

MARCH 12, 2020

COVID-19 at Pacific Dental Conference

On March 11, the BC Dental Association (BCDA) was informed about a possible case of COVID-19 from a participant at the Pacific Dental Conference March 5 – 7 and immediately contacted public health for accurate information and direction.

Today, March 12, Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) issued a media release confirming that one attendee tested positive and that the attendee was at the conference for two hours, from 2:00pm to 4:00pm, on March 6. They have completed a risk assessment and also confirmed that the attendee is recovering at home with no ongoing risk to the community, and that “the risk to [PDC] participants is extremely low.”

At a media conference held March 12, Dr. John Harding, Chief Medical Health Officer for VCH noted, “The way this disease is spread is the same as any other droplet disease like influenza. People would either have to have direct contact or touch a surface that someone else touched or sneezed on. So that’s why the **risk to people who were outside the conference and in other parts of the building is zero.**”

BCDA and the Pacific Dental Conference management team understand the wide-spread concern around the spread of COVID-19 among dental professionals attending the conference and their patients. As confirmed by VCH, dental office staff should follow regular infection control guidelines and screen patients accordingly; and patients should follow the public health guidelines for personal hygiene and self-isolation as needed. Beyond these guidelines, there is no indication of additional risk for dental staff who attended the conference or dental patients at this time. As Dr. Harding also noted, “I appreciate that a lot of people are concerned about the risk of getting COVID-19. I want to reassure people that there is no risk if people are asymptomatic. It’s safe to go see your dentist. If your dentist is healthy there is no concern.”