



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30329-4027

August 18, 2023

Yaneer Bar-Yam
Co-founder
World Health Network
Via email: yaneer@necsi.edu

Dear Yaneer Bar-Yam:

Thank you for sharing the letter dated August 7, 2023, from the infection prevention team at the World Health Network to members of the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC) regarding updates to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) *Isolation Precautions: Preventing Transmission of Infectious Agents in Healthcare Settings*. I am responding on behalf of HICPAC.

CDC is dedicated to improving healthcare quality to protect patients; protect healthcare personnel; and promote safety, quality, and value in both national and international healthcare delivery systems. This includes efforts focused on healthcare-associated infections; antimicrobial resistance; sepsis; adverse drug events; blood, organ, and tissue safety; immunization safety; and other related adverse events or medical errors in healthcare affecting patients and healthcare personnel. As part of our policy development and program implementation processes, CDC is committed to transparency, communication and stakeholder engagement, and I appreciate your feedback on one of our important tools to help keep people safe in our healthcare settings.

CDC's evidence-based guidelines are designed to protect patients and healthcare workers, encourage safe practices, improve health outcomes, and save lives. The guidelines are based on systematic evidence reviews that consider not only efficacy in model systems, but real-world effectiveness; unintended risks to patients, personnel, and the healthcare environment; and secondary impacts on healthcare quality.

As you mentioned, CDC uses a federal advisory committee, HICPAC,¹ which provides a public forum for the discussion of issues, and a defined system to ensure transparency, consistency, and freedom from conflicts of interest. Current HICPAC members are experts in the field of infection prevention and control (IPC) that cover a wide range of backgrounds and disciplines, including nursing.² Additionally, liaisons from IPC, clinical, and patient advocate partner organizations provide input during HICPAC meetings, including the American Nurses Association; the National Association of Directors of Nursing Administration in Long Term Care; the Infectious Disease Society of America; the American Health Care Association; the American Hospital Association; the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America; the Association of Professionals of Infection Control and Epidemiology; the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials; and the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists.

As part of the guideline development process, CDC defines questions and performs a systematic search of peer-reviewed published research addressing the questions. This is done with input from

¹ Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC). <https://www.cdc.gov/hicpac/index.html>

² HICPAC Roster. <https://www.cdc.gov/hicpac/roster.html>

national experts, both governmental and private sector, through HICPAC. This process includes public review and feedback via the Federal Register and at public HICPAC meetings. CDC evaluates the available evidence, and data are extracted and evaluated using systematic methods, e.g., modified Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development, and Evaluation methodology. CDC produces evidence summaries that weigh the harms and benefits related to each potential recommendation and drafts recommendations for Committee review.

Specific to the Isolation Guidelines, recommendations for Transmission-Based Precautions consider data on effectiveness of Precautions (e.g., personal protective equipment) in preventing transmission; morbidity and mortality associated with the specific disease; pathogen characteristics (e.g., infectious dose); patterns of pathogen transmission (e.g., transmission over long vs short distances); availability of effective therapeutics and vaccines; and levels of population immunity.

CDC performs segmental updates of existing documents based on HICPAC review of existing guidelines, sufficiency of the published evidence base, and emerging needs in U.S. healthcare. This allows CDC to provide more agile guidelines in response to various events, like updates to the *Guideline for Isolation Precautions: Preventing Transmission of Infectious Agents in Healthcare Settings (2007)* in response to Ebola in 2014 and Mpox in 2022, in addition to other routine updates to the guidelines.³

As previously mentioned, in addition to eliciting public feedback at HICPAC meetings, we post HICPAC guidelines to the Federal Register for public review and comment. We will carry out this process for the updates to the Guideline for Isolation Precautions. Following the public comment period, CDC will work with HICPAC members and workgroups to review the public comments and respond and update the guidelines as appropriate. Additionally, the public and other stakeholders can submit technical questions or comments about CDC's infection control guidelines, the recommendations contained in them, or their scientific basis to HICPAC's committee management team through CDC Info.⁴

Although HICPAC currently meets requirements for transparency as specified in the Federal Advisory Committee Act, CDC continues to explore options for increasing the availability of information for the public, including reducing the amount of time needed to prepare meeting minutes and posting slide presentations that are presented at the meetings.

CDC, in conjunction with interagency partners, will continue to consider the best available science, current conditions, and input from various groups to inform our guidelines. CDC welcomes feedback from all stakeholders, including the public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel B. Jernigan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Daniel Jernigan, MD, MPH
Director, National Center for Emerging and
Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, CDC

³ Updates. Guideline for Isolation Precautions: Preventing Transmission of Infectious Agents in Healthcare Settings (2007). <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/isolation/updates.html>

⁴ Contact HICPAC Committee Management. <https://www.cdc.gov/hicpac/contact.html>