

Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) Interim Lab Biosafety Guidance for Research with SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19)

TO: George Washington University Principal Investigators

FROM: The Institutional Biosafety Committee & The Office of Laboratory Safety

DATE: March 20, 2020

SUBJECT: Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) Interim Lab Biosafety Guidance for Research with SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19)

Introduction

In light of the evolving coronavirus pandemic impacting public health worldwide, members of the GW research community will likely mobilize to study this virus and similar emerging infectious agents..

The GW Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) is prepared to expedite review for projects that involve the testing/analysis of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19). The IBC will review these protocols within 5 business days.

It's important for those motivated to undertake this work to consider [all factors](#) that could lead to (or increase the likelihood of) an accidental exposure to infectious material before they commit to receiving these biohazardous materials and starting this work. Both risk assessment and institutional biosafety approval of biosafety/biocontainment procedures are necessary to ensure that this work will be done safely and in compliance with applicable standards.

Planning for Work with SARS-CoV-2 Associated Materials

More information emerges each day about COVID-19. Accordingly, there will be ongoing challenges for determining appropriate biosafety measures for research activities with biological materials associated with the virus.

A number of interim guidance documents have been developed regarding general biocontainment requirements for work with COVID-19-related material: these are available at this [link](#). However, they all emphasize the need to complete a thorough [risk assessment](#) for any research activity involving COVID-19 materials. The Office of Laboratory Safety will assist with conducting risk assessments in partnership with those planning this work. At this time, clinical samples potentially infected with COVID-19 should be handled in a certified biological safety cabinet in BSL-2 facility. However, researchers are advised to follow [BSL-3 practices](#) for additional protection. Any work involving isolation, infection or propagation of COVID-19 in cells/tissues or any work involving infection of animals, MUST be conducted in a BSL-3 laboratory.

- ***Please Note: GW investigators should not receive or accept COVID-19 samples or related materials before a risk assessment is completed and approved by GW's Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC).***

IBC Policies and Procedures

Any GW researcher who is planning to receive any biological specimens from COVID-19 patients (or any other materials associated with the SARS-CoV-2 virus) must submit [an application to the IBC](#). The IBC must review and approve the risk assessment and biocontainment plan for the proposed activities before shipment/transfer of these materials is initiated. (Note: This is not a new requirement but a reminder of the existing requirements for using any potentially infectious materials that have not been previously documented with and approved by the IBC.)

The IBC submissions must be made electronically via [GW iRIS](#).

Additional Risk Assessment and Biocontainment Resources

- [Risk Assessment from “Guidelines for Safe Work Practices in Human and Animal Medical Diagnostic Laboratories”](#)
- [BSL-2 with BSL-3 practices summary based on CDC/NIH “Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories”, 5th ed.](#)
- [NIH’s Interim Laboratory Biosafety Guidance for Research with SARS-CoV-2 and IBC Requirements under the NIH Guidelines](#)
- [Health Canada’s Biosafety Advisory on Novel Coronavirus](#)
- [CDC’s Coronavirus Disease 2019 Site](#)
- [CDC’s Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations for COVID-19](#)
- [CDC’s FAQ’s about Biosafety and COVID-19](#)
- [WHO’s Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines related SARS-CoV-2 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [EPA’s List of Disinfectants for use Against Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [FDA’s Coronavirus Disease COVID-19](#)

The Office of Laboratory Safety