

WorkSafeNB Position on Personal Protective Equipment

There is an unfortunate disagreement between CFNU/NBNU and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) / NB's Chief Medical Officer (CMO) / Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) and the World Health Organization (WHO), regarding the appropriate use of N-95 masks as part of the overall personal protective equipment (PPE) regime.

NBNU and CFNU believe that all front-line healthcare workers should have access to, and at minimum be protected using a fit-tested NIOSH-approved N-95 respirator when in contact with patients who are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19.

NB's Chief Medical Officer and the RHAs have stated that they will follow the recommendations from the PHAC and the WHO regarding when an N-95 is required: IP&C Full Precautions will de-escalate to Droplet/Contact when the Physician/Nurse Practitioner/Nurse has determined that the patient is no longer severe/critically ill and an Aerosol Generating Medical Procedure is no longer required (see Horizon's memo's [#8C: Ongoing concerns about PPE](#) and [#2B: COVID-19 IPC Update](#) which Vitalité and EM/ANB Inc. are also following).

On Sunday, March 22, NBNU participated on a conference call with the CMO, WorkSafeNB, Department of Health and RHA representatives: **WorkSafeNB stated that they will enforce the PHAC/RHA/WHO guidelines on PPE use.**

We have already heard of similar rulings for actual workplace refusals in both Alberta and Manitoba. With the RHA/PHAC/WHO guidelines being enforced by WorkSafeNB, it means that you could potentially be subject to discipline for refusal of providing care. While we have a difference of opinions, we must respect the Infection Prevention Control (IPC) guidelines that are currently in place regarding droplet/contact precautions.

As a result, while we continue to advocate for the precautionary principle and the safety and health of our members, we ask that you use your point-of-care risk assessment (PCRA), an activity that is based on the individual nurses' professional judgment (i.e., knowledge, skills, reasoning and education) in following the employer PPE guidelines when determining whether a patient has mild/moderate/severe symptoms. Underlying the PCRA is the principle that individual healthcare workers are best positioned to determine the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) required based on the situation and their interactions with an individual patient. They do so by evaluating the likelihood of exposure to themselves or others based on a specific task, environment, conditions, interaction or patient.

I am also awaiting definitions of mild/moderate/severe from the Office of the Chief Medical Officer and hope to have something by the end of today.

Proper training and information are critical in determining whether our employers are meeting their legal responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act: please advise your

manager and local president if you have not been properly trained to use the guidelines/PPE.

Continue to keep us updated with things that are happening on the frontlines so that we can deal with it accordingly. Also, I ask that you continue to visit the [COVID-19 portal on the NBNU website](#) for the latest information and updates pertaining to COVID-19.

Stay Safe!

In Solidarity,
Paula Doucet, President NBNU