Nasopharyngeal swab collection for influenza

Materials:
- Dacron-tipped nasopharyngeal swab*
- Viral transport media
- N95 respirator and gloves
- Goggles
- Gown

* Cotton or calcium alginate swabs are not acceptable. PCR assays may be inhibited by residues present in these materials.

Procedure:
1. Follow recommended infection control (IC) precautions including putting on N95 respirator, goggles, gown and gloves before proceeding. For complete IC recommendations see: http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/guidelines_infection_control.htm
2. Have patient sit with head against a wall as patients have a tendency to pull away during this procedure.
3. Insert swab into one nostril straight back (not upwards) and continue along the floor of the nasal passage for several centimeters until reaching the nasopharynx (resistance will be met). The distance from the nose to the ear gives an estimate of the distance the swab should be inserted. Do not force swab, if obstruction is encountered before reaching the nasopharynx, remove swab and try the other side.
4. Rotate the swab gently for 5-10 seconds to loosen the epithelial cells.
5. Remove swab and immediately inoculate viral transport media by inserting the swab at least ½ inch below the surface of the media. Bend or clip the swab handle to fit the transport medium tube and reattach the cap securely. A dry swab is NOT acceptable for PCR testing.
6. Specimen should be transported at refrigerator temperature and received by laboratory as soon as possible and within 5 days from time of collection.