

PICNet

PROVINCIAL INFECTION CONTROL
NETWORK OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
A program of the Provincial Health Services Authority

Development of Viral Respiratory Infection Outbreak Guidelines for Health-care Facilities in British Columbia, Accounting for Diversity of Partner Perspectives

ISSUE

In 2022, it was recognized that outbreaks of viral respiratory illness (VRI) caused by multiple pathogens were occurring in health-care facilities.

A single, unified resource was needed for prevention and management of VRI outbreaks in acute and long-term health-care facilities.

PROJECT

PICNet:

PARTNERED with Public Health.

The PICNet Medical Co-Director and a Medical Health Officer co-led a provincial working group to develop the guidelines.

IN COLLABORATION WITH health authority infection prevention & control (IPC) and workplace health and safety (WHS) colleagues, revisions were made to the 2018 Provincial Respiratory Outbreak Prevention and Control Guidelines in B.C.



ASSESSMENT

Equity Assessment

- All B.C. health authorities, including First Nations Health Authority, worked together to inform development of the guidance.
- **Composition of the working group** helped address equity considerations including urban, rural and indigenous communities.
- **A novel approach was taken** and a patient/family representative was consulted during guideline development to provide their perspective in order to help mitigate negative impact of IPC measures on patients, residents and families.

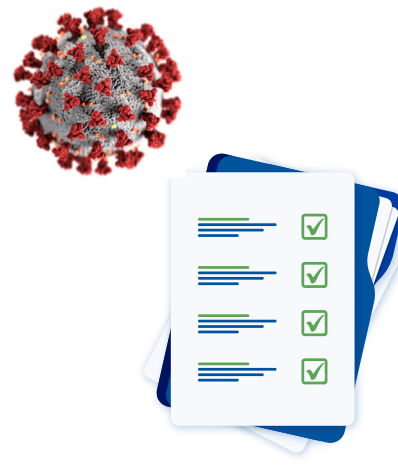
PICNet team reviewed current COVID-19 acute care and long-term care setting guidance in B.C., and other jurisdictional VRI and COVID-19 guidance. Updates included:

1. Appropriate definitions for VRI cases, clusters and outbreaks
2. Incorporation of current tools, resource materials, and organism-specific guidance
3. Inclusion of new provincial practice resources such as AGMP status, PPE recommendations, and use of respirators parameters
4. Collective outbreak prevention and management learnings and practice recommendations from the COVID-19 pandemic

While IPC principles are consistent across pathogens, there is evidence-based recognition in the guidance for differences in management by pathogen, e.g., variance in isolation period across pathogens, types of precautions (airborne versus droplet), etc.

RESULTS & LESSONS LEARNED

- **Availability of all-inclusive VRI outbreak guidance** affords the benefits of collective lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and prior outbreaks.
- **A unified guideline** provides a streamlined approach from outbreak preparation and investigation to outbreak declaration, regardless of causative pathogen, with consensus and standardization in approaches for prevention and management of VRI outbreaks across the province.
- **Next step** will be to create a communications strategy to best inform partners. Commitment to updating the guidance within 5 years or sooner, as able or required.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTRIBUTORS

NOORSALLAH ESMAIL¹
TARA DONOVAN TOWELL¹
BEN SHAW¹
STEPHANIE BURNISTON¹
KA WAI LEUNG¹
MEENA DAWAR³
TITUS WONG^{1,2}

¹ PICNet, PHSA

² Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, UBC

³ Vancouver Coastal Health Authority

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK

The VRI Working group as co-authors and collaborators, including Public Health, IPC and WHS representatives from B.C.'s Fraser, Interior, Island, Northern, Providence, Provincial Health Services, Vancouver Coastal and First Nations Health Authorities, B.C. Ministry of Health & patient/family representative volunteer from Family Caregivers of BC.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As a provincial network, we operate on the unceded traditional and ancestral lands of First Nations. Our main office is located on the traditional and ancestral lands of the territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, Stó:ló and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.