



DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Date: May 14, 2014

To: Local Public Health Officers  
Tribal Health Officers  
Hospital Emergency Departments  
Infection Preventionists

From: Jeffrey P. Davis, MD, Chief Medical Officer and State Epidemiologist for Communicable Diseases and Emergency Response

RE: Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

### Please Distribute Widely

You are likely already aware that since May 1, 2014, two imported cases of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) have been confirmed among travelers returning to the United States from the Arabian Peninsula. Both travelers are healthcare workers who reside and work in Saudi Arabia; however, their illnesses are not linked. Details regarding these cases are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/>.

Because these types of events will likely continue to occur and responses to them must be timely, having access to accurate information regarding testing for novel coronaviruses is essential. The following information describes the processes for case detection and follow up and testing for novel coronaviruses.

#### Testing for Novel Coronavirus

At present, PCR testing of specimens for MERS-CoV is available in Wisconsin only at the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH). Currently available diagnostic tests for other coronaviruses are not suitable for detecting this new virus.

To increase the likelihood of detecting MERS-CoV, CDC recommends collection of specimens from multiple sites from each patient such as a nasopharyngeal swab specimen plus a lower respiratory tract specimen that could include (induced) sputum, bronchoalveolar lavage, bronchial wash, or a tracheal aspirate. Lower respiratory tract specimens should be a priority for collection and PCR testing. Additionally, stool specimens should be collected but are of lower priority. Current specimen collection guidance is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>. The Wisconsin Division of Public Health (WDPH) will approve requests for tests to be conducted at the WSLH if a patient meets the criteria described below.

#### CDC Case Definitions

A Patient Under Investigation (PUI) is a person with the following characteristics:

- Fever ( $\geq 100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) and suspicion of pulmonary parenchymal disease (e.g., pneumonia or acute respiratory distress syndrome based on clinical or radiological evidence of consolidation), AND at least one of the following:

- A history of travel from the countries in and around the Arabian Peninsula\* within 14 days prior to illness onset; OR
- Close contact\*\* with a symptomatic traveler who developed fever and acute respiratory illness within 14 days after travel from the Arabian Peninsula or neighboring countries\* OR
- Is a member of a cluster of patients with severe acute respiratory illness (requiring hospitalization) of unknown etiology

\* Countries considered to be in or neighboring the Arabian Peninsula include Bahrain, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestinian territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Yemen.

\*\*Close contact is defined as providing care for the ill traveler (e.g., a healthcare worker or family member), or having similar close physical contact; or shared lodging (e.g. lived with, visited) with the traveler while the traveler was ill.

### **Reporting of PUIs**

PUIs shall be immediately reported to the WDPH and specimens from these patients will be approved for laboratory testing. To request approval for testing during business hours, please call the WDPH at 608-267-9003. For after-hours approval call 608-258-0099 and ask for the communicable disease epidemiologist on call.

Local health departments will be asked to collect data pertaining to PUIs, using the one-page short form referenced in the Guidance for Local Health Departments below. Local health departments should fax completed investigation forms to WDPH at 608-261-4976.

### **Guidance for Health Departments (CDC)**

- Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) Patient Under Investigation (PUI) Short Form
  - [Download PDF file](#) 
- Interim Home Care and Isolation Guidance for MERS-CoV
  - <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/MERS/hcp/home-care.html>

### **Guidance for Healthcare Providers, Infection Control (CDC)**

- Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Hospitalized Patients with Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)
  - <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/infection-prevention-control.html#infection-prevention>

### **Guidance for Virus Shipping and Outbreak Enhanced Surveillance Requisition Form (WSLH)**

- <http://www.slh.wisc.edu/wcIn-surveillance/surveillance/virology-surveillance/>

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