

March 17, 2020

Dear Ambulette Company,

As the Coronavirus/COVID-19 continues to spread, we are identifying an increasing number of dialysis patients who may have respiratory symptoms, but do not have an overall clinical condition that warrants being sent to the Emergency Room. In addition, many of the local hospitals are overwhelmed with patients and our patients would have long waits for care, which can be dangerous to their health. The CDC and NYS/ NYC DoH allow us to continue to dialyze patients who are clinically stable for chronic dialysis, but may be under suspicion for COVID-19, or who have COVID-19, but do not have severe enough symptoms to warrant hospitalization. We are reaching out to partner with you to safely transport these individuals to and from dialysis and allow them to receive life-saving dialysis treatment on an ongoing basis. We recognize this can be a concerning circumstance and want to provide you with as much assistance as possible as you assist our patients to get to the unit. Below, you will find a list of recommendations from the CDC/NYS DoH and steps that we are taking to keep all of us safe during this challenging time. Should you have any concerns, please feel free to reach out to the individuals listed below to discuss how we can partner safely and successfully.

1. Airborne precautions are no longer required for COVID-19 positive, or suspected COVID-19 patients.
2. An ear-loop, or surgical mask is an adequate barrier to protect against COVID-19 per the CDC.
3. We will cohort COVID-19 and suspected COVID-19 patients on the same shift to avoid additional exposure to the general population.
4. We recommend that you have a positive, or suspected positive patient wear an ear-loop, or surgical mask and gloves whenever he/she is in the ambulette. We recommend you have the driver do the same.
5. Whenever removing gloves, all people should perform hand hygiene. This can be handwashing for at least 20 seconds, or use of hand sanitizer. Your drivers are welcome to wash their hands, or use hand sanitizer in the unit when dropping off, or picking up a patient.
6. When picking up a patient, we will ensure that the patient has gloves and an ear-loop mask on prior to leaving the building.
7. You can call us at any time to receive clarification on a particular patient's risk factors.

Thank you in advance for your assistance,

Dr. J.G. Bhat

Dr. Nirmal Mattoo

Ricardo Sime, COVID-19 Administrative Lead, (516-642-1389)

Steven Weiss, COVID-19 Clinical Lead, (347-512-9090)

Information about Coronavirus/COVID-19

What is coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals. COVID-19 Novel (meaning “new”) coronavirus is a virus strain that has only spread in people since December 2019. There are thousands of confirmed cases in the world and additional cases being identified in a growing number of countries internationally, including the United States.

How does novel coronavirus spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 probably emerged from an animal source, but now is spreading from person to person. Since this virus is very new, health authorities continue to carefully watch how this virus spreads. Other coronaviruses spread from an infected person to others through:

- The air by coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes

How can I prevent getting novel coronavirus?

Currently there are no vaccines available to prevent novel coronavirus infections. Steps you can take to prevent spread of flu and the common cold will also help prevent coronavirus:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If not available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Stay home while you are sick, except dialysis, and avoid contact with others
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

How severe is novel coronavirus?

People infected have had illness that has ranged from mild (like a common cold) to severe pneumonia that requires medical care in a hospital. So far, deaths have been reported mainly in older adults who had other health conditions.

What are the symptoms?

People who have been diagnosed with novel coronavirus have symptoms that may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the virus. Symptoms may include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

How is novel coronavirus treated?

There is no specific treatment for coronavirus. Most people with mild coronavirus illness will recover on their own by drinking adequate fluids, resting, and taking pain and fever medications. However, some people develop pneumonia and need medical care or treatment in a hospital. Speak with your doctor for the care best for you.