 Department of Health Government of Nunavut		NURSING POLICY, PROCEDURE AND PROTOCOLS	
		Community Health Nursing	
TITLE:		SECTION:	POLICY NUMBER:
Transfer of Person Requiring Medical Care from water vessel to shore within Nunavut during COVID-19 Pandemic		Nursing Practice	07-038-00
EFFECTIVE DATE:	REVIEW DUE:	REPLACES NUMBER:	NUMBER OF PAGES:
June 23, 2020	June 2023	N/A	5
APPLIES TO:			
Community Health Centres			

1. BACKGROUND:

The Government of Nunavut (GN) has placed specific limitations and restrictions on travel in to the Territory of Nunavut in response to the SARS-CoV-2 virus (COVID-19) global pandemic. These limitations and restrictions are in place specifically to minimize risks for Nunavummiut.

During the summer months goods are transported to Nunavut by ocean going vessels/sealifts. The ships provide an essential service by transporting goods into Nunavut from other jurisdictions.

Persons onboard the sea vessels/ships may need access to healthcare services at community health centres and/or the Qikiqtani General Hospital (QGH). This policy has been developed in consultation with Federal Health and Marine partners, as well as the GN Departments of Health (DH) and Community and Government Services (CGS) to provide guidance and direction on how to safely provide care for these individuals while ensuring the safety of Nunavummiut. It is assumed that the sea vessels/ships are not arriving directly from international water.

2. POLICY:

2.1 It is the requirement that all communicable diseases be reported through existing standard operating procedures outlined in the Government of Nunavut Communicable Disease Manual and the COVID-19 Public Health Protocol.

2.1.1 Department of Health staff will provide health care services to sealift re-supply vessel staff who develop an illness or are injured.

2.1.2 All staff will take necessary precautions described in this protocol to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission once the ill or injured individual is brought ashore.

3. PRINCIPLES:

3.1 Safety and protection of healthcare providers, and community members is priority.

3.2 Additional precautionary measures should be taken when delivering care to patients with COVID-19 infection or communicable disease.

3.3 During the current pandemic, assume that all out of territory travel/contact be considered high risk for COVID-19 transmission.

3.4 All persons/patients seeking medical attention at Nunavut Health Centres or Hospital setting require screening for COVID-19.

4. DEFINITIONS:

- 4.1 Nurse refers to Community Health Nurse (CHN) or Supervisor of Community Health Programs (SCHP).
- 4.2 Person refers to anyone who has travelled or is travelling on a sea vessel/ship from out of territory for seasonal sealift deliveries to communities.
- 4.3 Patient refers to any person from the sea vessel/ship that requires care at the health centre or hospital.
- 4.4 Non-urgent refers to conditions that may be acute but non-urgent as well as conditions which may be part of a chronic problem with or without evidence of deterioration.
- 4.5 Urgent refers to conditions that could potentially progress to a serious problem requiring emergency interventions.
- 4.6 Emergent refers to conditions that are a potential threat to life, limb or function requiring rapid medical interventions and the use of condition specific controlled medical acts.
- 4.7 Resuscitation refers to conditions that are considered threats to life or limb and have imminent risk of deterioration requiring immediate aggressive interventions.

5. RECIPIENT PATIENTS:

- 5.1 All persons that require medical care in a community health centres or Qikiqtani General Hospital from out of territory sea vessels.

6. PROTOCOL:

- 6.1 While a sea vessel is in transport, as soon as there is a potential or actual need for medical care; COVID-19 or otherwise, the vessel Captain should contact the Canadian Coast Guard Marine Communications and Traffic services (MCTS) as per usual protocol.
 - 6.1.1 The Vessel captain will notify MCTS if they contact the health centre or hospital directly.
- 6.2 *For minor injury or illness scenarios where COVID-19 is not suspected*
 - 6.2.1 The health centre or hospital at the closest port is contacted prior to disembarking to arrange for health screening.
 - 6.2.2 If vessel is at sea, the vessel captain will contact MCTS to flag medical issues. MCTS will contact the closest health centre for instructions.
 - 6.2.3 The patient must wear a non-medical mask to disembark the vessel.
 - 6.2.4 The patient being transported to the health centre is to restrict contact with community members. If a patient requires assistance getting to the Health Centre or Hospital-limit to 1 person from the ship to attend with the patient. The attendant is also required to wear a non-medical mask.
 - 6.2.5 Health centre staff will don appropriate PPE and place patient in designated isolation room/space.
 - 6.2.6 Patient is to be treated, then transported back to the ship and will restrict contact with community members enroute.
- 6.3 *For minor injury or illness scenarios where COVID-19 is suspected*
 - 6.3.1 Patient to wear a surgical mask and should be isolated immediately onboard, as per the vessel's COVID-19 contingency plans.
 - 6.3.2 Captain to contact the health centre for screening assessment of the patient over the phone.
 - 6.3.3 The nurse will then use the COVID-19 Healthcare Provider Flowchart and consult with the PHO on call to decide next steps (e.g. if swab needed).
 - 6.3.4 If swab is needed, the nurse is to follow the COVID-19 Protocol Appendix B. Home

- Testing Guidance and obtain the swab at the sea vessel/ship, beach, or dock – which ever location is most suitable and presents the least risk of viral transmission.
- 6.3.5 The swab is to be tested in Iqaluit or Rankin Inlet using the GeneXpert for faster results and also sent to the southern testing facility, as per established local protocols.
 - 6.3.6 Captain of the vessel is to instruct all persons to report symptoms consistent with COVID-19 as per the COVID-19 Public Health Protocol.
 - 6.3.7 All persons on board the vessel reporting symptoms are to be assessed using the COVID-19 Healthcare Provider Flowchart and swabbed accordingly. Consult with Public Health Officer (PHO) on call for direction.
 - 6.3.8 The PHO, nurse, and vessel captain should assess the situation together and determine next steps regarding isolation plans via conference call.
 - 6.3.8.1 Operator may need to arrange and pay for a charter to send the swab to Iqaluit or Rankin Inlet for faster results with the GeneXpert. This decision will rest with the PHO on call and the Vessel Captain.
 - 6.3.8.2 If the patient is not permitted to re-board, the vessel operator is responsible for arranging an aircraft charter as soon as possible out of community. Note: medical evacuation using GN emergency system is reserved for those who medically require transfer to another health facility for care and treatment. Therefore, the vessel operator will need to arrange alternate air charter service for this type of evacuation.
 - 6.3.9 The captain or public health officer may request a secondary risk assessment and planning conference call to address concerns of a broader stakeholder group (PHAC, TC, CG, JFTN, PS NEM, Captain, operation and GN Health).
 - 6.3.10 If there will be a delay in transport, the patient will need to be isolated at the expense of the vessel operator. The health centre may not have capacity to keep patient in health centre beyond 4 hours.
- 6.4 For emergent/resuscitation scenario where COVID-19 IS or is NOT suspected at Sea**
- 6.4.1 The Vessel Captain contacts MCTS to flag medical issues.
 - 6.4.2 MCTS will connect with the Emergency Room Physician at QGH, where a decision will be made if the patient needs to come ashore, requires a sea medivac, and the level of urgency.
 - 6.4.3 If the patient needs to come ashore for treatment, the ER physician will contact the Nurse on Call or SCHP of the nearest health centre to determine appropriate location to come ashore.
 - 6.4.4 If a medivac from the vessel is warranted, MCTS will coordinate the medivac with the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC) and the ER physician on call.
- 6.5 For emergent/resuscitation scenario where COVID-19 IS or is NOT suspected anchored at community:**
- 6.5.1 The Vessel Captain will call the health centre directly. Health centre to screen for COVID symptoms when feasible and safe to do so.
 - 6.5.2 If life threatening condition – Do not delay transport. Someone from ship to call the health centre while patient is transported immediately to the health centre.
 - 6.5.3 Health Centre staff to coordinate transport from the beach to the Health Centre (if non-ambulatory), limiting contact with community.
 - 6.5.3.1 If patient needs assistance getting to the Health Centre – limit persons from the ship to attend with the patient. Everyone to wear nonmedical masks when disembarking.

- 6.5.3.2 Health Centre staff will don appropriate PPE, and isolate patient immediately in designated isolation room upon arrival to the Health Centre.
- 6.5.3.3 Patient treated and transported back to the ship, limiting contact with community.
- 6.5.3.4 If patient not able to continue with the vessel voyage due to medical reasons, a medevac is to be arranged by the Health Centre, while the patient remains isolated in the Health Centre.

6.6 For emergent/resuscitation scenario where COVID-19 is suspected:

- 6.6.1 Patient to wear medical mask and be isolated immediately onboard, as per the vessel's COVID-19 contingency plans.
- 6.6.2 Captain to contact the health centre – screening and assessment to occur over the phone using the COVID-19 Health Care Provider Flowchart and consult to PHO on call. Do not delay transportation to health centre if a life-threatening condition.
- 6.6.3 Bring to Health Centre, limiting contact with community members. If person is non-ambulatory, the Health Centre will coordinate transport from the beach to the Health Centre.
- 6.6.4 If patient needs assistance getting to the Health Centre – limit the number of persons from the ship to attend with the patient – both patient and attendant(s) will need to wear a surgical mask when disembarking.
 - 6.6.4.1 In addition to the medical mask, the attendant should also wear gloves and eye protection (goggles or face shield).
 - 6.6.4.2 PPE should be changed after the patient has been transferred to the health centre staff and appropriately disposed of in a sealed bag. If the attendant is at the health centre, they need to perform hand hygiene and don a new medical mask before leaving the health centre to return to the vessel.
 - 6.6.4.3 Transport staff should frequently clean their hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water and ensure that they clean their hands before putting on PPE and again after removing the PPE.
- 6.6.5 Health Centre staff will don PPE and isolate patient in designated isolation room immediately upon arrival at the Health Centre.
- 6.6.6 Captain of vessel to instruct all workers onboard to report if they have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 as per the COVID-19 Public Health Protocol to the nurse at the health centre. It is to be reported to PHO on Call and/or MCTS if at sea.
- 6.6.7 Conference call between the PHO, the Health Centre nurse, and the vessel Captain to assess the situation and determine next steps including a testing and isolation plan.
- 6.6.8 The PHO and Captain will decide if a secondary conference call is needed with broader stakeholders (PHAC, TC, CG, JTFN, PS NEM, Captain, operator and GN Health) when there is risk to vessel operations.
- 6.6.9 If swabbing is needed for additional persons, nurses to go to the vessel, beach, or dock to carry out the swabbing and contact tracing as per the COVID-19 Protocol Appendix B Home Testing Guidance
- 6.6.10 Persons to wear a mask when disembarking. Crew may have to rotate ashore for testing.



- 6.6.11 If patient not able to re-board vessel and requires ongoing medical care, patient to be isolated in the Health Centre and medevac arranged by the Health Centre.
- 6.6.12 If patient does not need medical monitoring, then the vessel operator is responsible for aircraft charter to evacuate person from the community.
- 6.6.13 Operator may need to arrange and pay for a charter to send the swab to Iqaluit or Rankin Inlet for faster results with the GeneXpert. Some ships may be outfitted with antigen tests.

7. RELATED POLICIES, PROTOCOLS AND LEGISLATION:

COVID-19 Public Health Protocol

Government of Nunavut Communicable Disease Manual

8. REFERENCES:

Approved By 	Date <i>June 29, 20</i>
Ruby Brown, Deputy Minister – Department of Health	
Approved By 	Date <i>June 23/20</i>
Monique Skinner, Acting Chief Nursing Officer	