

Safety Is Not Negotiable - Pandemic Preparedness – the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19)

Yesterday, on March 11th, the World Health Organization declared the novel coronavirus a pandemic. As registered nurses and nurse practitioners we are neither nervous nor afraid – as a profession, we are unwavering in our commitment to care for our patients, residents and clients.

Every day we look after people who are sicker and more infectious than those with COVID-19 – it's what we do as registered nurses and nurse practitioners.

What we are concerned about is our readiness to care for those who are infected and may require hospitalization. As of today, March 12th, we know there is one presumptive case in New Brunswick and more than 121,000 people have been infected with the virus worldwide.

NBNU is working to ensure that nurses on the frontline have the necessary education, training, drills and appropriate equipment to protect themselves. If you are concerned that adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), such as FIT testing and N-95 masks have not been provided, please follow up with your local president immediately.

There is still so much we do not know about COVID-19, but here's what we do know: without proper protective equipment, frontline healthcare workers can spread the infection to each other and to patients. The protection of registered nurses and all healthcare workers must be a priority.

We are calling on government and employers to make OUR protection THEIR priority.

Here's what you as registered nurses can do now to ensure our readiness:

- Update your N-95 respirator fit testing and wear an N-95 respirator if you are at risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- Use additional precautions like droplet, contact and airborne precautions, including gloves, gowns and face shields.
- You have the right to refuse to work in unsafe situations.
- If you do not have the required personal protective equipment or have any other concerns, stop what you're doing and speak with your manager or supervisor, document the situation and contact NBNU and your local president and labour relations officer.

A special section has been created on the NBNU website to provide members with general information on the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. We will continue updating this page with additional information as it becomes available. Please continue to check in regularly for updates.

To learn more about how to protect yourself, your family and healthcare colleagues please visit:

<https://nbnu.ca/safety-is-not-negotiable-pandemic-preparedness-the-coronavirus-2019-covid-19/>

In Solidarity,
Paula Doucet, RN
NBNU President