MERS Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) Update
Information for Emergency Department and ICU staff

- **Consider MERS-CoV infection** in patients with acute pneumonia/pneumonitis **AND** a history of travel from the Arabian Peninsula in the previous 14 days.
- **Isolate suspect cases** and use standard and transmission-based precautions.
- **MERS coronavirus is notifiable** under the NSW Public Health Act 2010.
- **Report suspect cases immediately by phone to your local Public Health Unit – 1300 066 055**

Update: In the past month there have been more than 150 new MERS-CoV cases reported, mainly from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. In particular, two hospital clusters in Jeddah and Abu Dhabi have been reported with many cases, and including health care workers. Exported MERS-CoV cases have recently been reported from the Philippines, Malaysia, Egypt and Greece.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has not identified any increase in transmissibility of the virus, and continues to advise that appropriate infection control practices can prevent hospital outbreaks.

Evaluate patients:
- Pneumonia or pneumonitis
- Onset within 14 days after travelling from countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula, OR
- Close contacts (of including health care workers) of such travellers, who also develop pneumonia or pneumonitis within 14 days.

Test patients:
- Testing for MERS-CoV is available in two NSW reference laboratories
- Consult with your local laboratory, infectious disease physicians and local Public Health Unit
- Use appropriate infection control precautions when collecting samples for testing
- Where possible, collect *lower respiratory tract samples* (bronchoalveolar lavage or endotracheal aspirates) in preference to upper respiratory tract samples
- Place samples into viral transport media
- Also test for other causes of community-acquired pneumonia (including bacterial culture, serology, urinary antigen testing) and tests for respiratory viruses.

Infection control:
- Isolate suspect cases in a single room with negative pressure air-handling (if available)
- Use standard and transmission-based precautions (contact and airborne), including the use of a P2 mask, disposable gown, gloves and eye protection when entering a patient care area.

Treat patients:
- Seek specialist infectious disease advice and consult published guidance.

Further information:
- NSW Health MERS-CoV Guidance: http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/alerts/Pages/MERS_Coronavirus.aspx
- WHO MERS-CoV updates: http://www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus_infections/en/

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30 April 2014

TRIM H14/33556