



Date: April 20, 2020
To: Department of Critical Care Physicians, Calgary
From: Alberta Precision Laboratories - Calgary, Microbiology
Re: Introduction of Rapid COVID-19 Testing in Calgary ICU's

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Message:

- Effective April 14, 2020, COVID-19 testing specimens submitted from patients in ICU locations in Calgary (ACH, FMC, PLC, SHC, RGH) will be tested with the Simplexa[®] nucleic acid test (NAT).
- Results will be available within 12 hours of receipt at the hospital laboratory.
- Acceptable specimens include nasopharyngeal swabs (FLOQSwab[®] in Universal Transport Media), endotracheal tube aspirates, and bronchoalveolar lavages.

Why This Is Important:

- The Simplexa[®] COVID-19 Direct assay (Diasorin) is a NAT that targets the ORF1ab region and the S gene of SARS-CoV-2, the etiologic agent of COVID-19.
- Its performance is equivalent to the COVID-19 lab-developed test being used at the APL-Public Health Laboratory. Additional confirmatory testing is not necessary.
- Because of limited supplies, this test is currently being offered to ICU patients only. Work is ongoing to validate other assays and secure supplies to provide rapid results to more patients.

Action Required:

- Ordering "COVID-19 testing" in SCM on a patient in an ICU location will automatically order the rapid Simplexa assay.
- **Do not order the Respiratory Pathogen Panel (RPP) on these patients.** All specimens for COVID-19 will be tested with the RPP. Ordering the RPP will cause duplicate testing.
- Specimens from other locations will continue to be sent to APL-Public Health Laboratory.
- Contact & droplet precautions should only be discontinued in accordance with Infection Prevention & Control (IP&C) guidelines or consultation, and should take into account the patient's clinical and radiological findings.

Inquiries and feedback may be directed to:

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This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by:

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