

Ransomware Threat Against Hospitals

Last night, a [joint advisory](#) was issued warning of an imminent and credible cyber threat directed at US hospitals.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), FBI, and HHS are urging hospitals to continue following best practices to minimize any interruptions in services to their communities.

The advisory notes that phishing emails are the primary methodology to deliver the malware, but not the exclusive methodology. Therefore, email security should be increased and staff should be placed on heightened alert for suspicious emails.

AHA's Senior Advisor for Cybersecurity and Risk, John Riggi, [noted](#), "The threat, as we know it, involves Trickbot malware and Ryuk ransomware targeting hospitals and health systems. Health care providers should proactively implement certain cybersecurity measures such as ensuring current, air-gapped backups of electronic health records and clinical and non-clinical data, expediting patching of all internet facing resources and test incident response plans as soon as possible. Hospitals should also be prepared to re-route patients to hospitals outside their area if there is a simultaneous regional outage of multiple-hospital IT systems. We will continue to monitor and work closely with our federal partners and distribute new details with members as they emerge."

Quality & Patient Safety

[CDC redefines "close contact"](#)

The CDC [recently updated](#) their definition of "close contact" as it relates to SARS-CoV-2 transmission. Previously, the CDC defined "close contact" as someone who spent at least 15 consecutive minutes within six feet of an individual with confirmed coronavirus.

The revision now defines close contact as someone who is **within six feet of an individual with confirmed coronavirus for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period** (individual exposures added together over a 24-hour period, e.g., three 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes) starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to test specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.

Additional factors to consider when defining close contact include:

- proximity (closer distance likely increases exposure risk),
- duration of exposure (longer exposure time likely increases exposure risk),
- symptom presentation (the period around onset of symptoms is associated with the highest levels of viral shedding),
- if the infected person was likely to generate respiratory aerosols (e.g., was coughing, singing, shouting), and
- other environmental factors (crowding, adequacy of ventilation, whether exposure was indoors or outdoors).

Determination of close contact should generally be made irrespective of whether the contact was wearing respiratory PPE. At this time, differential determination of close contact for those using fabric face coverings is not recommended.

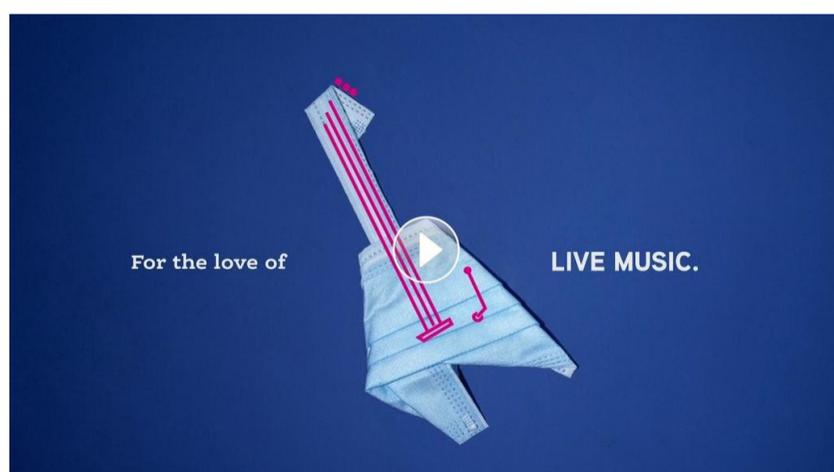
Resources & Equipment

[State funding for testing, labs now available](#)

The Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) is making \$2.5 million in funding available to assist labs in providing COVID-19 testing.

This funding opportunity, made available via CARES Act funds, is designated to help increase testing capacity and may be used for supplies, consumables, and lab equipment. Proposals are now being accepted and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

For additional details, please see the DHW [funding announcement](#) or contact [Traci Berreth](#) (208.334.5774).



This video, courtesy of the AHA, emphasizes the importance of wearing a mask to help Americans get back to doing the things they love. Hospitals can—and are encouraged to—add their own branding on the 30-second spot to use in their local markets.

Virtual Meetings & Education

[Safeguarding vaccine development](#)

AHA is hosting a call with the FBI's Executive Assistant Director, John Brown, who will discuss efforts to safeguard vaccine development and distribution. Updates on regulatory and policy developments by AHA leadership will also be provided.

AHA COVID-19 Update Call

Friday, October 30 ~ 12p MTN / 11a PAC
877.271.1828 / 43576# (please call at least 10 minutes early)

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