

COVID-19 Health System Updates

November 4, 2020, Wednesday

Here at Mount Sinai, our COVID-19 caseloads continue to decline as compared to last week. But as you probably know, it's a different story in much of the rest of the country, with cases reaching record levels in many states.

That has important implications for us, including changes to our travel policy, which I'll get to in a minute. And it's a reminder that we need to stay on our toes. Fortunately, we don't expect anything close to the volumes of critically ill patients with COVID-19 that we saw last spring. And, with eight months of learning and preparation under our belts, we are so much better prepared for anything we do see. We have warehouses full of PPE; we have extra clinical units built out and at the ready; and we have the best trained and most experienced COVID-19 workforce on the planet.

Meanwhile, there's one important thing to know about the latest rise in COVID-19 cases: Patient outcomes are a lot better this time around.

The Mount Sinai Hospital recently took a look at how COVID-19 patients admitted from July 1 to September 29 fared, compared with those admitted during the first wave. The improvements are extraordinary. Our mortality rates have dropped by 75 percent. Average length of stay decreased from 11 days to 9, and the percentage of patients needing to be put on ventilators declined from 17 percent to 9.5 percent. *The New York Times* [wrote about these results](#) late last week.

This analysis didn't assess the reasons for the improved outcomes, but we are confident that your innovation and care were large contributors.

During those stressful days in March, April, and May, Mount Sinai researchers, clinicians, and caregivers learned a lot about what works against COVID-19 and what doesn't. Anticoagulation, proning, avoiding ventilation in favor of high-flow nasal cannulae and other less invasive respiratory support, and therapeutics

including antibodies and remdesivir given early in the disease course—these all make a real difference. Some of these treatments were discovered and pioneered right here at Mount Sinai.

And you—our nurses, doctors, respiratory therapists, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, laboratory team members, and everyone else who contributes to caring for our COVID-19 patients—took these lessons and put them to work spectacularly. I thank you; your leadership and colleagues thank you; but most importantly, your patients and your fellow New Yorkers thank you.

As of this morning, we had 87 COVID-19-positive inpatients in our hospitals, 25 of whom were in critical care.

Travel Policy Updates

On Saturday, October 31, Governor Cuomo announced significant changes to the New York State travel policy. Instead of a list of “hot spot” states, the new rules apply to **all** travel outside of our region. And our region is currently defined as including New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont. The new guideline allows travelers returning to New York from outside this region to be tested for COVID-19, and those who test negative can avoid the mandatory 14-day quarantine.

We have updated the Mount Sinai [travel policy](#) to take the new state rules into account. This updated policy is effective Wednesday, November 4. Please review this policy if you are planning **any** travel, whether work or personal, outside New York and our neighboring states. Also, while it is not part of the travel policy, we encourage you to carry your Mount Sinai ID while traveling outside the region.

Preparing for a Vaccine

While approval or emergency use authorization of the first COVID-19 vaccine is still pending, Mount Sinai has been busy preparing for its eventual arrival. This week, we are installing freezers at each of our hospitals that can keep vaccines as cold as minus 80 degrees Celsius, which some of the vaccines being tested

require. We have also successfully registered with the city and state to accept shipments of vaccine once it becomes available.

Behind the Scenes ...

This week, I'd like to spotlight another leader who has been working behind the scenes to keep us all safe: Don Boyce, JD, Mount Sinai's Vice President for Emergency Management.

In the earliest days of the pandemic, he facilitated the Emergency Operations Center at the Corporate Services Center on 42nd Street. This gathering of our leaders in areas such as clinical care, administration, operations, and logistics brainstormed in real time as challenges arose. When social distancing became essential, the team—having grown exponentially—dispersed around the Health System and to remote locations, while using technology to stay in close contact.

Throughout the pandemic, and even now, the days have taken on a “working rhythm,” he says. “A cadence of calls and meetings runs through every day, identifying needs and expectations across the system. Each new set of issues, requires careful focus on the most critical issues impacting patients, staff, visitors, equipment, inventory, and procedures. It doesn't really end.”

Mr. Boyce thanks staff across the Health System who “quietly and heroically performed any service that was needed,” highlighting his colleagues in Emergency Management, who took on tasks such as supervising collection points for the deceased and speaking with families of those who passed away from COVID-19, in addition to their normal planning and operations work. And they are still preparing year round so that we are ready for anything and everything.

We are lucky to have people like Mr. Boyce helping us prepare for these challenges. And we are prepared, as I said earlier. We are ready to meet whatever the future brings. You can help us stay ready by keeping up the good work you are already doing; by continuing to wash your hands, wear masks, and observe social distancing in and out of work; and by taking care of yourself and your colleagues. Take some PTO if you can, use our [wellness resources](#), and

make time to relax and recharge. We are fortunate—and I am proud—to have each of you on our side.

Vicki R. LoPachin, MD, MBA

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