**PURPOSE**

This document describes safe handling practices for patient samples suspected of containing highly infectious pathogens, including COVID-19, MERS coronavirus and SARS coronavirus.

**SCOPE**

This document applies to UPMC Hanover Hospital laboratory.

**POLICY**

UPMC Hanover follows Standard precautions as well as guidelines from UPMC and CDC when handling and processing samples from patients with possible or confirmed infection with highly infectious pathogens. A risk assessment will be performed as required for changes in guidance from CDC and UPMC.

**GENERAL GUIDANCE**

PPE

1. By combining already existing required PPE with the use of a biological safety cabinet (BSC 2), the laboratory can safely handle samples from a patient with suspected highly infectious pathogens such as COVID-19, avian influenza, MERS coronavirus and SARS coronavirus.

2. The attached Lab Risk Assessment outlines common activities and a determination of risk.

Routine Lab Specimen Collection

1. Standard precautions including routine PPE are to be used when collecting specimens.

2. Requirements:

a. Label the specimen with required patient identification.

b. Place the specimen in a biohazard bag for transport.

c. The external surface of the bag should be wiped with available cleaning wipes (bleach or hydrogen peroxide are acceptable).

d. Place the specimen in a second biohazard bag.

e. Complete paperwork outside the specimen collection area, and place in the external pocket of the second biohazard specimen transport bag

f. Transport to the testing location in person (**use of pneumatic tube is prohibited).**

Routine Sample Handling and Testing

Handle specimens for routine diagnostic testing procedures in a biological safety cabinet (BSC-2).

a. The lab will limit any procedures/processes that can potentially aerosolize a sample.

b. A biological safety cabinet (BSC) will be used to contain any possible aerosolized sample during specimen manipulation.

c. Aliquoting should be performed in the BSC.

d. If an instrument requires an uncapped tube, uncap using a barrier.

**NOTE:** Specimens for culture that may contain known or suspected Category A pathogens must be referred to the Pennsylvania Department of Health for testing.

Waste Disposal and Decontamination

a. Waste is to be handled as biohazardous waste.

b. Follow manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and decontamination of equipment.

c. Decontaminate work surfaces using an EPA and UPMC approved disinfectant.



**REFERENCES:**

UPMC Laboratory Service Center. LSC Lab Testing Safety Guidelines: Handling of PUI/Positive Patient COVID-19 Samples. 4/2/2020.

CDC. Interim Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines for Handling and Processing Specimens Associated with Coronoavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-2019). 6/11/2021.

UPMC Hanover. Packing and Shipping UN2814 Infectious Substances Infecting Humans: Category A Pathogens. 8/2019.

College of American Pathologists. GEN.74 050. Specimen Handlng and Processing. 6/4/2020.