



Transitional Care Units Outbreak Response Plan

Policy:

- To effectively manage and contain an outbreak when identified in the Transitional Care Unit (TCU).
- To promote an infection prevention and control program designed to provide a safe, sanitary, and comfortable environment.
- To help prevent the development and transmission of communicable diseases and infections.
- Outbreak investigations will be organized by the infection control manager (Infection Preventionist) or designee in collaboration with the microbiologist, director of nursing, and employee health when an outbreak is suspected.

Lessons Learned and Experience with COVID-19:

1. Timely and consistent communication with families and their representatives.
2. Use of technology to connect families and their representatives as an alternative method of communication.
3. Admission screening of residents (patients) and weekly testing of staff.
4. Rapid identification and prompt isolation of suspected infected individual.
5. Enforcing daily temperature and symptom monitoring among staff and residents.
6. Surge capacity of the required personal protective equipment (PPE).

Section A: Infection Control

The TCU follows the hospital's protocol for:

1. Isolating and cohorting infected and at-risk patients in the event of an outbreak of a contagious disease until the cessation of the outbreak.
2. Information on the availability of laboratory testing, protocols for assessing whether facility visitors are ill, protocols to require ill staff to not present at the facility for work duties, and processes for implementing evidence-based outbreak response measures.
3. Policies to conduct routine monitoring of residents and staff to quickly identify signs of a communicable disease that could develop into an outbreak.



4. Policies for reporting outbreaks to public health officials in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
5. Policies to meet staffing, training, and facility demands during an infectious disease outbreak to successfully implement the outbreak response plan, including either employing on a full-time or part-time basis, or contracting with on a consultative basis, the following individuals:
 - a. An individual certified by the Certification Board of Infection Control and Epidemiology; and
 - b. A physician who has completed an infectious disease fellowship.
6. The hospital's infection control committee meets at least on a quarterly basis and is attended by the physician who has completed an infectious disease fellowship and an infection control coordinator who has education, training, completed course work, or experience in infection control or epidemiology, including certification in infection control by the Certification Board of Infection Control and Epidemiology.
7. TCU has a staffing plan for securing additional staff in the event of an outbreak through a contract with nursing staffing agencies and in collaboration with the nursing administration for staffing needs.
8. The TCU administrator and the director of nursing will review the outbreak response plan at least on an annual basis with the hospital's infection control committee.
9. This policy and its implementation will also be reviewed by the QAPI committee through designated communication channels annually or when changes are required as a response to the outbreak.

Section B: Patient and Staff Testing

1. All residents (patients) and staff, both direct care and non-direct care workers within TCU will be tested for COVID-19. TCU will follow hospital protocol regarding further retesting in accordance with the CDC guidance, as amended and supplemented.
2. Resident (Patient) Testing:
 - a. Preliminary approval for new TCU admission from the acute care requires a COVID-19 baseline testing (obtained from the Emergency Department) and retested (from the acute care) with negative results. Polymerase chain reaction



(PCR) retesting with a negative result is preferred within the 24-hour period prior to being transferred to TCU.

- b. TCU may admit patients directly from the Emergency Department or patient on observation status while CMS waivers are in effect. As such, only a baseline COVID-19 testing with negative result is required if the patient is coming from the Emergency Department or a hospital stay fewer than 3 days.

3. Staff Testing:

- a. COVID-19 testing is mandated for all employees working in TCU. As this follows the DOH directive, this is a condition of employment for all employees working in TCU until further notice. Employees will not be allowed to work in TCU without baseline testing and as approved by employee health.
- b. Staff will provide authorization for release of laboratory test results to the employee health personnel prior to being tested for COVID-19.
- c. Any staff who tested positive will receive guidance from employee health regarding the next steps in accordance with the hospital policy.
- d. Further retesting will be in accordance with the most current CDC guidelines. At this time, TCU core staff testing is conducted weekly until the DOH provides directive to cease testing.
- e. TCU will follow hospital protocols to address staffing and facility demands during an outbreak.

4. The administrator or designee will continue to report to the Office of Emergency Management in Executive Order No.111 testing dates, staff and resident/patients tested, aggregate testing results for the population, and other information requested by DOH.

Section C: Communications

The notification of residents, residents' families, visitors, and staff in the event of an outbreak of a contagious disease in the hospital:

1. Once the administrator or director of nursing receives the hospital's current protocol in response to an outbreak event, their director of nursing or designee will notify residents, their representatives or family member confirmed or



suspected COVID-19 activity in TCU, mitigating actions taken by the hospital to prevent or reduce the risk of transmission, including if normal operations in TCU will be altered through phone call, email, mailed letter, or hospital website.

2. The notification to inform residents, their representative or family member will occur by 5 pm the next calendar day following the occurrence of a single confirmed COVID-19 infection or of three or more residents or staff with new onset of respiratory symptoms that occurred within 72 hours of each other in TCU.
3. Residents, their representatives or family member will receive cumulative updates to at least weekly or by 5 pm the next calendar day following the subsequent occurrence of either: Each time a confirmed COVID-19 infection is identified, or whenever three or more residents or staff with new onset of respiratory symptoms occur within 72 hours of each other in TCU.
4. The director of nursing will monitor the effectiveness and timely reporting/notification to patients and families through patient and their representative's feedback.
5. Virtual communications:
 - a. Residents can use their own choice of virtual communication equipment (e.g. smartphone, tablets, laptop, etc.) and use the hospital Wi-Fi to connect to the internet to communicate with their families and representatives in the event of visitation restrictions. Alternatively, residents will be provided access to have virtual communication (e.g. phone or FaceTime) with their families or representatives as requested.
 - b. Shared virtual communication equipment will be sanitized per use as per hospital protocol.
6. The activities coordinator or designee is the primary contact to families for inbound calls and conducting regular outbound calls to keep families up to date regarding general operating status, such as when it is safe to resume visits.
7. The activities coordinator will host conference calls to families on a weekly basis to share the status of activities or happenings in the facility and where family members or their representatives can ask questions or make suggestions.
8. Families or representatives may call the TCU at any time for urgent calls or complaints:



- a. For Bayonne Medical Center TCU: 201-858-7330.
- b. For Hoboken University Medical Center TCU: 201-418-2151.