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PARTNERS INFECTION CONTROL GUIDANCE ON NON-HOSPITAL ISSUED N95 RESPIRATORS, SURGICAL MASKS, AND PROCEDURAL MASKS

At this time, with our current supply and our extended use and reuse policies, there are sufficient supplies of surgical and procedural masks that non-hospital approved surgical and procedural masks are not permitted.

The use of non-hospital-approved N95 respirators, surgical masks, and procedural masks raises challenges with respect to staff and patient safety, considering both their efficacy and the ability to ensure that they are able to be cleaned and disinfected.

The CDC, in their guidance on Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of Facemasks and Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of N95 Respirators, has stated that in settings where N95 respirators and face-masks (surgical masks and procedural masks) are not available, respectively:

*Healthcare personnel (HCP) might use homemade masks (e.g., bandana, scarf) for care of patients with COVID-19 as a last resort. However, homemade masks are not considered PPE, since their capability to protect HCP is unknown. Caution should be exercised when considering this option. Homemade masks should ideally be used in combination with a face shield that covers the entire front (that extends to the chin or below) and sides of the face.*

*In settings where N95 respirators are so limited that routinely practiced standards of care for wearing N95 respirators and equivalent or higher level of protection respirators are no longer possible, and surgical masks are not available, as a last resort, it may be necessary for HCP to use masks that have never been evaluated or approved by NIOSH or homemade masks. It may be considered to use these masks for care of patients with COVID-19, tuberculosis, measles, and varicella. However, caution should be exercised when considering this option. This will be re-evaluated regularly and reassessed.*