MEDIA RELEASE

CARPHA’s COVID-19 Testing Process and Adherence to Quality Standards

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. 22 April 2020. CARPHA Medical Microbiology Laboratory (CMML), as the regional reference laboratory, currently conducts tests for suspected COVID-19 cases for Member States using the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended testing protocol.

At present, samples can only be sent to CARPHA from the designated national public health laboratory in a country.

In Trinidad and Tobago, where CARPHA is headquartered, all samples from that country must be sent to the Trinidad Public Health Laboratory (TPHL), which is Trinidad and Tobago’s national reference laboratory. Once a sample is received, CARPHA will issue the result within 24-48 hours. COVID-19 results are sent to the Chief Medical Officers at the Ministries of Health, who are responsible for the dissemination of these results.

The CMML currently tests all suspected cases of COVID-19, as recommended by the WHO case definition, provided by the WHO Global surveillance for COVID-19 caused by human infection with COVID-19 virus.

The CMML uses the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) method, which is recommended by the WHO. This method remains the gold standard for COVID-19 laboratory diagnosis because the sensitivity and specificity of the test are nearly 100%. The CMML ensures appropriate quality control measures are followed to ensure the accuracy of all results.

The Caribbean Public Health Agency cannot and will not disseminate any country’s results directly to patients or individuals. It is an ethical breach and constitutes a violation of the Agency’s ethical standards to share confidential patient information with unauthorized persons.

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