Dear Colleagues,

We sincerely hope that this bulletin finds each of you and your loved ones safe, secure and untouched from the effects of COVID-19. The critical role that the laboratory plays in detection and management of the pandemic has once again risen to the forefront. I urge us all to use this as an opportunity to advocate for sustainable systems under which our laboratories, public or private can operate.

During these several weeks, the Secretariat has been diligently working with the CARPHA Medical Microbiology Laboratory (CMML) team to ensure rapid communication through the laboratory updates are made available in a timely manner to all our members of CariPHLN. To date, there have been ten (10) Laboratory Updates. Please note, that for laboratories accessing testing through CMML, samples can be taken from as early as day 0 to as much as ten (10) days following the onset of symptoms.

In this bulletin we draw your attention to updates on anticipated diagnostic tools, the virtual sessions which the CariPHLN Secretariat has been hosting, and access to key articles including how to make Viral Transport Media (VTM) in-house as we try to improvise due to shortages and supply chain challenges.

We are also pleased to announce the vacancy for the CariPHLN Manager. We highly encourage applications from our members!

CariPHLN and the Regional COVID-19 Response:

Virtual Session: Guidance on COVID-19
Considerations for Medical/Hospital Laboratories

CARPHA through the Caribbean Public Health Laboratory Network (CariPHLN), launched a virtual training package aimed at providing all medical and hospital laboratories with current information on newly available diagnostic platforms for detection of SARS-CoV-2; applicable laboratory biosafety and biosecurity guidance for handling and processing various types of patient samples that are suspect or confirmed cases of COVID-19 and an opportunity to learn from others in the Network that already have capacity for the detection of SARS-CoV-2.

Two sessions have already been conducted with National Laboratory Directors and for all medical/hospital laboratory directors and managers. Several additional requests have been received from Member States.

We now welcome all CariPHLN members to join us for our next live session on Thursday 16th April 2020 (11.00 – 13.00 hrs). Please click Accept when you receive the invitation!
GeneXpert: SARS-CoV-2 kits

CariPHLN has initiated discussions with other regional organizations such as the OECS, CMLF and CDC Caribbean Regional Office regarding the availability of GeneXpert testing kits for detection of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19). The kits are not yet available on the market as Cepheid is awaiting required approvals from Europe. While this is a moving target, they expect to come to market by the end of April 2020. During this time the Secretariat has undertaken an initiative to obtain information about existing capacities and projections for the volume of orders that can be placed as a Region.

Laboratories in the Network which have the GeneXpert machine and are also interested in building this capacity should ensure that they have the most current software version available - GeneXpert Software version 4.7b or higher; Gene Xpert Infinity 80 and 48s or Xpertise Software v 6.4b or higher.

From our Friends:

CMLF has published an article “COVID-19-An opportunity for strengthening laboratories and health systems in the region” Click below http://cmedlabsfoundation.net/documents/C OVID-19.pdf

ASLM and LabCoP convened a special ECHO session on COVID-19 testing: ‘Latest update on available technology to diagnose COVID-19: recommendations for clinical care and surveillance’. You can watch the recorded video session here and download the session presentation slide deck 1 here and slide deck 2 here.

CDC has published a new standard operating procedure (SOP) for laboratories to create their own VTM in accordance with CDC’s protocol. This is in response to the difficulty obtaining viral transport media (VTM).


Vacancy announcements:

CariPHLN Manager Find more details and how to apply https://carpha.org/More/CARPHA-Vacancies

Call for Experts: See attached flyer. Email HRM@CARPHA.ORG

COVID-19 Resource Centre

Laboratory testing:

CARPHA: https://carpha.org/What-We-Do/Public-Health/Novel-Coronavirus


FINDD: https://www.finddx.org/covid-19/

Laboratory Biosafety and Biosecurity guidelines:


WHO: https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/331138