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Contact:

Christina Trumbach
Marketing & Communication Manager
Health City Cayman Islands
Tel. + 1 (345) 526-2203
e-mail: christina.trumbach@healthcity.ky

Two Health City staff members test positive for COVID-19

CAYMAN ISLANDS (March 19, 2020) – Health City Cayman Islands is reporting that two staff members currently in quarantine have tested positive for COVID-19. The results of the second batch of tests run by the Cayman Islands Health Services Authority (HSA) were announced at a Cayman Islands Government press conference on Thursday, March 19.

Presently thirty samples would have been tested for Health City staff members, their families and any other individuals who were considered to be in direct risk. This means out of these thirty tests, two would have been positive. These persons were immediately quarantined and had samples taken from them once a patient at the facility tested positive for the virus on Thursday, March 12. The direct contacts of the two individuals who have tested positive have also been in quarantine, and neither of the COVID-19 positive staff members have any children.

“While we’d obviously hoped that we would have no positive cases, these results are in keeping with the fact that those who tested positive had more direct contact with the first patient who tested positive and was being cared for at our facility. While these are not the results we hoped for, we must take heart in that only two out of thirty of the samples from the staff members and their relatives tested returned a positive result. This shows that our infection control and containment procedures are as effective as possible given the circumstances. Moving forward we must all remain calm and vigilant in our precautionary measures,” Dr. Binoy Chattuparambil, Clinical Director of Health City Cayman Islands said.

Those connected to Health City who have tested positive for COVID-19 will remain in quarantine for 14 days, as is the standard for these cases as confirmed by Public Health Cayman Islands and Public Health England. They will have confirmatory clearance tests conducted at the conclusion of this period.

He said, “At Health City, we have taken rigorous measures to contain the spread of the virus, and have also been advised, instructed and reassured by Public Health England officials in this effort that we are taking all of the necessary and correct steps to curtail community transmission.”

None of the family members are showing symptoms at this time and are all doing well. These two staff members that tested positive are experiencing very mild symptoms.

The hospital quarantined and tested all staff members and their families who were at direct risk for exposure to the COVID-19 virus. The level of contact with the patient determined the risk level. Additionally, any of those staff members who were symptomatic were included in the testing group. Dr. Chattuparambil outlined the levels of contact assessed.

“In the context of COVID-19, there is an important degree of difference between what is considered ‘social contact’ – such as passing someone in a hallway; ‘infectious contact’ – such as being sneezed or coughed on by a symptomatic contact; or ‘secondary infectious contact’ – such as touching a surface that a symptomatic person has sneezed or coughed on. Those individuals who have tested positive would have had ‘infectious contact’ or ‘secondary infectious contact’. In this instance, it is unlikely that a positive test result would have resulted from ‘secondary infectious contact’ as Health City employs stringent infection control procedures including mandatory regular hand-sanitation and hand-washing by staff members, and ongoing cleaning and sanitation of the facility,” he said.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. Studies to date suggest that the virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through contact with respiratory droplets rather than through the air. (Source: <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>)

Dr. Chattuparambil outlined that these positive staff members would remain in quarantine for the rest of the prescribed 14 days. If they remain symptomatic after 14 days which is unlikely, they would remain in quarantine until symptoms disappear. This, he explained, was the standard endorsed by visiting Public Health England officials currently on island to assist with the Cayman Islands’ official government response to COVID-19.

He further explained that that any person who has had potential infectious contact with a quarantined individual at Health City has already been notified and has been followed up with by the Public Health Department for evaluation and potential testing.

Currently testing capabilities are limited on island and testing for COVID-19 and at present is being restricted to symptomatic high risk contacts and those that have other factors that would lead to suspicion of having the virus. Symptoms include fever, respiratory symptoms such as sore throat, cough, chest tightness or shortness of breath.

According to the Health City Infection Control Team led by pulmonologist Dr. Archita Joshi-Bhatt, “It is advisable to self-quarantine yourself for 14 days after your last day of possible exposure. The risk of transmission of the virus to others can be reduced by implementing personal protective measures, such as frequent hand washing, covering nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, avoiding close contact with people suffering from acute respiratory illnesses and avoiding large social gatherings.”

According to the WHO, the COVID-19 incubation period - which means the time between catching the virus and beginning to have symptoms of the disease - ranges from one to 14 days, and is most commonly around five days. (Source: <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>)

Dr. Chattuparambil counseled members of the public to remain calm in the wake of the positive test results.

“Please rest assured that we are abiding by the highest standards of infection control and have also taken expert advice on the containment of COVID-19. I would like to continue to urge everyone to follow standard precautionary measures against contracting the virus, including regular hand-washing and practicing good respiratory hygiene,” he said.

Dr. Chattuparambil advised that Health City is continuing to work closely with Cayman Islands Government health officials on regular updates regarding the local COVID-19 situation and will issue further updates as soon as any new information is available.

Individuals who develop any flu-like symptoms such as fever, cough, runny nose etc., are advised to contact the Cayman Islands Public Health Department at flu@hsa.ky or via the flu hotline at 1-800-534-8600.

For more information about how to protect yourself from acquiring COVID-19, visit www.hsa.ky/coronavirus and www.gov.ky/coronavirus

About Health City Cayman Islands

Health City Cayman Islands, the vision of renowned heart surgeon and humanitarian Dr. Devi Shetty, is supported by Narayana Health, one of India’s largest private healthcare systems. Health City, only the second hospital in the Caribbean to receive the Joint Commission International's "hospital accreditation", provides compassionate, high-quality, affordable healthcare services in a world-class, comfortable, patient-centered environment. Offering healthcare to local, regional and international patients, Health City Cayman Islands delivers excellence in adult and pediatric cardiology, cardiac surgery, cardiac electrophysiology, medical oncology, orthopedics, sports medicine, pediatric endocrinology, gastrointestinal, hepato-pancreato-biliary and bariatric surgery, neurology, interventional neurology and neuro-diagnostics, neurosurgery, minimally invasive spine surgery, gynecology, urology, pediatric allergies, colorectal surgery, dental, sleep lab and pulmonology services.

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