HUP: Protocol for Obtaining Nasopharyngeal/Oropharyngeal Specimens for COVID-19 Testing
Updated: 3/19/2020

- Collection of nasopharyngeal/oropharyngeal (NP/OP) swabs are used in diagnosis of many upper and lower respiratory tract infections, including COVID-19 (SARS CoV-2).
- Nasopharyngeal specimen quality is crucial and affects test sensitivity.
- Please follow protocol below for obtaining quality specimens.

Materials: Currently, we are performing NP/OP swabs using our standard viral collection kit (red top) with universal viral transport media. This may change as supplies of these kits are limited. Of note, you can ADD ON a COVID-19 in-house or send-out test to our current viral collection kit. To conserve materials, avoid doing multiple tests. See testing protocols for further guidance on how to add on specimens.

Procedure:
1. Perform hand hygiene before and after encounter (for all patients under investigation for COVID-19).
2. Providers: Wear gown, surgical mask, goggles/face shield, and gloves during specimen collection
3. For the nasopharyngeal swab:
   - Tilt patient’s head back and insert smaller swab (below) parallel to palate until resistance is met by contact with nasopharynx.
   - Leave swab in place for 2-3 seconds to absorb secretions, then rotate completely around for 10-15 seconds.
   - Patients generally feel very uncomfortable with this procedure. Be prepared for them to pull their head and/or body away.
   - Remove swab and repeat the same process in the other nostril with the same swab.

4. For the oropharyngeal swab: using larger swab (below), swab posterior pharynx, avoiding the tongue.

5. Place both NP and OP swabs immediately into sterile viral transport media vial; shaft of both swabs can be snapped off at demarcated line, and tube should be closed tightly.
6. Ensure patient label is placed on tube
7. Place sample in clear plastic specimen bag, seal, and then place this bag in another plastic specimen bag (i.e., double bag specimen)
8. Include in specimen bag completed “SARS CoV-2 Testing Requisition Form” signed / approved by infection control
8. Deliver to central receiving on Founders 7 (may be sent via tube system)

NOTE: INTUBATED patients: they only need a nasopharyngeal swab performed in both nostrils