



Date: May 4, 2020
To: South Zone, Central Zone ER Physicians, Nurses, and Emergency Room Staff
From: Microbiology Section, Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL)
Re: REVISED: Expansion of Rapid COVID-19 Testing to ED Patients at RDRH, CRH, MHRH

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Message:

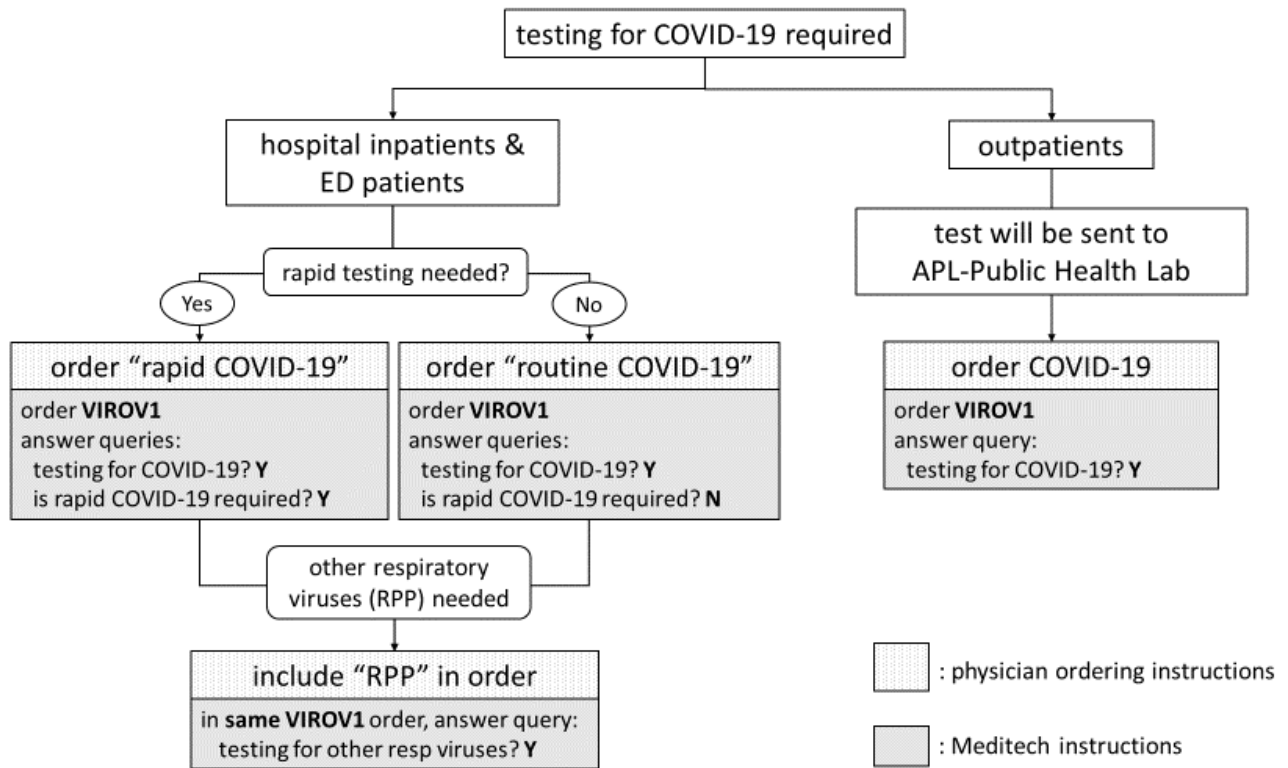
- Effective **May 4, 2020**, COVID-19 testing on specimens submitted from **ED patients** at Red Deer Regional Hospital (RDRH), Chinook Regional Hospital (CRH), Medicine Hat Regional Hospital (MHRH), and surrounding rural hospitals will be performed using the rapid Simplexa[®] nucleic acid test (NAT). **All inpatients** will continue to have the Simplexa[®] test performed.
- Results will be available within 6 hours of receipt at the RDRH, CRH, and MHRH laboratories.
 - Specimens will be transported to RDRH, CRH and MHRH by routine courier.
- Acceptable specimens include nasopharyngeal/throat swabs (in Universal Transport Media (UTM), ESwab, saline, but **not** APTIMA), nasopharyngeal aspirates, 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 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.

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 will continue to be sent to the APL-Public Health Laboratory 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:

Carol Boechler, Manager RDRH Laboratory 403-343-4718, carol.boechler@albertaprecisionlabs.ca
 Shelley Duncan, Manager CRH Laboratory, 403-388-5266, shelley.duncan@albertaprecisionlabs.ca
 Madisen Longley, Clinical Supervisor MHRH Laboratory, 403-529-8861, madisen.longley@albertaprecisionlabs.ca
 Wilson Chan, MD, Medical Microbiologist, 403-770-3338, wilson.chan@albertaprecisionlabs.ca
 Michael Groeschel, MD, Medical Microbiology, 403-770-3338, michael.groeschel@albertaprecisionlabs.ca

This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by:

Leland Baskin, MD, Associate Medical Director, South Sector