

Public Health Link

From the Chief Medical Officer for Wales

Distribution:	As Appendix 1
From:	Dr Frank Atherton, Chief Medical Officer
Date:	24 January 2020
Reference:	CEM/CMO/2020/1
Category:	Immediate (cascade within 6 hours)
Title:	Wuhan Novel Coronavirus
What is this about:	This alert and pathway outline the initial assessment questions to identify a patient who may require isolation and testing.
Why has it been sent:	Important information for immediate action

Message for all clinical staff encountering patients with respiratory infections arrived from overseas

2019-nCoV: Advice for the NHS in Wales

You will be aware of the evolving situation in China where, as of 24 January 2020 it has been reported that around 847 people have been identified with respiratory infections caused by a novel coronavirus.

Most reported cases are at the mild end of the spectrum; with no confirmed cases currently in the UK.

The severity of the infections range from mild symptoms of upper respiratory tract infection (with or without fever) to fulminant pneumonia requiring hospitalisation and advanced respiratory support, and as of 24 January the disease has sadly proved fatal in 26 cases in China. The annual Chinese New Year celebrations are imminent (start 25 January 2020); this typically involves the mass movement of people both within and outside China and may amplify transmission.

At the current time, if the novel coronavirus is seen in the UK it is most likely to be in a traveller who has visited Wuhan City in China.

Advice for NHS organisations is as follows:

- **It is essential that an accurate travel history is obtained from all patients with acute respiratory infections to help identify potential cases.**
- **Primary care practices are asked to identify possible cases, isolate them immediately (either at home if they phone or in the surgery if they have presented there) according to PHE guidance and contact Public Health Wales (PHW) Health Protection Team: AWARe (030 00 0300 32). PHW will provide the necessary risk assessment and advise on further action. General practitioners are not expected to undertake any clinical assessment or sampling. [Guidance for primary care can be found here.](#)**
- **All health boards are expected to have plans to assess, and where appropriate test, possible cases of 2019 nCoV using hospitals with appropriate isolation facilities. [Health boards should review the most up-to-date Public Health England \(PHE\) guidance](#) and ensure that they operationalise this. Health boards should liaise with local microbiology laboratory for testing advice.**
- **If the novel coronavirus is detected, the patient will be transferred to an Airborne High Consequences Infectious Diseases centre in England. PHW will undertake contact tracing and advise on ongoing management. As more is known about this infection guidance will be updated.**

The attached pathway outlines the initial assessment questions to identify a patient who may require isolation and testing. All primary and secondary healthcare providers should make arrangements for such patients to be identified immediately and isolated according to the PHE guidance. The current patient pathway is for assessment in airborne isolation in an acute hospital, followed by testing and a period of isolation (at home or in hospital) whilst awaiting the results.

PHE in collaboration with PHW and the wider NHS has published guidance covering the following:

[Initial assessment and investigation of cases](#)

[Infection prevention and control and guidance](#)

[Guidance on diagnostics](#)

[Guidance for primary care](#)

The four key principles to bear in mind in community settings are to:

- **Identify** possible cases as soon as possible.
- **Isolate** to prevent transmission to other patients and staff.
- Avoid direct physical contact unless wearing **appropriate personal protective equipment**.
- Get **specialist advice** from the Health Protection Team (0300 00 300 32).

In secondary care get **specialist advice** from a local microbiologist, virologist or infectious disease physician at your health board.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank Atherton', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr Frank Atherton
Chief Medical Officer

To: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership to forward to:

All General Practitioners - please ensure this message is seen by all practice nurses and non-principals working in your practice and retain a copy in your 'locum information pack'.

All Community Pharmacists

Deputising services

HB Chief Pharmacists

HB Prescribing Advisers

Independent/Private clinics and Hospitals and Hospices throughout Wales

To: Health Boards and NHS Trusts:

Chief Executives

Medical Directors

Nurse Directors

Directors of Public Health

Hospital Principals and Chief Pharmacists

Onward distribution to:

Immunisation Leads,

Infectious Disease Departments

Acute medical units

Microbiologists

To: Public Health Wales:

Chief Executive

Director of Public Health Services

Consultants in Communicable Disease Control

Microbiologists

Consultant Epidemiologists

Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme

Cc: NHS Direct Wales

British Medical Association

Royal College of GPs

Royal College of Nursing

Royal College of Midwives

Royal Pharmaceutical Society

Community Pharmacy Wales

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health Wales