

DEPARTMENT COVID-19 UPDATE #3 – March 17, 2020

To all members of the Department:

Here is today's update with the most recent information that we have about changes happening within the department, hospitals, university, and the wider community. I won't repeat information covered in previous updates, but will just go over anything that has come up in the last 24 hours. And let me begin with a link to a site that gives an up-to-date picture of the global situation <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

Undergraduate (MD) Program

- All horizontal electives have been cancelled.

Postgraduate Residency Program

- All incoming and outgoing electives have been cancelled.
- Residents are able to see people with COVID-19, while using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- The Geriatric Psychiatry Residency is taking additional precautions due to the vulnerability of the populations they serve
- We continue to actively work to get residents on OTN and may have made a break through today - residents are testing it out - stay tuned.

Relevant articles, documents and sites

- We will be posting a series of relevant articles, videos, self-help resources and links on our website tomorrow. For today, here are:
 - A video on how to use personal protection equipment (PPE) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=syh5UnC6G2k&feature=youtu.be>
 - And this site provides a lot of excellent information about on-line teaching <https://teachremotely.harvard.edu/>
- If you have any resources that may be helpful to circulate, please send them to Bev.

Psychology Residents

- The psychology residents will remain on site in their placements.
- All research placements have been suspended.

PES

- While the demand has been reduced over the last two or three days it is likely to increase as ED gets busier, with increasing numbers of patients being referred from ED. We want to make sure we continue to support our ED colleagues, who will bear the brunt of this increase.

OTN and virtual platforms

- Lengthy delays remain for people wishing to sign up with OTN. Here is the link to sign up if you haven't already done so <https://otnhub.ca/signup-info/> New billing codes have also been developed.
- If anybody wants to use Zoom for arranging a meeting or activity, please contact Bev if you need assistance
- If you would like to use WebEx and need assistance, please contact Claudia Castellanos castell@mcmaster.ca

Fellowship Program

- We are discouraging fellows who don't have their own vehicle from using public transportation if they can avoid it, and will try to consolidate placements for fellows who are working in more than one location.

Working from home

- Almost all of our central administrative team are now working from home and this will continue.
- All staff and faculty should prepare themselves in case they end up working from home, taking home any materials you may need, or ensuring you have internet access from home to any sources you may need to contact to.

Hamilton Family Health Team

- The FHT are well positioned because so many physicians are already using OTN and all clinical activities are now virtual. This may enable them to use some of their capacity to assist other services at St. Joes.

Self-Isolation

- Just a reminder to let me and Bev know if you are in self-isolation either because you have recently travelled or have symptoms for which you are taking the necessary precautions.

Research

- All our research activities are now effectively suspended and the only people going into the labs are those that are required to maintain reagents, animals, or samples.
- The following guidelines have been developed by FHS and the two Hospitals
 - No research with subjects that require face-to-face contact, unless these are on-going interventional or clinical studies that impact human health.
 - No new animal-based research; completion of current, on-going animal studies to continue with some adaptations, in consultation with the Central Animal Facility.
 - No initiation of new research experiments that require campus access, unless they are associated with emergency COVID-19 funding or involve activities focusing on patient health and safety. Please discuss such plans with your ADR

and the VPR before proceeding. Research that can be completed remotely (e.g. on line) that is not impacted by social distancing policies may continue.

- Researchers and groups must develop plans to close down existing research within university facilities on short notice, including plans for waste disposal and identification of essential services to maintain research samples, facilities and infrastructure where appropriate.

Practicing outside our scope of practice during a public health emergency – CPSO Guidelines

In states of emergency such as now, as long as we are acting in good faith, all physicians including those with Restricted Licences or Academic Licences may practice, temporarily, outside their scope of practice. The CPSO states:

1. During public health emergencies it may be necessary for physicians to temporarily practice outside their scope, but physicians must only do so if:
 - a. the medical care needed is urgent,
 - b. a more skilled physician is not available, and,
 - c. not providing medical care may result in greater risk or harm to the patient or public than providing it.
2. To ensure competence while temporarily practising outside of one's scope of practice, physicians must exercise their professional judgement and work with their health care colleagues to determine what appropriate medical care they can provide to persons in need of care, in accordance with relevant legislation and emergency management plans.
3. Once the public health emergency is over, physicians must not practise outside of their scope, unless they elect to change their scope of practice in accordance with College policy.

Finally, my thanks again to all of you who are working so hard to come up with solutions to the challenges we are facing. Being able to continue to work together and support one another, especially if we find ourselves spending more time apart, will make it much easier to get through whatever lies ahead

Nick