

APPENDIX “C”

Joint Statement – COVID-19 and Personal Protective Equipment

This joint communication is issued on behalf of Shared Health (the “Employing Authority”) and the Manitoba Nurses Union (“MNU” or the “Union”).

The current COVID-19 pandemic has placed unprecedented stressors on the health care system in Manitoba and around the world. The Employing Authority and Union agree that protecting the health and safety of Nurses and the patients for whom they care is of utmost importance during this time. It is critical that all parties work together to prevent exposure to, and transmission of, COVID-19 to Nurses, while also preserving supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) for when specific PPE is required in order to safely provide care.

Given the foregoing, the Employing Authority and Union agree to the following standards for provision of PPE for Nurses working with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients:

1. The Employing Authority shall make available to Nurses providing direct patient care to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients appropriate PPE. This will include reasonable access to a fit tested N95 respirator or equivalent PPE upon request of the Nurse, procedure masks, gloves, face shields with side protection (or goggles), and fluid resistant gowns. As each site and unit within each site can be unique, each will develop their own protocol to ensure reasonable access is provided.

For the purposes of making N95 respirators available upon request for use in providing care to a suspected COVID-19 patient, this refers to a patient that is symptomatic for COVID-19 and who will be referred for testing or has been tested and is awaiting test results. Where the Nurse providing direct patient care to a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patient requests a N95 respirator during a shift, it shall automatically be provided.

The Employing Authority commits to provide all Nurses with information and appropriate training on safe utilization of all PPE.

2. The Employing Authority shall make available to a Nurse performing a nasopharyngeal swab test appropriate PPE including procedure/surgical masks, gloves, face shields with side protection (or goggles), and fluid resistant gowns. A point-of-care risk assessment (PCRA) will be performed by a Nurse before performing every nasopharyngeal swab. Should a Nurse determine, based on a PCRA, that specific circumstances exist that justify a higher level of PPE

including access to a N95 respirator, a N95 or higher equivalent PPE will be made available based on the Nurse's request.

The parties agree that the Nurse's PCRA should take into account the need to preserve and conserve the supply of PPE necessary to safely provide care throughout the health care system.

The parties agree that the following are non-exhaustive guidelines that a Nurse can consider at the PCRA in exercising professional judgment as to whether specific circumstances exist that justify a N95 respirator:

- Consideration of the patient's symptoms and volume of respiratory secretions and ability to control secretions and coughing;
 - The Nurse's assessment of the likelihood of coughing or sneezing being induced by the swab;
 - The environment in which the swab is being performed;
 - The patient's ability to comply with Infection Prevention Control measures.
3. In all other situations than outlined above, and for conditions other than COVID-19, a PCRA will be performed by the Nurse before every patient interaction. The PCRA should include consideration of the probability and frequency of aerosol generating medical procedures (AGMPs).

If a Nurse determines, based on the PCRA, that there are reasonable grounds for the use of specific additional PPE, the Nurse's request for appropriate PPE shall not be unreasonably denied by the Employing Authority unless the Employing Authority determines that the Nurse shall be assigned to another area. Where temporary reassignment occurs, wherever possible, reasonable steps shall be taken to minimize disruption to the Nurse's schedule, travel to work, etc.

4. All Nurses present in a room where AGMPs are being performed on suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients shall be provided with N95 respirators. For patients who are neither COVID-19 suspects nor confirmed COVID-19 patients ("Green Zone" patients), a list of procedures and Shared Health's view as to the appropriate PPE for each is available by referring to the following resources:

Up-to-Date List of Aerosol-Generating Medical Procedures:

<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/aerosol-generating-medical-procedures-AGMPs.pdf>

Resources for AGMPs in Long-Term Care Settings:

<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/agmps-and-long-term-care.pdf>

Resources for Surgery/Procedures:

<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/covid-19-transesophageal-echocardiogram-agmps.pdf>

<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/covid-19-ugi-endoscopy-and-ng-placement.pdf>

5. The parties agree that the conservation and stewardship of PPE is important in order to ensure the availability of PPE for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Employing Authority and Union shall form a joint committee (“the PPE Committee”) whose mandate shall include making recommendations to the Health Senior Leadership Council as to the monitoring and assessing of the supply of PPE on an ongoing basis, the efficacy of various forms of PPE at preventing and/or minimizing the spread of COVID-19 amongst Nurses and patients, and future stockpiling of PPE.

The parties will assess the available supply of PPEs on an ongoing basis and commit to continuing to explore all available avenues to obtain and maintain a sufficient supply.

In the event that the supply of PPE reaches a point where a shortage of supplies is anticipated, the Employing Authority will be responsible for developing contingency plans, in consultation with the PPE Committee, in order to ensure the safety of Nurses in Manitoba.

6. The parties are committed to working together in good faith in an attempt to reach consensus on issues pertaining to appropriate PPE and have agreed to an expeditious dispute resolution mechanism should they fail to reach consensus.