



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

March 27, 2020

DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

No. 2020 – 0167

TO: ALL UNDERSECRETARIES AND ASSISTANT SECRETARIES OF HEALTH; MINISTER OF HEALTH - BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO (MOH-BARMM); ALL DIRECTORS OF BUREAUS, SERVICES, AND CENTERS FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT (CHDS); ALL EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF SPECIALTY HOSPITALS; CHIEFS OF MEDICAL CENTERS, HOSPITALS, AND SANITARIA; AND ALL OTHERS CONCERNED

SUBJECT: Interim Guidelines on the Proper Handling and Disinfection of Non-critical Items Used in the Management of COVID-19 Patients in All Health Facilities and Temporary Treatment and Monitoring Facilities

I. BACKGROUND

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a highly infectious disease that spreads mostly from person-to-person via respiratory droplets, being in direct contact with infected people, indirect contact with surfaces in the immediate environment or with objects used on the infected persons. Non-critical items used in the management of COVID-19 patients, such as trays, linens, records, and bed railings, are possible fomites for transmission. As such, there is a need to implement infection prevention control measures on proper handling and disinfection on these non-critical items in health facilities, community quarantine units, and temporary treatment and monitoring facilities catering suspect, probable and confirmed COVID-19 cases in accordance with the latest case definition for surveillance of COVID-19 patients.

The Department of Health (DOH) hereby issues these guidelines on proper handling and disinfection of non-critical items in health facilities to ensure the safety of health workers and to prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

II. OBJECTIVE

To provide guidance on the proper handling and disinfection of non-critical items used in the management of suspect, probable and confirmed COVID-19 patients.

III. SCOPE AND COVERAGE

This issuance shall cover all health facilities, community quarantine units, and temporary treatment and monitoring facilities that handle suspect, probable and confirmed COVID-19 patients.

IV. GENERAL GUIDELINES

- A. All health facilities, community quarantine units, and temporary treatment and monitoring facilities shall ensure that proper handling and disinfection of all non-critical items used for suspect, probable and confirmed COVID-19 patients are strictly done.
- B. All health facilities shall perform disinfection of non-critical items before and after every use, using 70% alcohol or approved disinfectants by the health facility.
- C. All personnel shall clean and disinfect their respective working areas before leaving their posts.
- D. All personnel shall use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) during the cleaning and disinfection process. PPEs shall be disposed of in appropriate waste bins.

V. SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

A. Disinfection of Non-critical Items

1. Medical items

- a. Non-critical medical items used for patient care include blood pressure cuffs, bed pans, emesis basin, crutches, wheelchairs, food trays, and the like as defined in Department Memorandum No. 2020-0072 *“Interim Guidelines for 2019 Novel Coronavirus Acute Respiratory Disease (2019-nCoV ARD) Response in Hospitals and Other Health Facilities”*
- b. All facilities that handle suspect, probable and confirmed COVID-19 patients shall disinfect non-critical medical items, following the recommendations of the manufacturer and with the use disinfectants approved by the health facility

2. Environmental surfaces

- a. Environmental surfaces shall be kept visibly clean based on the established protocols of the health facility.
- b. Visible dirt on surfaces shall be promptly removed using detergent and water, or a disinfectant approved for use by the health facility. The approved disinfectants shall be used according to the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and disinfecting environmental surfaces.
- c. Frequently touched surfaces shall be cleaned and disinfected (e.g. door knobs, bed rails, light switches) on a more frequent schedule, as established by the health facility.
- d. Cleaning and disinfecting solutions shall be prepared daily or when needed.
- e. Mops and cloths used for cleaning and disinfecting shall be cleaned after every use, and shall be allowed to dry before the next use.

3. Linens

- a. All linens and patient gowns shall be handled, transported, processed, and stored in a manner that will prevent its contamination.
- b. For used linens, the following shall be considered:
 - i. Least agitation shall be undertaken in the removal of used linen from the patient bed to prevent contamination of the surrounding environment or possible infection to persons handling the linen.
 - ii. Used linen shall never be placed on another patient's bed.
 - iii. Used linen shall be held away from the healthcare worker's uniform.
 - iv. Used linen shall be bagged at point of use and directly placed into the linen hamper or in the linen chute.
 - v. Bags or containers for linens used for suspect, probable and confirmed COVID-19 patients shall be identified with proper labels or color coding.
 - vi. Precaution shall be undertaken when transporting the used linens out of the patient room. Used linens shall not come into contact with the patients' clothing, furniture, clean linens, equipment, doors, walls and other clean items and surfaces.
 - vii. Linens used by suspect, probable and confirmed COVID-19 patients shall be separately laundered with other infectious cases.
 - viii. Usage of detergents and other laundry chemicals for the used linens shall be in accordance with the established protocol of the health facility.
 - ix. Continuous flow of clean water for laundry shall be ensured.
 - x. Washing machines used for laundering used linen shall be cleaned and disinfected after every use.
 - xi. For outsourced laundry services, the health facility shall ensure that the provisions on handling, storage, and transport stated in the contract are strictly adhered to by the laundry services.

4. Health Records

a. Paper-based Health Records

- i. All health workers managing suspect, probable and confirmed COVID-19 patients shall practice hand hygiene at all times - before and after documentation. Hand hygiene supplies (i.e. soap and water, or alcohol-based handrubs) shall be available and accessible to the health workers.
- ii. All documentation shall be done at the nurse's station only or at the designated area away from the patient's room.
- iii. The Health Information Management Department (HIMD)/records office shall be provided with hand hygiene supplies (i.e. soap and water, or alcohol-based handrubs) and which shall be available and accessible to its personnel.
- iv. Disinfectant machines (e.g. Virus Disinfectant Portable Machine and Ultraviolet (UV) light), if available, shall be used for decontamination of health records.
- v. All decontaminated health records shall be placed on a designated plastic container prior to forwarding to the health records office. The Infection Control Team or staff shall lead the decontamination process.

b. Electronic Health Records

- i. All electronic devices used for documentation shall follow decontamination procedures of electronics as stated in Section V., Item 4 of this Circular.

5. Electronic Devices

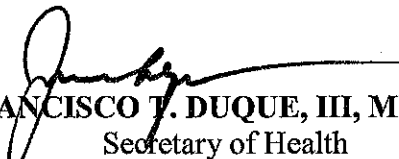
All electronic devices shall be decontaminated as follows:

- a. Devices shall be disconnected and/or unplugged before decontamination.
- b. Visible dirt shall be removed using cleaning or disinfecting products for identified electronic devices. Manufacturer's instructions shall be followed for cleaning and/or disinfecting electronic devices.
- c. If no manufacturer guidance is available, the use of alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 70% alcohol shall be considered for disinfection.
- d. Surfaces shall be dried thoroughly to avoid pooling of liquids.
- e. Consider placing wipeable covers to parts of the electronic devices (e.g. keyboards, monitors) for easier cleaning.

B. Disposal of used Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

All PPE used for the disinfection of non-critical medical items and environment shall be considered as infectious waste, which shall be properly treated prior to disposal in accordance with healthcare waste management policies and procedures.

Dissemination of the information to all concerned is hereby requested.


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