



Date: April 20, 2020
To: South Zone, Central Zone Physicians, Nurses, Unit Locations
From: Microbiology Section, Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL)
Re: Introduction of Rapid, Decentralized COVID-19 Testing at RDRH, CRH, MHRH

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Message:

- Effective **April 16, 2020**, COVID-19 testing on specimens submitted from hospital inpatients at Red Deer Regional Hospital (RDRH), Chinook Regional Hospital (CRH), Medicine Hat Regional Hospital (MHRH), and surrounding rural hospitals will be performed using the rapid Simplexa® nucleic acid test (NAT).
- Results will be available within 6 hours of receipt at the RDRH, CRH, and MHRH laboratories.
 - Specimens being transported to RDRH, CRH, and MHRH will be sent by routine courier.
- Acceptable specimens include nasopharyngeal swabs (in Universal Transport Media), nasopharyngeal aspirates, 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.

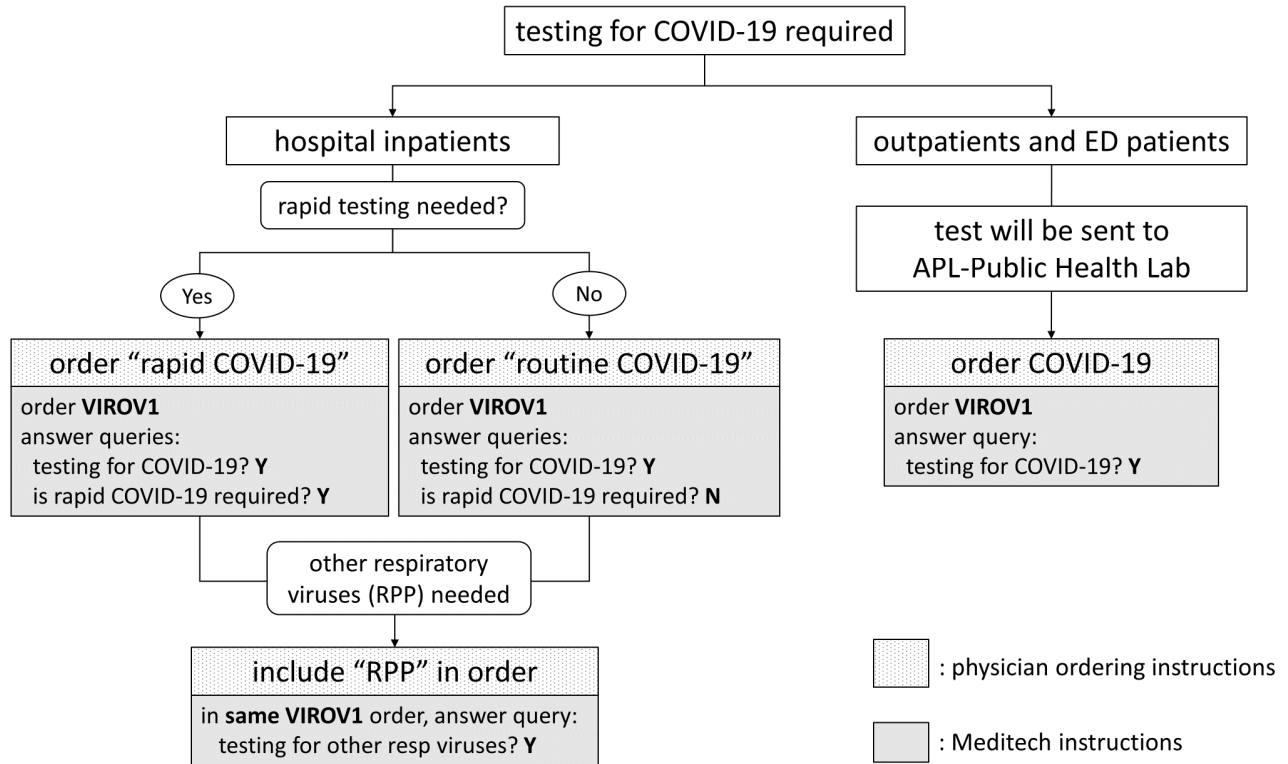
Why This Is Important:

- The Simplexa® assay targets the ORF1ab region and the S gene of SARS-CoV-2, the etiologic agent of COVID-19.
- Its performance is equivalent to the lab-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 orders for rapid COVID-19 are submitted in Meditech (see flow chart attached).
 - If rapid COVID-19 testing is required, order specifically as “rapid COVID-19”.
 - If COVID-19 testing is needed, but not urgently, order as “COVID-19” or “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 Calgary.
- **All results will be available in Netcare. The results will not be viewable in Meditech.**
- 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.

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