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Bay of Plenty + Lakes Districts

To: Health Professionals and Practice Managers in the Bay of Plenty and Lakes

Date: 22 January 2020

Dear Colleagues

Update and Advice on Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

We have been monitoring information about the cluster of pneumonia cases in the city of Wuhan (in Hubei province, Central China), now known to be caused by a novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

While this is a rapidly emerging situation, it now seems likely that the virus is capable of human-to-human transmission and that cases are occurring in other cities and regions in China. To date, it appears that 2019-nCoV has been responsible for six deaths in China. While cases have been identified in Japan, Thailand, South Korea and the United States in individuals recently travelling from China, there does not appear to be transmission or clusters occurring outside of China, at this stage.

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that can cause a very wide spectrum of illness from the common cold to SARS-CoV (which had a case-fatality rate of approximately 10%) and MERS-CoV (which has a case-fatality rate of approximately 35%).

We advise that:

- All clinics, practices and emergency departments have measures in place to immediately identify and manage any patients presenting with upper and/or lower respiratory tract infection symptoms and with a history of travel from China in the last 14 days. (Please see attached poster that may be displayed, and for which we should soon have versions with Mandarin and Cantonese).
- Any such patients should immediately be provided a mask to wear and be seen in a separate room with the door closed, or an isolation room where available. The room should

have a private bathroom or commode chair. Please also review your procedures to help ensure they do not expose other patients such as in a waiting room or corridor areas.

- Health care personnel entering the room or attending the patient should use standard precautions, contact precautions, airborne precautions and eye protection. This means using gown and gloves, N95 mask, goggles or face shield, and preferably disposable shoe covers.
- Thorough hand hygiene using soap and water is essential, noting that alcohol hand gels on their own are not sufficient.
- The on-call Infectious Diseases Physician should be contacted for advice on clinical assessment, any laboratory testing and further management.

We will provide updates as the situation becomes clearer and further advice is obtained from the World Health Organisation and our Ministry of Health.

Thank you for your assistance with managing such presentations and helping protect the public and our health care personnel from this new disease.

Kind regards

Dr Diane Hanfelt-Goade
Infectious Diseases Physician

Dr Neil de Wet
Medical Officer of Health

For more information:

www.toiteora.govt.nz/2019nCoV

www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/novel-coronavirus-china-2019-ncov