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Dear Drs. Wright and Lin,

CDC would like to thank you for your leadership of the Isolation Precautions Guideline Workgroup and for the draft guideline that HICPAC submitted for official CDC review following the November 2-3, 2023, HICPAC meeting. CDC appreciates the efforts of HICPAC and the workgroup and believes that the current draft addresses important issues including describing how pathogens are transmitted in healthcare and recommending practices to protect healthcare personnel, patients, and visitors. We look forward to supporting you and the workgroup in the development of pathogen-specific recommendations as part of updates to Appendix A in the next phase of revisions and are grateful for the commitment and sacrifice that HICPAC and workgroup members make to help CDC produce the well-informed guidance.

As part of the review process, prior to submission to the Federal Register for public comment, the document was reviewed by CDC. That review identified several questions for which CDC would like to request further input from the committee. Therefore, before entering the current draft into the Federal Register for the written public comment period, we would like HICPAC and the workgroup to consider the four questions we have listed below. Additional subject matter experts will be added to the workgroup to assist with preparing responses. We feel these questions, largely related to when masks and respirators (such as N-95) are recommended in healthcare settings, reflect concerns or areas of confusion that continue to be raised by stakeholders in response to the draft guideline.

1. Should there be a category of Transmission-based Precautions that includes masks (instead of NIOSH Approved® N95® [or higher-level] respirators) for pathogens that spread by the air? Should N95 respirators be recommended for all pathogens that spread by the air?
2. Can the workgroup clarify the criteria that would be used to determine which transmission by air category applies for a pathogen? For the category of Special Air Precautions, can you clarify if this category includes only new or emerging pathogens or if this category might also include other pathogens that are more established? Can you also clarify what constitutes a severe illness?
3. Is the current guideline language sufficient to allow for voluntary use of a NIOSH Approved N95 (or higher-level) respirator? Should the document include a recommendation about healthcare organizations allowing voluntary use?
4. Should there be a recommendation for use of source control in healthcare settings that is broader than current draft recommendations? Should source control be recommended at all times in healthcare facilities?

We believe that additional discussion by HICPAC of these questions will strengthen the current draft and ensure that areas of concern receive the most complete review possible. We continue to greatly appreciate your leadership in updating this important guideline.

Thank you,

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