REGISTRAR’S ADVISORY

Asymptomatic COVID-19 Point of Care Testing in Community Pharmacies

Introduction

Nova Scotia’s approach to testing for COVID-19 continues to evolve as part of its response to the pandemic. To ensure that the province continues to have adequate testing capacity to identify and contain the spread of COVID-19, the government is considering requests from various entities, including pharmacies, for approval to provide point of care testing (POCT) for asymptomatic individuals outside of the mandatory testing requirements set out by Public Health (e.g., international travel, etc.).

Guidance

- Pharmacies may only provide asymptomatic COVID-19 POCT when they do so in accordance with s. 22 of the Health Protection Act Order by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, including that the pharmacy has:
  - obtained prior approval from the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health; and
  - complies with any direction issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, including following the COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Testing for Outbound Travelers Protocol.
- Pharmacy practitioners who are involved in asymptomatic COVID-19 POCT are expected to do so in accordance with the Standards of Practice: Testing. For clarity:
  - Requirements related to notifying a patient’s primary care provider (standard 3.10) and follow-up of test results outside of the normal range (standard 3.9) are considered to be met through the COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Testing for Outbound Travelers Protocol for a positive COVID-19 POCT result, which includes communication with the patient that they must book a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, providing the patient with a Nova Scotia Health lab requisition for a priority PCR test, and reporting of the positive result to Public Health.
  - A patient record must be created for every asymptomatic COVID-19 POCT conducted (standard 3.11.1) and be kept in accordance with the requirements set out for all patient records in the Registration, Licensing and Professional Accountability Regulations.
- Nurses employed in community pharmacies who have the appropriate competencies may collect and process samples for COVID-19 testing in accordance with the NSCN/NSCP Joint Statement on Nurses Employed in Community Pharmacies to Support the COVID-19 Pandemic Response.
- Pharmacies who use or allow a third-party business to provide asymptomatic COVID-19 testing on the pharmacy premises need to ensure that the business is an approved COVID-19 testing provider under s. 22 of the Health Protection Act Order by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.