

Recommendations for Stress Testing During the COVID - 19 Pandemic

A consensus statement from the Cardiologists of OPA

As cardiologists in this community, we must ensure the health and safety of our patients, staff, and colleagues. The current pandemic has raised many concerns regarding the way in which we perform many of our daily procedures. To reduce the viral spread the following recommendations should immediately be put in place within all settings in which stress testing is performed:

1. Given the high prevalence of those with virus in Erie County and as it is known that this virus is spread by aerosol exercise stress testing should be discontinued for evaluation of ischemia and replaced by pharmacologic stress testing whenever possible.
2. All patients must wear a surgical mask covering the mouth and nose throughout the test. If the patient refuses to wear a surgical mask prior to the beginning of the test the test is not to proceed, and the patient is to be discharged from the facility.
3. In those instances where exercise stress testing is necessary and cannot be delayed until the local prevalence of disease decreases the patient must wear a surgical mask covering the mouth and nose throughout the test and all personnel in the room during the test must wear a surgical mask covering the mouth and nose and appropriate protective eyewear. If the patient refuses to wear a surgical mask the test is not to proceed. If the patient takes off the surgical mask during exercise the test is to be terminated.
4. Whenever medically possible the patient should be COVID tested prior to the procedure.
5. If the patient is COVID positive or if the patient is a person under investigation (PUI) the test should not be performed.
6. All patients should be prescreened prior to testing. This includes, but is not limited to, a questionnaire including recent travel, exposures, symptoms, and evaluation of the patient's temperature. If the patient is highly suspect no stress test should be performed until COVID testing is complete. If medical circumstances dictate a stress test must be performed in this population prior to obtaining the results of the COVID test it must be done pharmacologically to reduce the risk of aerosol spread.

As the above measures will reduce the risk of spreading the infection and help, ensure the safety of the patient and all personnel present during the test we are requesting the insurance carriers immediately adopt this protocol. These measures will reduce the risk of exposure by reducing aerosolization of the viral particles (pharmacologic versus exercise), avoid the need for repeat testing (additional exposure to the patient, personnel performing the test and additional visit to the waiting room) in those that cannot adequately exercise or have nondiagnostic tests and must be repeated with the use of nuclear imaging. The use of proper personal protective equipment as described above also adds to the safety of those involved in the stress test.

Respectfully Submitted

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