

COVID-19 Health System Updates

August 19, 2020, Wednesday

In my last couple of updates to you, I've talked about the importance of masking and social distancing for all staff in stopping the spread of COVID-19. We need to take care of each other by masking up. But we also want to continue to show the city, the country, and the world that we can be trusted to do the right thing for our patients, visitors, and staff.

Studies show that many people are still afraid to come to the hospital or doctor's office for fear of COVID-19. We've worked hard to overcome those fears by telling patients and the public the [many steps we're taking](#) to keep them safe. But that hard work can be undone in an instant if a patient or visitor sees a staff member without a mask on, especially if they put it on social media.

So I'll say again: you must wear a Mount Sinai-issued surgical mask anytime you are in a Mount Sinai facility. If you work at the 42nd Street Corporate Services Center, remember that you can get a mask from Employee Health Services on the fourth floor, daily from 8 am to 4 pm. At our hospitals and other facilities, you can get masks from your supervisor or your unit. If you are having difficulty obtaining a mask, please let me know.

As you know, it's also important to keep your distance from others, except when necessary for patient care, at all times. But if you need to take your mask off to eat or drink, you **must** be at least six feet away from other people while doing so. This is for everyone's protection.

One thing that I haven't talked about for a while is eye protection. So I want to remind you that anyone involved in direct patient care, whether ambulatory or inpatient, needs to wear appropriate eye protection—a face shield, goggles, or safety glasses—while doing so. This is for your own safety, especially in case a patient removes their mask unexpectedly while you are caring for them.

New York's and Mount Sinai's COVID-19 caseload continues to be among the lowest in the nation and the lowest we've seen since early in the pandemic. With measures like these, we can all help keep it that way.

Warrior Watch™ Study Continues

Here's a reminder about the Warrior Watch™ Study, which supports health care warriors throughout the Mount Sinai Health System in the battle with COVID-19. We are still recruiting Mount Sinai employees, as well as colleagues at other health systems, to participate in this study, which uses an iPhone app and an Apple Watch to administer

questions and collect data from participants. The study's goals are to understand the impact that COVID-19 is having on the psychological well-being of health care workers and how this stress can be improved, and to identify COVID-19 infections in our employees prior to the development of symptoms. Those who are interested are encouraged to reach out to the study team by emailing covid.hcw@mssm.edu.

Well-Being Resources Available

I've written before about the many types of resources that we've created and made available to help with your mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Our colleagues at the Office for Well-Being and Resilience have now put together an easy-to-navigate [infographic](#) that pulls all these resources together in one place. Please check it out when you have the time, and take advantage of these wonderful offerings.

Studying Health Disparities and COVID-19

The Arnhold Institute for Global Health at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and NYC Health + Hospitals have launched the COVID-19 Unit for Research at Elmhurst (CURE-19). The new initiative will translate data, experiences, and lessons from clinicians at NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst and NYC Health + Hospitals/Queens into research that will address both the pandemic and root causes of health disparities in New York City. The goal is to provide other health systems nationwide and internationally with guidance to enhance the quality and access to the care they deliver. You can read more about this project [here](#).

Meet Our COVID-19 Scientists

Children account for a lower relative percentage of identified cases of COVID-19, and throughout the pandemic, clinicians around the world have wondered why. Supinda Bunyavanich, MD, MPH, found a possible answer in samples collected from the nasal lining of 305 of our patients in her studies of asthma: Children showed significantly less expression of ACE2 receptors—proteins that are seen as an entry point for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Her team's findings were published in May in *JAMA*. "Think of ACE2 as a doorknob that SARS-CoV-2 uses to get in," Dr. Bunyavanich says. "There might be plenty of virus waiting at the door, but it has a harder time getting through in children compared to adults." She stresses that children can still get the disease, and we don't know if they have a lower risk of asymptomatic infection. So vigilance is still important, especially as communities consider whether to reopen schools in the fall. Read more about the research [here](#).

Mount Sinai in the News

For some patients diagnosed with coronavirus, the symptoms can linger on for months. CNN's Sanjay Gupta, MD, spoke with some of the so-called "long haulers" who are living a nightmare that has medical experts scratching their heads, including Michael Reagan, a patient at Mount Sinai's Center for Post-COVID Care who is experiencing

long-term after-effects from the illness including tremors and mental “fogginess.” The segment aired on *Anderson Cooper 360* and can be viewed [here](#).

As the summer winds down, I hope you are able to take some time to enjoy the warm days and spend time with your family and close friends, in a responsible and safe way. We don't know what the autumn will bring with regard to the course of this pandemic, but I do know that if we take proper care of ourselves and each other, we'll be ready to face it together.

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