



Date: May 8, 2020
To: North Zone, North Zone Physicians, Nurses, Unit Locations
From: Microbiology Section, DynaLIFE Medical Labs
Re: Introduction of Rapid, Decentralized COVID-19 Testing at Northern Lights Regional Health Centre (NLRHC) and Northwest Health Centre (NWHC)

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Message:

- Effective **May 11, 2020**, COVID-19 testing on specimens submitted from hospital inpatients at Northern Lights Regional Health Centre (NLRHC) and Northwest Health Centre (NWHC) and surrounding rural hospitals will be performed using the rapid GeneXpert® nucleic acid test (NAT).
- Acceptable specimens include nasopharyngeal swabs (FLOQSwab® in Universal Transport Media), throat swabs (eSwab® collection kit or polyester/cotton swabs in saline transport medium), endotracheal tube aspirates, and bronchoalveolar lavages.
- Specimens collected from patients in emergency departments, assessment centres, and in the community will continue to be forwarded to the APL – Public Health Laboratory.

Why This Is Important:

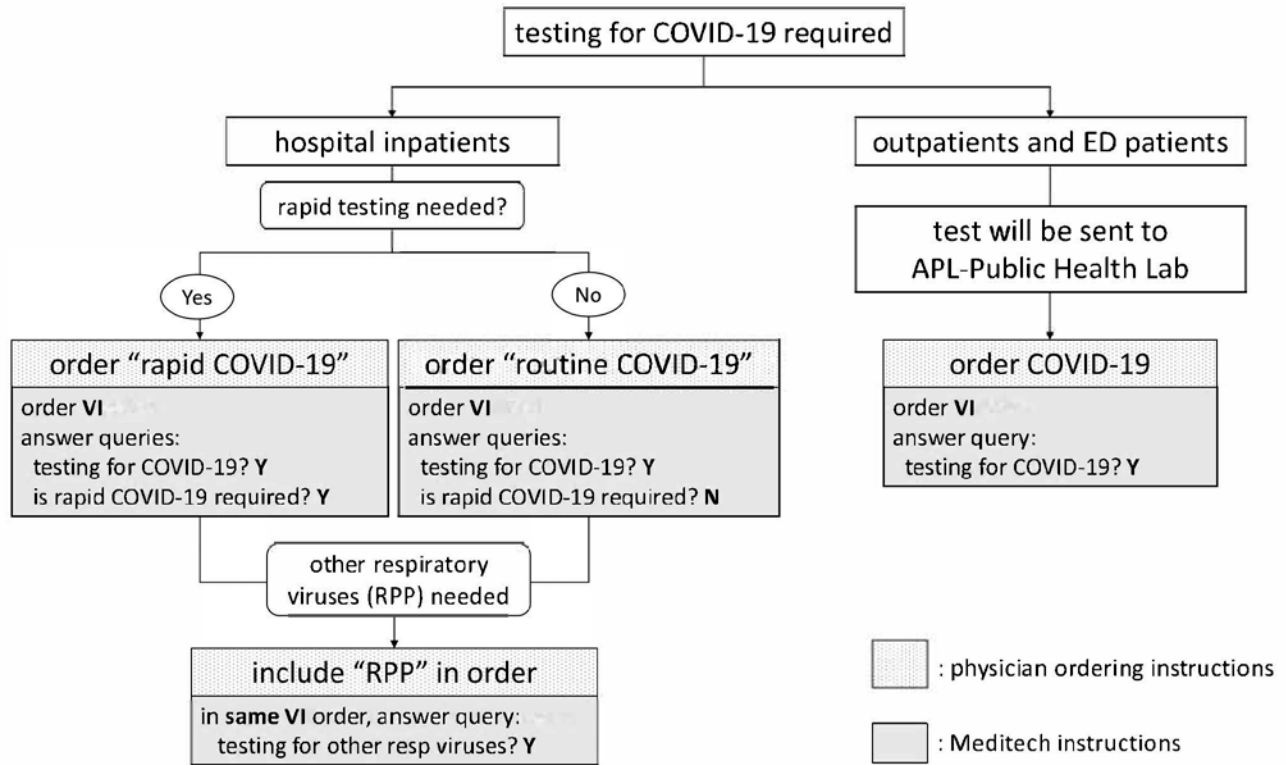
- The GeneXpert® assay targets the N and S genes of SARS-CoV-2, the etiologic agent of COVID-19.
- Its performance is comparable to the laboratory-developed test used at the APL – Public Health Laboratory. Additional confirmatory testing is not necessary.
- Because of limited supply, this test is currently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

Action Required:

- Ensure all inpatient hospital 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 and emergency patients 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 VI.**
 - See Meditech instructions on flow chart (attached, shaded boxes).



Inquiries and feedback may be directed to:

Dr. Bob Verity, Interim Microbiology Director, DynaLIFE
Tel: (780) 451-3702 Ext. 8157

Or after 4pm and on weekends

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This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by:

Dr. Raymond Lai, Medical Director, *DynaLIFE* Medical Labs
Dr. Michael Mengel, Medical Director, Northern Zone