



Date: January 31, 2020
To: All Physicians
From: Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) – Public Health Laboratory
Re: Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Laboratory Update

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Key Messages:

- A novel coronavirus (CoV) is causing an outbreak of viral pneumonia throughout China and has spread to multiple other countries.
- Although the current risk to Albertans is low, infection with this pathogen should be considered in cases of acute respiratory illness who have traveled in the prior 14 days to areas considered to have active transmission of 2019-nCoV. The epidemiology of this outbreak is evolving rapidly and the assessment of the suspect case is done in consultation with the APL-Public Health Laboratory virologist-on-call (VOC) and the Medical Officer of Health (MOH).
- Both upper (e.g. nasopharyngeal swab) and lower (if feasible) respiratory tract specimens should be collected for testing.
- APL-Public Health Laboratory will work with the National Microbiology Laboratory (Winnipeg) for the provision of 2019-nCoV testing as needed.

Background:

In December 2019, dozens of patients in the city of Wuhan, China, fell ill with an unknown pathogen. A novel coronavirus, termed 2019-nCoV, has been found to be the etiological agent responsible for this outbreak. The 2019-nCoV is a newly discovered coronavirus related to SARS-CoV. The outbreak has expanded beyond Wuhan and the epidemiology has been rapidly evolving. Although risk to Albertans is low, all suspect cases should prompt MOH and VOC consultation to ensure appropriate testing is done.

Action Required:

- **Prior to collecting specimens from suspect cases** contact the Zone MOH and APL-Public Health (ProvLab) VOC when testing is desired for a suspect case of 2019-nCoV in a patient recently returned from an area with known 2019-nCoV circulation/transmission.

Links:

- [Alberta Public Health Communicable Disease Advisory](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada Travel Notice](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada Biosafety Advisory](#)

Inquiries and feedback may be directed to:

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This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by:

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