

The use of Gowns for Essential Visitors in Long Term Care

Situation

Essential visitors who come to our LTC homes have been wearing PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) for all visits regardless of the status of the resident (ie. if they are on Droplet and Contact precautions or otherwise) since march 2020. This PPE includes a mask, gloves and a reusable gown.

Background

The BCCDC Infection Prevention and Control Requirements for COVID-19 in Long Term Care and Seniors' Assisted Living (June 30, 2020) states, *"Visitors shall be instructed when to perform hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and safe physical distancing. All visitors are required to bring and wear a mask. When visiting with a client on 'Droplet & Contact Precautions' all visitors shall be instructed on how to put on and remove any required PPE. If the visitor is unable to adhere to appropriate precautions, the visitor shall be excluded from visiting."*

This document does not state that every essential visitor is required to wear a gown or gloves. Essential visits are defined as compassionate care and supportive physical and mental well-being care of the resident (such as feeding, mobility and assistance with personal care).

Practice requirements are intended to support residents, families, staff and all LTC homes to provide an opportunity for social and essential visits.

Assessment

The LTC sites at PHC have provided reusable gowns in addition to a mask and gloves for all essential visitors. Essential visits follow a written plan, are scheduled and supported by the facility. LTC homes have designated a location for the donning and doffing of PPE near to the entrance/exit of the home. Visitors then travel through the building to their visiting location.

Recommendation

While IPAC does not endorse deviating from the BCCDC guideline, we understand there are practical reasons (primarily based on practice over the last six months) while the use of gowns by essential visitors may continue but there may come a time when this needs to be reassessed.

We therefore recommend the following:

1. If a resident is on Droplet and Contact Precautions, the essential visitor is required to wear a mask, eye protection, gloves and a gown. The donning and doffing of these items should be done as close to the care provided to the resident (for example, doffing in particular should occur in the resident room or just outside the room, not at the exit of the facility)

2. If a resident is not on Droplet and Contact Precautions, the essential visitor may continue to wear full PPE (mask, eye protection, gloves and a reusable gown) until such a time that the situation requires reassessment.

3. For setting up Donning and Doffing for essential visitors please consider the following:
 - a. The status of the resident and if it has changed (ie. is the resident now a PUI (Person Under Investigation) and the requirement to don and doff closer to the resident space.

 - b. The entrance and exit of the building – ie. Where to don and doff safely as defined by:
 - Enough space to don and doff without coming into contact with people or items
 - ABHR available for use while donning and doffing
 - Linen hamper available for used gowns
 - Clean storage of gloves, masks and gowns at donning station