

PRACTICE ALERT

Risk of Nebulizer Treatments in patients with suspected COVID-19

DATE: March 14, 2020

SITE(S): VCH ALL SITES

SITUATION / BACKGROUND:

COVID-19, an emerging respiratory illness, is transmitted via respiratory droplets. Certain medical interventions, including the delivery of medication via nebulizer, pose an increased risk of transmission of the virus. Therefore, there is opportunity to review the potential risks that nebulizer treatments pose to staff and to patients.

Nebulizer treatments are a type of aerosol generating medical procedure (AGMP). AGMPs are any procedure carried out on a patient/resident/client that can induce the production of aerosols of various sizes, including droplet nuclei. Medical procedures that generate aerosols or droplet nuclei in high concentration present a risk for opportunistic airborne transmission of pathogens that otherwise are not spread by the airborne route and increase the risk for transmission.

ACTION / RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) Avoid the use of small volume nebulizer for medication administration to avoid generating aerosolized particles.
- 2) If bronchodilators are required, administration with metered dose inhaler (MDI) with aerochamber is preferred.
- 3) If MDI is not feasible for the patient, and nebulizer must be used (eg. decreased level of consciousness or if patient has difficulty coordinating the MDI), consult the most responsible physician to determine the treatment plan.
- 4) [Airborne precautions](#) are required for all AGMP procedures of suspected and diagnosed patients with influenza-like illnesses, including COVID-19.
- 5) All suspected and diagnosed COVID-19 patients to be placed in a private room or area with at least 2 meter separation and Droplet and Contact Precautions implemented. See [VCH COVID-19 Patient Identification and Assessment](#).
- 6) Perform nebulizer treatments in a negative pressure room whenever possible, or in a single room if former not available.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For additional information:

- [Infection Prevention and Control Best Practices Guideline on Aerosol Generating Medical Procedures](#)
- [Appropriate Use of Procedure Masks and N95 Respirators](#)
- [Infection Prevention & Control COVID-19 Resources for Healthcare Providers](#)

Or contact your local Professional Practice Department and local Infection Prevention and Control Practitioner.