Communication with COVID-19 patients in healthcare settings

!!! The patient has a hard time talking because of shortness of breath, oxygen mask etc. He or she has something to say and has questions. Offer alternatives, such as writing utensils, letter card etc.

!!! Because of the deteriorated health condition, medication etc., the patients' abilities to understand and remember spoken information are reduced.

!!! When you are wearing a face mask, you are more difficult to understand and your non-verbal communication is limited. You can easily be misunderstood.

Communication towards patient:

- Draw the attention by tapping/touching the patient's shoulder or arm and make eye contact.
- Speak loud and clear and in short sentences. Clarify what you want to say by making a gesture and/or pointing to a word, sentence or symbol on the Communication card while saying the word or sentence. Let your finger rest on the symbol/word/sentence.
- Agree upon a signal for YES/NO; nodding yes/shaking no, thumb up/closed fist, blink/ eyes shut , look up/eyes shut etc. **Write this down below and hang it up (on bed/door)!**

The patient communicates by:

Yes: ………………………………………………

NO: …………………………………………………..

DIFFERENT: ………………………………………….

Patient communication with Communication card(s):
- Keep the Communication card at a distance of 30 cm from the eyes.
- Fill in the empty cells with patient specific relevant words.
- Ask the patient to look at the card and point to what he or she wants to say. Use the letter card if necessary (on the back).
- If the patient is unable to point, guess what he/she wants to say by tracking their eye gaze. Confirm this by asking a YES/NO question: "Did you mean to say - shortness of breath -?" Repeat what the patient was trying to say.
- If you are unable to track the eye gaze, check column by column;
  - o I am – I have / I am –I want; after every column ask: "Is it in here?"
  - o Start at the top of the chosen row, read every option out loud and ask "Did you mean - headache -?"
  - o Confirm using YES/NO and repeat what the patient wanted to say.
- The 1-10 scale can be used for multiple purposes: pain, shortness of breath etc.

I AM	I HAVE / I AM	I WANT

I AM	I HAVE / I AM	I WANT