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Coronavirus Infection Update

Dear Future Care Clients,

A large number of coronavirus cases have been reported in Wuhan, China. This is a rapidly evolving situation. Wuhan is a city in central China. It is the 7th largest city in China with a population of over 11 million people.

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that are common among animals, but rarely affect humans. There are several coronaviruses that do affect humans and they almost always cause mild respiratory disease like the common cold or the flu. In rare cases, coronaviruses can become zoonotic, meaning they can be transmitted from animals to humans. This has happened previously with Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). These were thought to have possibly evolved to be able to affect humans from camels and civet cats respectively.

MERS virus was first reported in the Middle East in 2012 and also causes respiratory problems, but apparently far more severe than the currently reported virus in Wuhan. Up to 75% of people who contracted MERS died. There have been no SARS cases in many years. MERS, SARS and the current coronavirus cause much more severe illness in older patients.

The current coronavirus infection is affecting many people, but a far smaller percentage are becoming severely ill – likely less than 15%. It appears to also progress more slowly. It appears to start as a mild cough which progresses over a week to increased shortness of breath. They either get better or get worse and need to go to the hospital (15-20%). While they believe that the infection came from animals, as early cases were from workers in animal markets where they keep caged exotic and common animals in cages to be sold for food, they have recently also confirmed there can be human to human transmission, likely through secretions such as air droplets from sneezing and coughing infected individuals.

Initial symptoms of any coronavirus infection include runny nose, mild headache, cough, sore throat, fever, and a general feeling of being unwell.

There is no vaccine and no specific treatment. Individuals are directed to stay home and get lots of rest, drink lots of fluids and avoid exposing others, only going out to seek medical care for worsening respiratory symptoms and to wear a mask at all times. Hot steamy showers or humidifiers may help with cough and sore throat. Ibuprofen or acetaminophen should be taken for fever.

In an abundance of caution, Chinese authorities have closed Wuhan to any transportation out of the city to limit the spread of the infection, although cases are already being reported in other areas of China and one in the US from someone recently returned from the area.

What to do: (This will change as information becomes available and more focused)

Identify any employees/crew who have recently traveled from China, especially if from the Wuhan area, within the last 14 days. Inquire as to respiratory symptoms, and if any, isolate them and require them to wear a mask. Seek medical advice on the next steps.

Inquire if any newly boarding crew have traveled from China and/or been exposed to anyone with respiratory symptoms within the last 14 days. If the answer is yes, quarantine them on the ship for the first 48 hours before releasing them to work.

Treat all mild respiratory illnesses as above but be prepared to send individuals with worsening respiratory symptoms to the hospital while having them wear a mask at all times.

Avoid shaking hands or any other close physical interpersonal greetings until we see how this outbreak develops.

For additional information please contact physicians@futurecareinc.com. To refer a specific crewmember medical incident please continue to email our Contact Center at <firstresponse@futurecareinc.com> .

Thank you.

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