

ATTENTION: Important Update on Open-Heart Infections at WellSpan York Hospital
Please share this with your physicians & advanced practice clinicians.

Dear Physician or Advanced Practice Clinician:

The purpose of this message is to provide an update on the open-heart bacterial exposure issue at WellSpan York Hospital.

Last Monday, we began notifying approximately 1,300 open-heart surgery patients of possible exposure to bacteria during open-heart procedures performed between October 1, 2011 and July 24, 2015. Working with you, we have made it our highest priority since that time to provide these individuals with the information and resources they require and to address their physical and emotional needs.

Together, we have:

- ✓ worked to establish a website to which people could turn for additional information;
- ✓ established a nurse call center that could answer questions from patients (**Note:** The call center line will transition to a nurse navigator on Nov. 11. See below for details.);
- ✓ shared important information so that we are prepared to care for our patients who were exposed;
- ✓ established a team of clinical staff who were prepared to see patients who felt they were at risk;
- ✓ prepared detailed communication to explain the situation as clearly as possible to our patients;
- ✓ and entered a diagnosis code in four regional electronic health records in Cerner PowerChart, AllScripts, Meditech and McKesson, so that you will not be required to individually enter that code at a WellSpan facility for these patients who may have been exposed to NTM. The ICD-10 diagnosis code for these patient cases should be "Z77.9 = *Other contact with and (suspected) exposure hazardous to health.*"

To date, more than 500 patients have called the WellSpan Nurse Call Center for information and resources. In addition, the public website, www.wellspan.org/yorkopenheart, has received more than 7,000 page views. Also, anecdotal feedback from you and your colleagues suggests that many patients have been in contact with their primary care physicians regarding this issue.

What's new?

New details on covering expenses for affected patients: We wanted to provide you with more details regarding billing and reimbursement for the patients' initial primary care visit and potential follow-up visits and treatments. The following information about care or treatment related to this specific NTM issue is important:

- WellSpan will pay for the cost of these patients' initial visit to their primary care provider to discuss their potential exposure to NTM, determine if they have any symptoms of an NTM infection and/or begin monitoring for potential signs of infection. If additional visits are needed to specifically address issues related to a potential NTM infection, WellSpan will ensure the costs of those follow-up visits are covered, as well.
- Claims for these visits should be sent to SOUTH CENTRAL *Preferred*. We would prefer that providers FAX them to 717-851-6798 so they can receive immediate attention. If a provider prefers to send them electronically our NEIC Payor number is 23266. Patients should not be asked for a co-pay on this visit. As mentioned above, the ICD-10 diagnosis code for these claims should be Z77.9 = *Other contact with and (suspected) exposure hazardous to health*. Provider questions about billing procedures can be directed to Jane Grove at 717-851-6715 or Martha Clark at 717-851-6972.
- If symptoms exist, and there is suspicion of potential NTM infection, testing may occur. WellSpan will ensure that the cost of testing and monitoring is covered. It is important to remember that the chances of acquiring this infection are very low, and the symptoms are very general. If an NTM infection is not confirmed through testing, the symptoms would therefore be

related to a different health issue. In those cases, a patient's health insurance or other traditional payment methods would apply. If the patient does not have health insurance, or has a significant financial barrier, we will work with that patient to ensure he/she gets tested at a WellSpan facility.

- If a patient develops a confirmed NTM infection, we will provide treatment to that patient by WellSpan physicians and clinicians at our facilities – at no cost to the patient. WellSpan will reimburse the patient's insurance provider and/or the patient for all charges related to this infection going back to the first testing for symptoms. If circumstances prevent the patient from seeking care from a WellSpan provider, our nurse navigator will work with the patient to find alternatives for his or her treatment while also helping with billing and reimbursement issues.

New Nurse Navigator: As this issue progresses, we recognize that patients will likely require more personalized assistance. With that in mind, on Nov. 11, we will transition the Nurse Call Center line to be answered by a new, dedicated nurse navigator, to help these patients access the care they need.

I am pleased to announce that Kelly Osmolinski-Smith will serve in this capacity. She will serve as a liaison between the patient and the WellSpan health system, connect the patient to appropriate community resources and make sure all of their expenses are covered.

Kelly will be able to help patients with questions such as:

- When should I make my next appointment with my primary care physician?
- How do I arrange a home visit with WellSpan VNA Home Care?
- I received a bill from my primary care physician. Am I supposed to pay it?

She can also work to connect patients with WellSpan's Employee Assistance Program, or EAP, which provides confidential counseling services to patients experiencing stress, anxiety or other emotional issues related to this news.

You may also be interested in knowing that Kelly will work to establish an internal registry to track the conditions and treatment all 1,300 patients who may have been exposed to this bacteria. This will enable us to swiftly identify trends and to communicate timely and important information to you about this bacteria.

If you have questions regarding Kelly's role, please contact her at 866-217-2970.

Other important new details: We are also attaching an informational document, which provides clinical guidance from our Infectious Disease physicians regarding monitoring, testing and treatment of these patients who may be at risk for infection from this potential NTM exposure.

If you have a clinical question pertaining to one of your patients, or if you have a patient who requires additional evaluation for potential exposure to this bacteria, please call 717-812-4933. You will be connected to a physician assistant who is working with Eugene M. Curley III, M.D., and his team of clinicians at WellSpan Infectious Disease Specialists, to answer your questions and expedite care.

Again, we sincerely appreciate your tremendous efforts on behalf of our patients and the collaborative spirit with which you have engaged with us.

Sincerely,



Keith D. Noll
Senior Vice President, WellSpan Health
President, WellSpan York Hospital