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SUWASIRIPAYA

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சுகாதார அமைச்சு
Ministry of Health

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My No.) DGHS/COVID-19/347/2021

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Your No.)

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திகதி)
Date) 10.10.2023

All Deputy Director Generals of Health Services
All Provincial Directors & Regional Directors of Health Services
All Directors and Medical Superintendents of Hospitals
Regional Epidemiologists
All JMOs of Hospitals and Universities
Heads of other Healthcare Institutions
Medical Officers of Health

Update on Management of COVID-19 patients and disposal of COVID-19-related deaths in the Current Situation

The recent announcement by the World Health Organization (WHO) that COVID-19 will no longer be categorized as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) marks a milestone in the pandemic. While acknowledging remaining uncertainties over the potential evolution of SARS-CoV-2, it has been advised to transition to long-term management of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the past 1.5 years, Sri Lanka has witnessed a substantial decrease in cases in a sustainable manner, and a decline in COVID-19-related hospitalizations and deaths accompanied by satisfactory vaccination coverage against the COVID-19 infection. Considering these improvements, in the current circumstances, management protocols for COVID-19 patients and related deaths are revised as below.

The following circulars:

- No. DGHS/COVID-19/347/2021 dated 27.01.2022 on "Exit Strategy for COVID-19 Patients and Contacts",
 - EPID/400/2019/n-CoV dated 02.03.2022 on "Update on Post-mortem Diagnosis, Disposal and Reporting of COVID-19 related deaths" & any
 - COVID-19 related circulars pertaining to public transport and public gatherings published by the Ministry of Health from time to time during previous prevailing situations,
- are all hereby canceled.

With the powers vested under the Quarantine and Prevention of Disease Ordinance No. 03 of 1897, the following instructions have been issued:

1. COVID-19 patients:

- 1.1 For all diagnosed patients with COVID-19 infection; decision on hospital admission and duration of hospital care to be decided by the treating physician, according to the patient's clinical condition.
- 1.2 In regard to the management of diagnosed COVID-19 patients in hospital wards and ICU settings, no specific infection prevention control measures are necessary other than the standard respiratory & contact precautions to be taken in regard to viral respiratory tract infections. Such patients should follow the standard infection prevention and control measures including maintenance of appropriate personal hygiene during their period of illness.
2. **Screening prior to clinical procedures:** In the current context, screening should not be done for COVID-19 prior to any medical or surgical procedure.
3. **Close contacts of COVID-19 patients:** Irrespective of COVID vaccination status, close contacts of COVID-19 patients should not be screened or quarantined.
4. Any individual who develops symptoms suggestive of flu-like illness (e.g. cough, cold), should follow appropriate respiratory hygiene & cough etiquette measures, especially among public gatherings and when using public transportation.
5. **COVID-19-related deaths:** In the current context, for the bodies of deceased individuals who were diagnosed with COVID-19; no specific guidelines need to be followed for their subsequent disposal. The bodies should be released to family members for the final rites and disposal while adhering to general infection control measures.
6. **Surveillance of COVID-19:** Disease surveillance activities will need to be continued as per guidelines issued by the Epidemiology Unit, Ministry of Health.
7. Above measures are also applicable to the private healthcare institutions.

This circular will be effective from 10th October 2023.


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