

DEPARTMENT COVID-19 UPDATE # 2 - March 16, 2020

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

To all members of the Department:

As we move through this increasingly uncertain and unsettling period, the like of which none of us have experienced before, we need to continue to do whatever we can to help and support one another and find ways to solve together the problems we will inevitably face as they arise. In that respect, I and the Department's leadership teams want to provide you with the most current and clear information we can as to what is happening, what we are doing to respond to this situation, and what the implications are for each of you, whether you are a learner, staff or faculty. This will become even more important as our day to day contacts decrease.

To achieve this, we are holding a daily call for all Program and Portfolio leads, as well as key hospital leads and our admin team to keep ourselves updated, and I will also be sending out daily updates after these calls. We are also posting key links and documents to our website. Things are changing very rapidly, so I apologise if any of the information we send is out of date or contains any inaccuracies.

I also want to acknowledge the enormous amount of work that so many people in every part of the Department are doing, and to thank you all for your tireless efforts and support for the work of our Department, to ensure we can meet the challenges we will face over the coming weeks and prepare and organize ourselves for whatever lies ahead. And again, if you have any questions please contact me or Bev Pindar-Donick at any time.

DEPARTMENT CHANGES

As a Department we have taken the following steps in addition to those announced on Friday

- All administrative staff will be working from home with the exception of a small number of tasks that will require a small group of us to visit the office occasionally, but we will be keeping that to an absolute minimum.
- All Department meetings will now be held remotely unless people happen to be in the building at the same time and choose to gather in the same room while maintaining the necessary distance.
- Wherever possible no-one should be travelling from one location to another during the day for anything other than clinical care.
- Bev and I will continue to serve as the main contacts for all questions about department response and activities so if you have an email that needs to go to the department can you email it to us first.
- We will be using Zoom, WebEx and Bell teleconferencing for all meetings and communication. If you have any questions about how to set up a meeting, please contact Bev and she will talk you through the steps or direct you to someone who can. We will

also be circulating a simple guide for everybody who may wish to set up an account for a meeting and McMaster have added a link about this to their COVID-19 site <https://covid19.mcmaster.ca/faculty-staff-information/teaching-and-instruction/><https://covid19.mcmaster.ca/faculty-staff-information/teaching-and-instruction/>

I would also ask each of you to do the following

- To let Bev and myself know
 - If you are travelling abroad or on your return returned from any foreign travel.
 - If you are in self-isolation or quarantine.
 - If there any documents that you think would be of broad interest to all members of the department.
- If you are a physician, please register for OTN. There are also new temporary billing codes for telephone and video consults. RMA have also asked all physicians to continue to submit their billings.

UPDATES

Psychiatry Residency

- All psychiatry residents are considered essential and will be expected to continue in their clinical placements as best as possible. For those in outpatient settings, we would ask supervisors to assist in getting your resident set up on secure virtual platforms that you might be using such as Dovetale Virtual or OTN.
- We are trying to arrange for residents to be registered under supervisor's OTN accounts for virtual visits - this requires supervisors to have an OTN account, so please register asap as turnaround times are now weeks.
- If you already have an OTN account, consider starting patient meetings for residents using your account i.e. you sign in and the resident conducts the visit.
- Please ensure that all necessary clinic precautions are being applied to those patients with whom residents might be involved.
- Over the next number few weeks, the number of outpatient visits may decrease. If so, can supervisors provide residents with readings, etc.
- Resident rotation placements are being reviewed to ensure each clinical site has precautions in place.
- All teaching sessions will be handled remotely and we will be providing additional support to all supervisors, who will now be facilitating sessions from their own space virtually using GoToMeeting, but not in person.
- Pri Weerasekera has prepared guidelines regarding psychotherapy that have been circulated to all residents, moving to a virtual model and teleconferencing for supervision.

- St. Joes continues to look at all aspects of the work of PES where residents are likely to be involved including how we can divert cases, improve flow and provide additional support to family physicians and focus on flow. The residents in both campuses have shown incredible dedication to patient care in the psych emerg. They have also created a back-up call schedule which is one-resident deep. Supervisors on call are asked to provide additional support to residents through this additionally stressful time.
- This year's Royal College written exams have been postponed.

Undergraduate (MD) Program

- All clinical clerk clerkship placements have been cancelled for the next two weeks, as of 18.00 today.
- All other teaching is now being conducted virtually.
- Almost all electives have now been cancelled.

Hospital Updates

- Child psychiatry emergency service at HHS has moved to the inpatient unit which will reduce the availability of inpatient beds.

Graduate Students and Postdocs

- Only researcher learners performing critical tasks necessary to the continuance of research (e.g. animal care) are allowed on hospital sites.
- Research learners may still attend the McMaster campus but potential risks to student safety should be weighed heavily against any perceived benefits of attendance.
- Researcher learners are urged to be in touch with their supervisors concerning contingency plans.
- RCT (psychology) practicums are suspended. RCT students should contact their clinical supervisors for direction.
- RCT psychology residency positions continue to be evaluated. All clinical placements and research electives are now cancelled.

Nick