2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Provider Alert for Mendocino County
In light of recent news regarding local transmission (“sustained community spread”) of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Northern California and the West Coast, Mendocino County Public Health is taking steps to prepare for the possibility of COVID-19 community spread in our county in the near future. On March 4, 2020 a local and public health emergency was declared by Mendocino County due to the COVID-19 situation as announced in the latest press release on the new Novel Corona Virus Mendocino County webpage:

https://www.mendocinocounty.org/community/novel-coronavirus

On this webpage you can also find information for the new community focused COVID-19 hotline: (707) 234-6052

Please note the COVID-19 Mendocino County press conference on YOU TUBE from March 5, 2020, which can be a helpful source of information for you and your patients.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6_ucEEPNo

California declared a State of Emergency due to COVID-19 on March 5.

While there continue to be no known cases of COVID-19 in Mendocino County at this time, and the risk of infection in our County remains low, this is a rapidly evolving epidemic. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and California Department of Public Health (CDPH) are recommending that we prepare for a likely pandemic of COVID-19. The danger of a COVID-19 Pandemic is not based on the disease itself being extremely deadly. It is the widespread infection of populations without prior immunity to the disease during a pandemic which impacts society in ways that can be extremely damaging. For this reason, responses to pandemics are designed to first contain and then control and mitigate the spread of the disease so communities can prepare to respond.

The coronavirus in its usual form causes the common cold. COVID-19 can cause an illness that is like a severe flu, while most people experience mild or no illness. In general, children have not become seriously ill with this new coronavirus infection. Serious illness has generally occurred in the geriatric population. In a recent report (link below) from the WHO-China Joint Mission on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the following findings, based on analysis of over 50,000 laboratory confirmed cases, revealed important characteristics of COVID-19 infection including:


- Median age 51 with majority of cases between 39 and 63 years of age
- Transmission is via droplets and fomites (not airborne) as well as by fecal shedding
- Children (18 and under) are 2% of all cases and it is rare to see cases in children that are not mild.
• Typical symptoms are fever (87.9%), dry cough (67.7%) fatigue (38.1%), and sputum production (33.4%). Notably 3.7% of cases had diarrhea.
• 80% of cases have mild to moderate disease; 13.8% have severe disease; 6.1% have critical illness.
• Asymptomatic infection is rare.
• Individuals at highest risk for severe disease and death are over the age of 60 and those with co-morbidities.
• The highest mortality rate occurred in those over age 80 (CFR 21.9%)

Up until today, testing for the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) has been controlled by the CDC in coordination with local governmental public health departments. As of late last week, testing was made available in California at certain Public Health laboratories. As of today the closest Public Health testing site for Mendocino County is in the State Laboratory in Richmond, CA with plans to make the test available in the Sonoma County Public Health lab next week. While 5000 test kits were sent to these California Public Health labs by the CDC in the last week, efforts are being made by the CDC to distribute 70,000 tests kits to public health labs across the nation in the near future.

Yesterday LabCorp and Quest announced that they are making commercial COVID-19 tests available which hospitals and clinics can utilize without involvement of the public health system. The Mendocino County Public Health department will continue to utilize the Public Health System Covid-19 testing from the CDC for any high risk patients who would benefit from close involvement of the Public Health Departments. We ask that any clinicians who order the COVID-19 test from a commercial source such as Quest or LabCorp inform the Mendocino County Communicable Diseases Department about the patient so we can have situational awareness using a CMR form faxed to 472-2714. For any questions about this process please call Sharon Convery at (707) 391-3593.

Additionally any positive cases must be reported to the Public Health Department Duty Officer by calling REDCOM (707) 568-5992 and with the CMR form faxed to the above number.

It is critically important that all clinicians and health care administrators regularly familiarize themselves with the CDC guidelines for COVID-19 clinical criteria which can be found on the CDC website listed below and are regularly updated.

This week the CDC COVID-19 testing guidance was generalized to include anyone with respiratory symptoms. The Mendocino County Department of Public Health will continue to focus on the CDC HIGH RISK testing guidelines shown below that were in use prior to 3/3/2020 to guide the testing directly coordinated by the Public Health department:
Public Health department COVID-19 testing will only be available for individuals who meet the HIGH RISK criteria below (commercial lab testing by QUEST/LABCORP can be used by clinics or hospitals at their discretion).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clinical Features</th>
<th>Epidemiologic Risk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fever or signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath)</td>
<td>AND Any person, including healthcare personnel, who has had close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fever and signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization</td>
<td>AND A history of travel from affected geographic areas, within 14 days of symptom onset</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fever with severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g., pneumonia, ARDS (acute respiratory distress syndrome) requiring hospitalization and without an alternative explanatory diagnosis (e.g., influenza).</td>
<td>AND No identified source of exposure</td>
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¹ Fever may be subjective or objective

Clinicians with a patient meeting the above CDC generated HIGH RISK criteria for COVID-19 testing, and who wish to involve the public health department directly for testing, must contact the Public Health Officer to review the case. The Public Health Officer can be reached via REDCOM at (707) 568-5992. Ask to speak with the dispatch supervisor and request that the Mendocino County Health Officer be notified. If the case meets criteria for testing, the Health Officer will then consult with the CDC and obtain authorization for testing with a PUI number (Person Under Investigation). If approved, the samples will be obtained by a health care worker wearing proper PPE including: a N95 respirator, eye protection, gown, and gloves. The specimen will be sent by a Mendocino County courier to the Sonoma County Regional Public Health Lab which will coordinate testing with the CDC.

**Actions Requested of Healthcare Professionals:**

1. **Screen** for travel history on all patients with potentially infectious disease, especially those with fever and acute respiratory illness. Place visible signage requesting visitors with a fever and recent travel to China, Italy, Iran or South Korea to notify a hospital staff member.

2. **Immediately isolate** patients reporting fever (>100.4°F or >38°C) AND lower respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) AND travel to China, Italy, Iran or South Korea within 14 days prior to illness.
   a. Place surgical mask on patient and place patient in private room with door closed (optimally, a negative-pressure, airborne isolation room).
b. Implement all of the infection control procedures listed below for healthcare workers who will come into close contact with the patient:
   - Standard precautions AND
   - Contact precautions (gloves, gown) AND
   - Airborne precautions (N95 mask or PAPR) AND
   - Eye protection (face shield or goggles)

3. **Identify** patients who may have respiratory illness caused by COVID-19. A **flowchart** (example from CDC included at link below) can be posted in your facility and shared with colleagues.


4. **If Public Health Department involvement is desired for HIGH RISK patients,** immediately report the suspected COVID-19 patient to Mendocino County Public Health by calling REDCOM at (707) 568-5992, ask to speak with the dispatch supervisor and request that the Mendocino County Health Officer be notified.

Mendocino County Public Health Emergency Preparedness program maintains a supply of PPE including unexpired N95 masks to support our local providers. If local providers are running low in their supplies of PPE, they should follow the ICS protocol and submit a resource request to Mendocino County Public Health.

The CDC is recommending that facility policies and practices are in place to minimize exposures to respiratory pathogens including SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. These practices include that facilities practice Standard Precautions including placement of patients in respiratory isolation when indicated, the promotion of proper hand hygiene, and the mandate of appropriate use of PPE (personal protective equipment). Anyone with lower respiratory illness should wear a surgical mask to protect others from infection. The management of visitor access and movement within the facility and the implementation of engineering controls can reduce or eliminate exposure by shielding health care personnel (HCP) and other patients from infected individuals. This CDC guidance can be found at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html

In Mendocino County we are working hard 24/7 to prepare and respond in a coordinated fashion to a potential COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you for the important work you do as our Health Care Partners.