

COVID 19 COMMITTEE MEETING Minutes
THURSDAY, March 4, 2021
2:00 PM

The meeting had about 37 people in attendance and began with an overview of diagnostic testing by Julie Pittman called *Understanding Covid 19 Diagnostic Testing*. She described the distinction between the Antigen tests and the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests. She reviewed detection, sample, turn around time, complexity, intended use, testing personnel, sensitivity, and specificity. For more information review her PPT posted at the end of the minutes. She also discussed test recommendations, factors that influence results, and shared observations made by clinical lab managers.

Although there was no weekly update on college incidence rates, it was suggested it was probably low because state rates were low and have been dropping until yesterday. Some of that may be due to the storm.

Kim Kirby was unable to attend but Dr. King shared her note about the Phase 4 Meeting held Tuesday, March 2. The subcommittee recommend that we continue with current protocols until the end of March. At that time the subcommittee will see what, if any, changes the governor has outlined.

The Committee talked about opening slowly. The primary concerns are ensuring sufficient supplies and personnel to handle the COVID disinfecting protocols. The areas the Committee are looking most for opening first would be the fitness centers and possibly small meetings. Currently, the GPC is closed, the PT house is closed, the Community Room in DW will be closed until classes are over or 6 ft. social distancing is removed.

Members reported on the ongoing vaccination effort. Helena had an on-campus event with about 45 employees receiving a second vaccine shot administered by Hickory Hill Pharmacy. Stuttgart had many employees reporting to the High School for the first and second shot and a few from DeWitt went to Stuttgart to get vaccinated. DeWitt vaccines were provided by Dean's Pharmacy. Thanks to the efforts of Kim Kirby and Rhonda St. Columbia the vaccination arrangements for employees went smoothly.

There was a brief discussion about vaccination safety and efficacy. Dr. King shared that each vaccine had age restrictions with Moderna 18+ and Pfizer 16+

The group discussed the importance to practice the Covid safety protocols we have in place even if a person has received the vaccine. Basically, masks, social distancing, washing hands, using sanitizer, and cleaning work or student spaces after use. Additionally, we are continuing to screen all students and visitors on campus, taking temperatures, and following other safety measures. Although there was not a lengthy discussion about vaccine myths, agencies which post the latest information about the vaccine such as the CDC, WHO, and the Mayo Clinic are a good source to verify if information is accurate or false. Two such sites are listed.

Debunking myths-CDC, WHO, Mayo Clinic

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html>

<https://newsnetwork.mayoclinic.org/discussion/covid-19-vaccine-myths-debunked/>

The Governor announced that he may remove the “Mask Mandate” after March 31. The mandate may become a guideline. It is important for people to understand that this does not mean that masks wearing is no longer required. It means that it will no longer be punishable by a fine. Actually, very little of that happened in Arkansas. We will wait to see if the state does open up after March 31. The rate infection, hospitalizations, and deaths will determine what Governor Hutchison decide to do.

It is unlikely that things will be back to normal this summer so there will be a great number of online classes. Courses in science, occupations like CDL and welding, and others will continue to meet face to face. The plan is to have the Fall 2021 schedule primarily face-to face. Faculty will need to be prepared to pivot to online instruction when there is an emergency situation.

At some point we will want to offer an online survey to determine how many people at the College have been vaccinated. We plan to do that soon.

Michelle Waites reminded people about maintaining safe protocols. A reminder will be sent to students and staff about the importance of keeping protocols even if you have been vaccinated.

Dr. King shared that several variants of the virus have emerged and are posing concerns. These include strains such as the South African, Brazilian, United Kingdom, California, and New York strain. We do not know enough about these mutations to make any predictions other than these spread more easily, these are milder for some and more severe for others, these have been detected by currently available testing. Of those infected, many respond well to medicines available at this time. It was noted that medical treatments used for those who have the corona virus has improved.

UNDERSTANDING COVID-19 DIAGNOSTIC TESTING

Julie Pittman, MEd, MLS(ASCP)
MLT/PLB Program Director

Antigen Test VS. Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) Test

	Antigen Test	PCR Test
Detection	Nucleocapsid Protein	Nucleic Acids
Sample	Nasal/NP	Upper and Lower Respiratory
Turn Around Time	15 min	Reference Lab 24-48 hrs. Hospital possibly same day
Complexity	low	high
Intended Use	Persons with symptoms- test within the first 5 days	Persons with or without symptoms that have reason to suspect COVID
Testing Personnel	Clinical lab personnel trained for invitro diagnostic procedures	Laboratories certified under CLIA that meet requirements to perform high complexity tests
Sensitivity	Moderate	High
Specificity	High	High

TESTING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Symptomatic individuals should be tested within the first 5 days of onset of symptoms with antigen test. Negative results should be confirmed by PCR test.
- Asymptomatic individuals should be tested by PCR since there is not enough information available about viral loads among this group.
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/testing/expanded-screening-testing.html>

Factors That Influence Test Results

- Qualified testing personnel
 - Even with low complexity tests
- Quality of specimen
 - Nasal vs. NP
 - Self acquired vs HCW acquired
- Following recommended testing guidelines
 - Symptomatic vs asymptomatic persons

PCCUA Clinical Site Lab Managers Observations

- Tests correlate well, if testing guidelines are followed (A. Palmer and C. Rogers, personal communication, February 10, 2021).
- Ensure staff have been well trained on specimen collection methods (K. Shirley, personal communication, February 10, 2021).
- Combo tests are now available that offer testing for Coronavirus, Influenza A and Influenza B with one swab (K. Shirley, personal communication, February 10, 2021).
- Expect to see saliva becoming a more common specimen (J. Collum, personal communication, February 10, 2021).
- Not batch testing rapid specimens seem to give better results, tests are performed immediately after collection (Z. Stevens, personal communication, February 10, 2021).
- Been basically eating, sleeping, and breathing COVID, in a non infectious way (Z. Stevens, personal communication, February 10, 2021).

Laboratory Professionals Know What Matters

- **WHAT** we do and **HOW** we do it greatly affects patient outcomes.
- Getting a good quality specimen **MATTERS!**
- Processing the specimen in a timely manner **MATTERS!**
- Making sure the right patient gets the right results **MATTERS** (K. Shirley, personal communication, February 10, 2021).

References

- CareStart (2020). *CareStart COVID-19 antigen*. <https://carestartantigen.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/EUA-qr-test610-1-CareStart-Antigen-1hr-1.pdf>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021, February 25). *Frequently asked questions about coronavirus (COVID-19) for laboratories*. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/resources/antigen-tests-guidelines.html#table1>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020, December 16). *Interim guidance for antigen testing for SARS-CoV-2*. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/resources/antigen-tests-guidelines.html#table1>
- Quidel (2021). *Sofia SARS antigen FIA*. <https://www.quidel.com/sites/default/files/product/documents/EP143890-EN00.pdf>
- U.S. Food & Drug Administration (2021, March 3). *In vitro diagnostics EUAs*. <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-legal-regulatory-and-policy-framework/emergency-use-authorization/covid-19/euay>