

PRESS RELEASE



Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“CHCC Implementing Infectious Disease Diagnostic Tool: BioFire”

Part of the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation’s (CHCC) ongoing efforts to protect the CNMI community involves the surveillance and monitoring of infectious diseases. Regular surveillance allows the CHCC Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) Program, under the Public Health and Hospital Emergency Preparedness Program (PHEP), to rapidly respond to disease outbreaks based on confirmed or suspected cases, in order to mitigate the effects on the population and break the chain of transmission.

As part of this effort, the CHCC is in the interim process of implementing our first public health specific laboratory diagnostic tool for infectious diseases; BioFire. BioFire is a public health tool designed for syndromic surveillance, and is capable of testing for a variety of pathogens in less than one hour.

Syndromic surveillance is based on two features of a disease: symptoms and signs. A symptom is something like a sore throat or an upset stomach, which is apparent to the patient. A sign is a measurable indication of disease, such as a temperature of 102°F. A syndrome is a set of signs and symptoms that characteristically occur together.

Some diseases can cause very similar signs and symptoms, especially in the early stages. Gastroenteritis - which is the inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract that can cause cramps, diarrhea, and vomiting - can be caused by different pathogens, so if the CHCC notices a number of patients with these symptoms, BioFire can be utilized to test for a common cause.

Only a few US territories have implemented this tool, which will reduce the time it takes to confirm a suspected case of a disease, and will reduce the CHCC’s reliance on off-island laboratory testing.

This tool cannot test for cases of COVID-19, but it can test for other respiratory pathogens that will make it easier to rule out COVID-19 in a patient who is experiencing respiratory symptoms.

For more information on BioFire, please visit: www.biofiredx.com

For more information about CHCC programs, please follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

This press release may be found online at <http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html>

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