



South Warwickshire
Clinical Commissioning Group



Coventry and Rugby
Clinical Commissioning Group

Our Ref: SS/GW

16 December 2014

To: Coventry and Rugby Care Homes
NHS Coventry and Rugby CCG GP Practices
South Warwickshire Care Homes
NHS South Warwickshire CCG GP Practices

Christchurch House
Greyfriars Lane
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Telephone: **02476 553 344**
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Dear Colleague

Norovirus Testing: New Local Arrangements

Norovirus is one of the most common causes of gastroenteritis amongst adults in the UK affecting 600,000 patients each year with an estimated cost to the NHS of £100million per annum. Outbreaks within the community setting, specifically care homes, are common but often remain undiagnosed as testing specifically for Norovirus locally has not been funded. The impact of Norovirus outbreaks across the health economy is also significant with many hospital admissions resulting in ward closures.

As part of the Norovirus Strategy across Coventry and Warwickshire, both NHS Coventry and Rugby and NHS South Warwickshire CCGs have agreed to provide funding to ensure specific Norovirus testing is undertaken locally. It is anticipated that the testing of stool specimens will assist in the prompt recognition and timely management of an outbreak, thus enabling a risk assessment strategy to be implemented within the care home based on laboratory diagnosis rather than clinical presentation alone.

Norovirus testing will come into effect **immediately**. The initial management of outbreaks will not change though (please refer to Appendix 1a or 1b). Appendix 2 provides guidance on how to take a stool specimen.

Care homes are still contractually obliged to report any suspected outbreaks of diarrhoea and/or vomiting in the first instance to Public Health England (PHE), (formally Health Protection Unit), West Midlands and East on **Tel: 0344 225 3560 (Option 2, Option 1)** who will provide initial telephone advice and guidance.

PHE may then advise the care home to send stool specimens via the normal GP route marked clearly **"for Norovirus Testing"**, (after first gaining verbal consent from the resident's GP). Please note the laboratory will only test together (as a pooled sample), a minimum of three separate resident's specimens. The result of the pooled test will give confirmation of an outbreak by detection of a "Norovirus positive" result and will be communicated back to the care home by the laboratory. PHE should then be contacted by the care home and informed of this result.

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If you have any queries, please contact Virology at UHCW on Tel: (024) 7696 5461. Alternatively please call Judith Timms, Clinical Lead for Virology and Molecular Pathology on (024) 7696 4640 or a member of her team on (024) 76 965471/(024) 7696 5473.

Yours faithfully



SHARON STUART

**Infection Prevention & Control Commissioning Nurse
NHS Coventry and Rugby CCG**

Encs

cc

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