

COVID-19 in Jamaica, West Indies

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As of April 05, 2020 there are 58 positive COVID-19 cases in Jamaica, according to the Ministry of Health & Wellness. This is an additional 3 more than yesterday. All nasopharyngeal swabs are processed through our National Influenza Centre. Of the total cases, 30 were imported through travel, primarily the United States (New York) and United Kingdom (London) and 22 had contact with positive imported persons.

The remaining six patients' transmission mode is being investigated. To date only one health care provider is positive and is currently stable. The majority of affected cases are male 53%, whilst 47% are female. The average age is 50.4, but ages range from 12 to 87 years.

Eight (8) patients have recovered and discharged to their communities. Five (5) patients are awaiting their second negative swab after 48 hours to be discharged. There have been three deaths. The Internal Medicine team (three Consultants, four medical officers) and nursing staff are the primary caregivers to all suspected and confirmed positive cases. Our nursing staff includes two infection control nurses. Islandwide, there remains many healthcare providers who have yet to complete fit testing for the N95 mask relating to a limited number of testers.

Since Jamaica's first positive patient on March 10, 2020, there have been an average of 0 to 6 positive cases per day. There are daily updates by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, numerous social media hand hygiene and social distancing campaigns to assist with mitigating spread. Several mobile vans have been procured by the Ministry of Health to augment community testing by the public health team as well as to safely transport the health care worker. Private passenger air and sea travel have been closed and quarantine facilities are being utilized. Further restrictions have been implemented by the institution of an island-wide night curfew.

Mandeville Regional Hospital (MRH) is the sole designated isolation unit covering central Jamaica (Southern Region). It houses a two bed, negative pressure isolation unit each with its own bathroom. There is a separate donning and doffing area. A twenty-bed ward was refitted to provide initially a ten bed isolation area where the nurses station with a walled off. Visiting hours are curtailed along with reducing visitors to only one per patient. All elective surgeries cancelled. Accident and emergency organized a pre-triage area outside of the hospital via tents. Multiple hand sanitizers and hand washing stations have been installed island wide in public areas as well as medical facilities. The hospital has 3 bed high dependency unit that functions below that of an intensive care unit. There are two regular ventilators and a portable ventilator which are not available at this point for use in COVID-19 induced respiratory distress syndrome. The hospital has procured five additional ventilators for the new re-fitted isolation ward and is awaiting gas and water piping installation. This will add to the challenge of obtaining the additional trained staff to man this critically understaffed area.

The MRH has a stand-a-lone hemodialysis unit with twelve chairs running five days per week and an on call emergency dialysis service. The machines have reached their life expectancy and so there are multiple disturbances to treatment due to machine malfunction. To date we have not had any positive COVID-19 dialysis patients, though at least one death died with multiorgan failure and acute kidney injury which occurred in another hospital. A Renal Unit COVID-19 protocol is being drafted to be added to the hospital's general COVID-19 protocol. MRH does not have an isolation machine or area that can provide hemodialysis, so a logistic challenge would entail transferring the patient to an out of region hospital. A proposal will be submitted to hospital administration for the procurement and installation of hemodialysis machine and water treatment mechanism within the newly re-fitted isolation area.

MRH Patient Statistics – Feb. 26 - April 04, 2020

Patient Status	N (#)
Admitted	10
Isolated	10
Total Positive	7
Current in-pt positive	5
Discharged	3
Died	1
Out of region transfer for ventilatory support	1

Though not protocolized, hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin has been used on all 7 positive patients, based on a small French paper showing potential benefits of reducing viral shedding. Jamaica hopes to complete an application to participate in international multi-country trial, as there remains multiple unanswered questions/concerns about these and other potential pharmacotherapies.

We are continuing to dialogue and brainstorm ideas of how to mitigate the spread of this highly contagious disease, alongside sifting through the numerous COVID-19 papers published worldwide on a daily basis.

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