Dear Colleagues,

As many of our countries move towards a new phase in the management of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the CariPHLN Secretariat continues to work with you to share the latest developments and guidance on laboratory related matters.

In Bulletin #3, we highlight the new CARPHA Interim Guidance for the Evaluation and Selection of Diagnostic Tests for the COVID-19 Response and the updated WHO Interim Laboratory Biosafety Guidance related to Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19).

Laboratory Capacities for COVID-19

The Secretariat recently completed a rapid survey with National Laboratory Directors in the CARPHA Member States (CMS) to identify current and planned diagnostic capacities for the detection of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

A summary of the results was presented to the CARPHA COVID-19 Response Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on May 15, 2020. Currently 61% (16) CMS have laboratory capacity in at least 1 national laboratory, while others are at various stages of implementation of the molecular, polymerase chain reaction (PCR) method. The majority of CMS (88%, 23) intend to have some level of PCR or PCR-based platform e.g. GeneXpert testing capacity in place to support their national recovery phase plans. At this time, only a few (6) CMS are being supported by other laboratories in their national networks. This number is expected to increase when other types of diagnostic kits become readily available.

CARPHA Interim Guidance for the Evaluation and Selection of Diagnostic Tests for the COVID-19 Response

CARPHA has designed a simple, user-friendly instrument consisting of 14 parameters to assist national and other stakeholders in the evaluation and selection of diagnostic tests to be used for the COVID-19 response in CMS. The guidance contains practical examples and a form which can be used to record the evaluation of each kit. More details can be found here [https://bit.ly/2T9IsVU](https://bit.ly/2T9IsVU)

Please visit the CARPHA dedicated web page for the most recent advisories, technical guidance and updates at [http://carpha.org/What-We-Do/Public-Health/Novel-Coronavirus](http://carpha.org/What-We-Do/Public-Health/Novel-Coronavirus)
On May 13, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued an update to the interim guidance adding recommendations on point of care (POC) or near-POC assays.

Key points include the importance of each laboratory conducting a **local risk assessment** “to ensure it is competent to safely perform the intended testing with appropriate risk control measures in place”; and specific recommendations for **Point of care or near-POC assays**, including those using polyvalent platforms such as GeneXpert for which sample manipulation and the level of aerosol generation would be minimal. According to the guidance such test, “could be performed on a bench without employing a BSC, when the local risk assessment so dictates, and the following conditions are fully met:

- performed on a diaper or large paper towel in a well-ventilated area free of clutter, where there are no documents, computers or personal stuff
- appropriate PPE worn similar to other manual testing, such as but not limited to a full-length long (elastic) sleeved lab coat, safety goggles or glasses, and suitable disposable gloves
- risk assessment should inform the use of respiratory protection as a supplementary precaution
- staff well trained in GMPP
- no rush or increased pressure for test turnaround time
- a validated infectious waste process including excess specimens”


**Webinars and Articles**

**CDC** is currently a Global Webinar Series: Practical IPC Considerations in the Fight Against COVID-19. The upcoming session this Thursday, May 21, 2020 at 8:00 – 9:30 am EDT, will be on **IPC Monitoring and Facility Readiness for COVID-19**

Register [https://echo.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_tY840I7cQFiapoXEdTZg](https://echo.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_tY840I7cQFiapoXEdTZg)

**ASLM** convened its Special COVID-19 ECHO Session #9: Diagnostics in the COVID-19 Pandemic Response: Knowledge gaps and updates on performance of serology tests, on May 8, 2020. You can watch the recorded video [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...) and download the session presentation slides [here](https://www.aslmc.org/...).

**Come To Care: COVID-19 And Persons Living With HIV**, an article from the Jamaica Gleaner published on May 13, 2020 was shared by a member of the network. The article notes that persons living with HIV (PLHIV) who are not in treatment could be at higher risk of getting severe disease from COVID-19. However, as persons heed the call, “for PLHIV who are in treatment and are currently on their anti-HIV medication, their suppressed viral load means that they are at no greater risk for COVID-19 complications when compared to the general population.” (Link:[http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/health/20200513/come-care-covid-19-and-persons-living-hiv](http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/health/20200513/come-care-covid-19-and-persons-living-hiv))

We encourage you to share more articles so we can highlight ongoing work in our Member States

**Vacancy Update:**

**CariPHLN Manager:** We note that the recruitment of the CariPHLN Manager is ongoing with interviews scheduled to take place this Wednesday May 20, 2020. Thank you to all who submitted applications.
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