

BULLETIN

Health care workers need protection during pandemic: NUPGE and HSABC release new research showing higher precautions recommended

March 19, 2020

The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) and Health Sciences Association of BC (HSA) released today a research paper focused on respiratory protection for health workers caring for COVID-19 patients.

“Health care workers around the world are reporting that personal protective equipment guidelines are inconsistent and in short supply. As this pandemic hits our health care system in Canada, the priority must be to keep our health care workers healthy so they can provide the care patients need,” said NUPGE President Larry Brown.

“HSA contacted Dr. John Murphy, an expert on occupational hygiene and adjunct professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto, for science-based guidance on the best measures for infection control among health care workers. His research confirms that the best practice is to use N95 respiratory protection. This supports the position of other national health care unions in Canada, and the joint advice to members from unions across Canada,” Brown said. [See March 13, 2020 Joint Statement](#)

“HSA represents more than 15,000 health science professionals working in our hospitals, including the respiratory therapists responsible for keeping patients in respiratory distress alive and the diagnostic technologists conducting the scans, x-rays, and other critical tests needed to diagnose hospitalized patients. When working with COVID-19 patients, a surgical mask is simply not the best practice for infection control. It is important our members know that and make sound decisions about how to best protect themselves while providing care,” said HSA President Val Avery.

Recognizing the world-wide shortage of personal protective equipment, Dr. Murphy recommends that properly fit-tested N95 masks be prioritized for allocation based on assessment of the extent of potential exposure and risk, and that surgical masks be used as a back up. In all cases, eye protection must accompany respiratory protection.

Link: [Respiratory Protection for Health Workers Caring for COVID-19 Patients \(Murphy 2020\)](#)

Link: [Advisory Report for the Health Sciences Association of British Columbia and the National Union of Public and General Employees on Respiratory Protection During Care of Influenza Patients \(Murphy 2009\)](#)

Contact:

[NUPGE: Anil Naidoo, NUPGE National Representative: 613.986.5409](#)

[HSA: Miriam Sobrino, HSA Communications: 604 328 2886](#)

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180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

Telephone 604-517-0994
1-800-663-2017