Clinician alert #34 – All clinicians
Effective from 28 October 2020

SARS-CoV-2 Rapid Antigen Testing
The Public Health Laboratory network (PHLN) and Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) have released a joint statement on SARS-CoV-2 rapid antigen tests which can be found here.

- PHLN and CDNA note that rapid antigen tests may have a role as a screening test for COVID-19 in certain contexts and settings, to be determined by jurisdictional public health authorities. This will be complementary to, and not a replacement for, Reverse Transcriptase Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) testing;
- PHLN and CDNA caution against the wide-scale implementation of any type of new testing technology before appropriate post-market evaluation is undertaken. PHLN and CDNA note there are many issues to consider, including supply chains, logistics, cost, ease-of-use, test performance, data security and privacy;
- PHLN and CDNA recommend only a medical practitioner or suitably qualified person should perform or supervise the use of rapid antigen tests; and
- PHLN and CDNA urge the continued and rigorous evaluation of emerging testing technologies prior to use. This helps safeguard Australia's world-leading testing capacity for COVID-19 and ensures that the highest quality testing technology is available to support the Australian community.
- In Western Australia (WA) the Chief Health Officer has prohibited the use of SARS-CoV-2 rapid antigen tests as an acute illness diagnostic tool for COVID-19, as their use may adversely affect the prevention, control and abatement of the serious public health risk presented by COVID-19.

The Chief Health Officer letter on Prohibition on the Use of Rapid Antigen Tests Directions can be found here.

Maritime crew members
The requirements of Maritime crew members have changed in accordance with the Quarantine (Closing the Border) Approval for Maritime Crew (No 4) which can be found here.

- Crew members flying into WA to embark a vessel, must quarantine at a quarantine centre for 14 days prior to embarkation, unless they have completed supervised quarantine in another state or territory in Australia.
- A maritime crew member can only disembark from an affected vessel:
  - at a Perth Port; or
  - at a port other than a Perth Port if, as soon as possible (within 8 hours) after they disembark the vessel they board a charter flight to Perth airport.
  - at any port to undertake port activities;
  - at any port to transfer to another vessel in the port;
- When the crew member disembarks an affected vessel or charter flight in Perth they must:
  - if the flight out of Australia leaves within 8 hours of disembarking the affected vessel in Perth or the arrival of the charter flight, travel directly to Perth airport for their flight out of Australia; or
• if the flight out of Australia does not leave within 8 hours of disembarking the affected vessel in Perth or the arrival of the charter flight, travel directly to a relevant place, which may include a quarantine centre or an approved crew hotel, and remain there while they wait for their flight out of Australia.

• A crew member who is ordinarily resident in Australia may, in addition to the above, disembark a vessel in a Perth Port and go directly to a quarantine centre for 14 days. Or, if they disembark in a port other than a Perth Port, as soon as possible after they disembark the vessel, board a charter flight to an airport in the Perth metropolitan region and then go directly to a quarantine centre where they will undergo 14 days’ quarantine.

• A Crew Member disembarking at a port that is not a Perth Port, and leaving Perth on a flight within 8 hrs (arriving by vessel), can take a private chartered vehicle to a nearby regional airport and must take a private chartered flight to Perth, to meet a flight leaving Australia.

• A Crew Member disembarking at a port that is not a Perth Port, and leaving Perth on a flight more than 8 hours later (arriving by vessel), can take a private chartered vehicle to a regional airport, must take a private chartered flight to Perth, will be transported directly to a Quarantine Centre, and can leave the Quarantine Centre to meet a flight leaving Australia.

• Any crew member who disembarks in a port other than Perth will not be allowed to board a commercial flight. To disembark, a non-Australian resident must have a ticket or other confirmed booking for a flight to a destination outside of Australia.

• At all times crew members will be required to practise hand hygiene, cough etiquette and physical distancing and wear a face mask.

COVID-19 testing information
Refer to ‘Testing for SARS-CoV-2 in Western Australia #15’ for further information regarding testing criteria in WA.

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