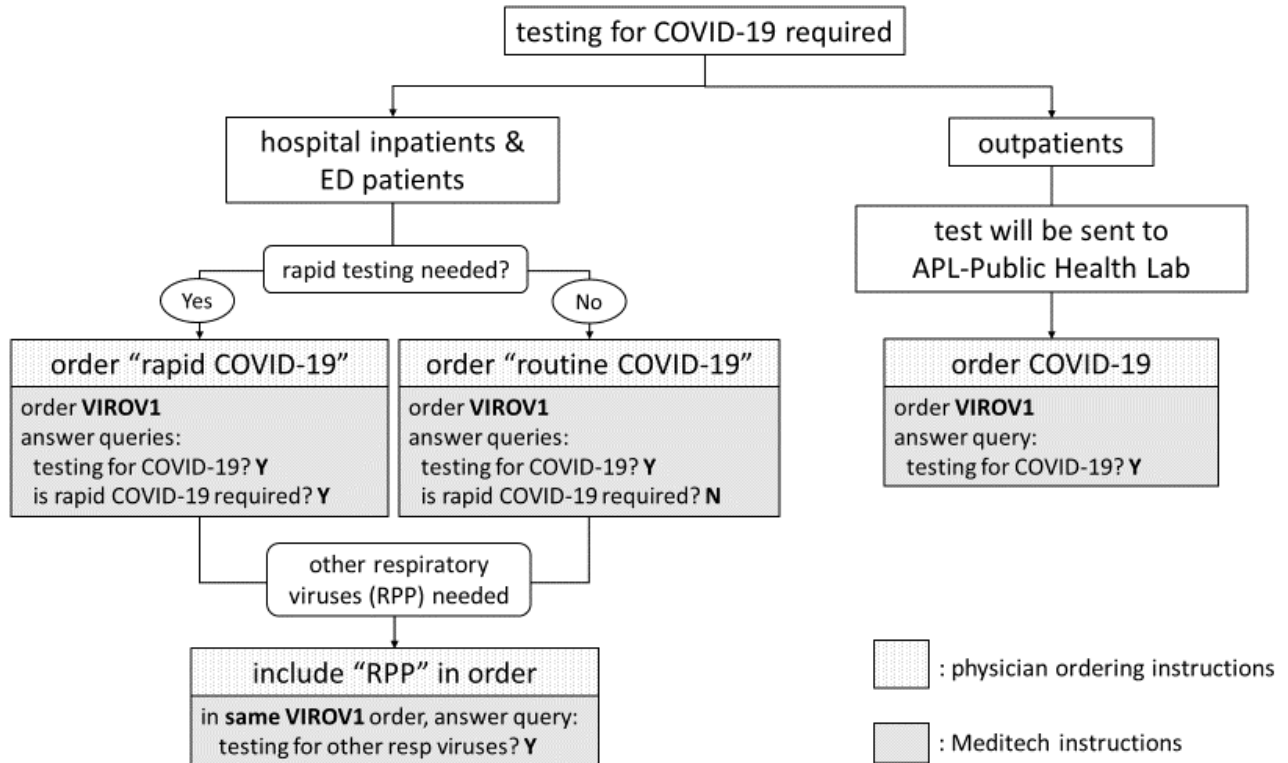
- The GeneXpert® assay targets the N and S genes of SARS-CoV-2, the etiologic agent of COVID-19.
- Its performance is comparable to the laboratory-developed test used at the APL – Public Health Laboratory. Additional confirmatory testing is not necessary.
- Because of limited supply, this test is currently being offered to hospital ED and inpatients only.

**Action Required:**

- Ensure all orders for rapid COVID-19 are submitted in Meditech (see flow chart attached).
  - If rapid COVID-19 testing is required, order as “rapid COVID-19”.
  - If COVID-19 testing is needed, but not urgently, order as “routine COVID-19”.
  - If testing for other respiratory viruses is needed, order “RPP”. The respiratory pathogen panel (RPP) will no longer be automatically performed on all COVID-19 tests.
- Repeat rapid COVID-19 test requests and testing of outpatients will continue to be sent to the APL – Public Health Laboratories in Edmonton.
- **All results will be available in Netcare. The results will not be viewable in Meditech.**
- Contact and droplet precautions should only be discontinued in accordance with Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) guidelines or consultation and should take into account the patient’s clinical and radiological findings.



- **Ordering staff: all COVID-19 and other viral testing should be ordered as VIROV1.**
  - See Meditech instructions on flow chart (shaded boxes).



**Inquiries and feedback may be directed to:**

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**This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by:**

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