

DEPARTMENT COVID-19 UPDATE #6 - March 26, 2020

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

Once again I hope you are doing OK and taking all the necessary steps to protect yourself, your families and loved ones, your patients and our community.

We are beginning to adjust to our new routines and adapt to the previously unimaginable changes we are having to make in our personal and professional lives. Our initial priorities as a Department - working closely with our hospital partners - have been ensuring the safety of our learners, faculty and staff; redesigning and continuing (mainly virtually) our educational programs and placements; providing all Department members with up-to-date and relevant information; and defining our immediate and short-term priorities, as well as those things that can be put to one side.

The focus is now shifting to the issues of redeployment into areas of need, the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE), and the physical changes we are making in the ways we are organising care and hospital services to keep staff and patients alike safe. And as I see the remarkable efforts so many of us are making every day, I am so appreciative of all that you are doing, often at a personal cost, and I feel very fortunate to be part of such a dedicated Department.

To keep you informed about the developments taking place, and to keep us as connected as is possible, I am arranging a **Zoom Department Meeting next Wednesday April 1st. at 08.00.** For those of you unable to attend we will be recording the session so that you can watch it later. See below for more details.

Redeployment

Hospital planning Both Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS) and St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton (SJH) are developing inventories of the skills of their physicians and staff, including residents, in preparation for a time when they may have to work outside of their regular scope of practice. In some places this has already started. We don't know yet what we (faculty and residents) may be asked to do, so at this time our focus is on preparing for redeployment within the mental health programs. But we also need to think about what we may be asked to do down the road, and we are working with the hospitals to develop plans for all possible eventualities.

Redeployment and learners Sheila Harms has created a Redeployment Working Group that includes all of our 4 Psychiatry Postgraduate Programs and our fellows, initially focusing on redeployment within Psychiatry. JoAnn Corey has taken a lead in developing draft frameworks and redeployment actions plans in collaboration with the other subspecialty program directors and their Education Committees. These documents support the PGME publication "Principles for the Redeployment of Residents and Fellows in Times of Exceptional Health System Need" to guide redeployment decisions for residents and fellows, which articulates, amongst many other things, that no decision can be made without the involvement of a learner's program director.

Other Education news

Expanded roles in the residency program

- **Jessica Vanderveen** is going to be extending her role as the PEC Safety Subcommittee Chair to assist JoAnn Corey addressing any questions related to Safety & COVID.
- **Natasha Snelgrove** our residency curriculum co-ordinator is looking at ways to adapt and expand our virtual curriculum, and to provide additional educational materials on COVID-19 in general, which will be available for all learners, and resources for residents whose clinical rotations have been truncated, including the development of On-line courses and self-learning resources.

Temporary Licences The CPSO has issued a statement saying that they will be issuing temporary restricted licenses for residents who are meant to graduate this summer. It is for six months and can be renewed. These licenses will require limited supervision which will include remote and off-site supervision.

A presentation on COVID-19 This presentation was made to our residents and fellows by Alim Pardhan, Program Director of the Emergency Medicine Training Program at McMaster. Our residents thought it was outstanding. It can be found here. [COVID Basics Session \(March 25, 2020\).mp4](#)

Two other excellent presentation The first is a whiteboard presentation on how to use Acceptance and Commitment Therapy techniques to deal with the Corona crisis and the accompanying fear, anxiety and worry. <https://youtu.be/BmvNCdpHUYM>

The second is a very helpful guide from the UK College of Psychiatrists for clinicians and mental health services for responding to a variety of situations related to COVID-19 <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/about-us/responding-to-covid-19/responding-to-covid-19-guidance-for-clinicians/community-and-inpatient-services-covid-19-guidance-for-clinicians>

Department

Self-isolation & Quarantine Can you continue to inform Bev pindon@mcmaster.ca if you are in self-isolation, or in quarantine or COVID-19 positive, so we are aware of the overall picture. All of this information will be kept completely confidential.

Website We continue to post materials on our website but will be reorganising the content and headings today, to make it easier to use.

Tenure and Promotion While the University has not changed its timelines for the T&P process, for people who are preparing materials for T&P there will be some flexibility around the deadlines for receiving packages if necessary. The FHS T&P office will not be expecting dossiers until the end of August. We will be as flexible as possible with members who are under review – and to assist any faculty members who are unable to complete their documents due to other pressures.

Department meeting I hope you will be able to join us for the virtual Department meeting (see above) scheduled for **Wednesday April 1st. at 08.00**. The goals are to provide brief summaries of the most current information we have, and to answer any questions you may have. This will be done by answering pre-submitted questions during the meeting. I will be sending out an email with call details and an invitation for questions on Monday, and we will try and answer as many questions as we can in our brief introductory overviews. This will be recorded for future viewing if you can't make it, but for now can you hold the date.

Clinical services

Using video-conferencing platforms other than OTN for virtual care In their new guidelines for virtual care, the OMA have authorised the use of a variety of different platforms including Skype and Teams by Microsoft, FaceTime, Zoom and Google Hangouts. There does need to be an explicit patient consent. Verbal consent must be obtained from the patient at the beginning of each interview, after explaining the possible privacy implications.

And as always, if you need assistance in using Zoom please contact Bev.

RMA Billings RMA has asked all physicians to continue to submit their billings during this time, and to make arrangements for their administrative assistants to be able to submit billings RMA from home. You will find a link to the most recent billing codes for virtual care, as well as the OMA guidelines for virtual visits on our website.

Research

Townhall for our research community: A virtual Research Town Hall took place on Tuesday. A number of concerns were discussed, including how to support research staff during this period, and solutions were generated together. For example, Stelios Georgiades identified a free tool for collection of on-line data that has been developed locally through HHS funding <https://webility.ca/> A follow-up meeting is being arranged with Bev Pindar-Donick and Kim Raskob next week. Details will follow; all are welcome.

Granting agencies Discussions continue with granting agencies about the impact of COVID-19 on current research activities. Researchers should be proactive when reaching out to funders, identifying potential issues but also proposing potential solutions (e.g., moving to an on-line format). Some agencies are asking about the generalizability of data collected over this period; the Research Office has developed a standardized response that can be shared with anyone who is interested. CIHR has also begun to send messages out advising as to potential impacts of COVID-19. See <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/51917.html> for updates as they become available.

Safety of all research personnel Our primary concern in all our research activities is the safety and wellbeing of all researchers. As with all other areas of activity, I can't stress enough the importance of working from home wherever possible and of physical distancing.

Decisions regarding student and staff safety are being carefully monitored by the Associate Dean, Research, FHS and the VPR Research at McMaster. The Department has prepared a plan for maintenance of critical research functions over this period for submission to FHS. Please see this NYT article for the impact of COVID-19 on university research worldwide and the steps

faculty are taking to protect their students and

staff: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/23/science/coronavirus-closed-labs.html>

Cybersecurity With so many of us working from home, especially our researchers, we need to be extra-vigilant about IT security. If you haven't already done so, check the University Technology Services (UTS) page here: <https://cto.mcmaster.ca/mcmaster-cyber-security-resources-working-from-home/> for directions surrounding your cyber security.

Mutual Support and Wellness

The working group met for the first time on Tuesday and will be meeting weekly. Our strategy at the moment will focus on a) the regular provision of information about the current situation b) helping to build virtual support networks and c) circulating materials to assist with wellness and stress management and d) finding ways to occupy our time productively if we are working from home. The group currently has 10 members and if you are interested in joining please contact Karen Saperson saperson@mcmaster.ca or Lisa Kennedy lkenne@mcmaster.ca Mark Walton is also currently developing resources for FHS that we will draw upon.

Can I remind you to complete the survey that was sent out earlier this morning, which will give us some idea of what you are looking for and help us prioritise what we develop or offer. <https://surveys.mcmaster.ca/limesurvey/index.php/872312?lang=en>

In that regard I would thank Tara Riddell, one of our psychiatry residents and her colleagues for the amazing job they did in compiling the attached list of wellness and self-help resources. It contains an enormous amount of useful information about mental and physical health, supports, social health and other information such as virtual tours, on line books, music, etc. organized by the tabs at the bottom.

And a reminder that Mamta Gautam also holds a daily support session just for physicians from across the country. Any physician is welcome to join the Zoom call in at 4pm EST (everyday including weekends). To join, please email Dr. Gautam at: mgautam@rogers.com

Screening for COVID-19

I want to summarise the most recent information on screening and testing at SJH and HHS. All tests at both hospitals are processed by the Hamilton Regional Laboratory Medicine Program (HRLMP) and results are usually available within 12 hours.

SJH. If a staff or physician screens positive in the West 5th SJH screening line they will be sent to ED at the Charlton campus. If symptoms occur at home or prior to being in the screening line they should proceed to the King Street Site.

Both the urgent care and the COVID clinic at King Street are able to send health care workers swabs through a quicker process, so it is important physicians/health care workers identify themselves, if possible calling first either Urgent Care 905-573-4812 or the COVID clinic, 905-573-4844 so they can be directed to wherever is less busy.

HHS. All staff / physicians who experience symptoms of COVID-19 including cough, unexplained

fever, shortness of breath, gastrointestinal issues, muscle aches, sore throat and runny nose, will be asked to do the following immediately:

If at work/on shift:

- o Contact Employee Health Services (EHS) at covidforms@hpsc.ca or dialing extension 42200 and leaving a message
- o Notify your leader / Physician Leader
- o Go home immediately
- o Wait for an EHS nurse to contact you with further instructions

If at home or elsewhere:

- o Contact EHS via email at covidforms@hpsc.ca or call 905-521-2100 ext. 42200
- o Wait for an EHS nurse to contact you with further instructions

All employee tests will be done in the Urgent Care Centre (not in the nearby Assessment Centre). Employees will receive their results from EHS with directions on whether to self-isolate or return to work.

And to end on something a little lighter You may have seen this, but its always worth another viewing. What we can do together when we're apart. <https://slippedisc.com/2020/03/believe-it-orchestra-plays-beethoven-9th-from-their-homes/>

Nick