

DEPARTMENT COVID-19 UPDATE #7 – April 7, 2020

On behalf of Nick Kates, Chair, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences -

While it is with a mixture of anticipation and trepidation that we await what the coming days will bring, we know we've done as much as we can to prepare for this pandemic and to enable us to cope with whatever we're going to face. I want again to thank you and express my appreciation for the time, commitment and round the clock efforts you've contributed over the last month and for the really impressive ways you have come together to support one another, something that is going to be even more important over the weeks ahead. I'd also like to wish those of you who will be celebrating Passover or Easter this week, and your families, a very happy holidays and I hope you all have as restful a weekend as is possible.

This Update covers some of the developments over the last week, but I'd like to begin with some very nice news and congratulate Dr. Katy Ramsden, one of our final year psychiatry residents, and her husband Sam on the arrival of their daughter, Maggie on Friday.

EDUCATION

Psychiatry Residency Programs:

Through the efforts of Dr. Natasha Snelgrove, the residents have had a number of medicine-based virtual teaching sessions. She has also curated a module of medicine resources for them which we will make available for all our psychiatrists.

There is a likelihood that some of our psychiatry residents may be moved to General Internal Medicine as early as April 13th. Once the number of residents going to Internal Medicine is known, and the hospitals have a better idea of the impact of COVID-19 on our priority psychiatry clinical services, we will look at what adjustments the Program may need to make to support these. We are also looking at what additional roles our fellows might be able to play. And I want to acknowledge the fantastic ways in which our residents are responding to the challenges they are facing and the uncertainty of what lies ahead, in such a calm, professional, constructive and positive manner. They bring great credit to our Department.

Two working groups are assisting the redeployment situation. Sheila Harms leads a **Resident Redeployment Group** which is developing a single plan for all our general and subspecialty residents in Hamilton and the Waterloo Regional Campus, and our fellows. And a **co-ordinating group** of leaders of the Hospital Services at St. Joe's and HHS and the leads of our residency and fellowship programs meets regularly to co-ordinate Hospital and Residency redeployment and service realignment plans.

Other Learners:

SJHH has temporarily suspended all non-medical learner placements. **RCT (Psychology)** practica at SJHH and HHS remain on hold.

Bi-weekly **student town halls** are being held with the MiNDS (3 sections) and RCT students. Common graduate student concerns regarding COVID-19 have been identified (e.g, suspension of research; coping with family members) and solutions problem-solved together.

The MD program is setting up an on-line curriculum, which is now available. Clerkship placements will not begin until July at the earliest.

HOSPITAL UPDATES

HHS Volumes for inpatient and emergency room (ER) remain low. Outpatient service are using virtual and telephone appointments to support patients, particularly those who are high risk patients, and the program is trying to include patients who had been referred pre-COVID and were on the waiting list. The risk support team helps with risk situations for outpatients, and supports patients of family physicians and community based psychiatrists (initially through indirect consultation).

We are discussing with the HHS resilience group who are working on supports for staff and physicians how the child psychiatrists and child and youth mental health clinicians can contribute to their work. And capacity planning continues at HHS and McMaster Children's Hospital.

SJHH

Changes to In-Patient Mental Health Bed locations:

On April 7th (today), the 2 inpatient units on the 9th and 10th floors of the Juravinski Tower at the Charlton site (where there are currently a total of just 24 inpatients) are being relocated to the Harbour North 2 Unit at the West 5th Campus, to create more medicine beds at Charlton Campus. The Charlton site will then have created 200 empty medical beds to handle the surge. To create the space necessary to make this move possible, the three Schizophrenia Program inpatient units at West 5th Campus are combining into two units.

In addition, Waterfall 1 is being prepared to become a Unit for mental health inpatients who become COVID-19 positive. An separate eight-bed pod is being created, with the option of creating two further pods if needed. These beds will be staffed by the family physicians already covering West 5th, supported by the psychiatrists already working on those units. As of today, the entire West 5th campus remains COVID-19 free.

ECT and TMS have also been halted temporarily, because of the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE). It is hoped that these services will resume as soon as the availability of PPEs improves.

Safety Guidelines when using a surgical or procedural mask

Jess Vanderveen has prepared general guidelines whenever you're using a mask:

Remember to:

- Avoid touching the mask. If you touch your mask, perform hand hygiene immediately.
- Always use excellent hand hygiene when removing, adjusting and replacing your mask, in order to avoid self-contamination.
- Wash your hands before and after every patient contact.
- Do not wear mask around your neck when not in use.

- When removing and storing your mask until the next use, fold it carefully so that the outer surface is folded inward.

Masks may be removed temporarily during documentation, meals, washroom use, etc. Leave the patient care area prior to removing your mask.

Discard your mask when:

- it becomes visibly soiled/wet/damaged,
- makes contact with a patient, or
- the integrity becomes compromised

RESEARCH

A **town hall** was held for the research community this past Wednesday with Bev Pindar-Donick and Kim Raskob to discuss Human Resources concerns.

Weekly town halls will be held weekly for the research community to discuss common concerns until resolution of the current situation. **All are welcome to attend.** The next town hall will be held on: **Wednesday, April 8 at 4 p.m.** The Zoom link for this week's meeting is: <https://zoom.us/j/916238318>

For **research staff employed by SJHH and/or by HHS**, common solutions to support staff and investigators are being sought across the city.

CIHR has cancelled the Spring 2020 Operating Grant competition and will extend funding for all existing investigator-initiated research grants scheduled to expire between June 30, 2020 and March 30, 2021, for one year. They will also extend all bridge grants provided to Nominated Principal Investigators (PIs) in the Fall 2019 Project Grant competition. For more information surrounding CIHR's response to the COVID-19 situation, please see: <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/51917.html>

A number of funding opportunities have emerged for **COVID-19-related research work**. These are summarized in the most recent *Health Research Services Funding Bulletin*, on our website.

Some **research contracts** may be affected by the COVID-19 situation. If this applies to you and your research contract was executed by SJHH, please contact researchcontracts@stjoes.ca for assistance. Researchers at HHS and McMaster are also advised to contact Research Administration at HHS (Katie Porter; porter@HHSC.CA) or Health Research Services at McMaster (Tracy Arabski arabski@mcmaster.ca) respectively, should they have similar concerns. Please remember to get HIREB approval for any changes you may need to make.

Wellness and Support

Mark Walton, Associate Dean, Faculty Affairs, has created a Wellness Steering Committee to oversee faculty wellness during COVID-19. This group consists of Mark, Teresa Chan (emergency medicine), Assistant Dean Program for Faculty Development; Anne Wong (anaesthesia), Lead Faculty Leadership initiative; Pam Elmhurst, Manager Faculty Affairs, and Karen Saperson. It will be responsible for curating and overseeing resources for faculty and will be using a "Train the

Trainer" approach, helping Departments to create virtual informal (Zoom) support meetings, much as we are doing in Psychiatry.

And a reminder that **our Department's wellness planning group** meets every Tuesday at 07:45. If you are interested in joining this groups or have suggestions for things we could be doing, please contact Karen who can provide the details saperson@mcmaster.ca

The Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) also continue to arrange a series of virtual events that can be found here [HR Events page](#)

SJHH, under the leadership of Karen Rowa, Randi McCabe, Joe Pellizzari and Erika Haber, has launched an initiative to provide **support and assistance for frontline workers at SJHH** who are dealing with the mental health consequences of the work they are doing, including 1:1 support or counselling. If any of you would be interested in helping with this please contact Karen Rowa krowa@stjosham.on.ca

And **career reviews** for full-time faculty are going to be postponed, and reorganised for the time when COVID-19 will no longer be dominating our thoughts and activities.

Our website

We are currently reorganising the resources on our website, to make sure they remain current and easy to access. This should be completed by Thursday. I would highlight two items we will be adding this week:

- a) A listing of **resources for students** prepared by Catherine Munn can be found [here](#)
- b) An **Anxiety workbook** prepared by the Hamilton Family Health Team (attached)

Other ongoing sources of information

This site provides regular updates about the spread of COVID-19 <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/> which updates the global spread of the pandemic.

Local information and updates can be found:

For McMaster <https://covid19.mcmaster.ca/>

For HHS <https://www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/covid19/>

For SJH <https://www.stjoes.ca/coronavirus>

And something lighter to finish.....Using our new technologies

Here are a couple of videos about some of the pitfalls when using communication technologies. The first is a look at teleconferences <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=a+conference+call+in+real+life+youtube> The other, produced by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), demonstrates telepsychiatry faux pas, but also contains helpful tips on how to introduce a virtual consultation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4unpA1Se5I>

Stay well and stay connected.

Nick