

COVID-19 Health System Updates

June 10, 2020 Wednesday

These recent months have been unlike any others in our lifetime. For months, the COVID-19 pandemic overwhelmed our city. Then, the senseless murders of Black Americans, caught in images for the world to witness, shocked our collective conscience. Now, protests against bigotry, brutality, and racism have inspired a search for our nation's soul. One transformational moment has intersected with another—this once-in-a-century public health crisis overlapping with a nationwide movement aimed at eliminating a pervasive social ill that has infected America since its founding: racism.

Of course, these two moments are connected. Because when it comes to health outcomes across America, shocking disparities abound. Race and socioeconomic status are strong predictors of life expectancy, and existing inequities in health care have been magnified by the recent devastation of COVID-19. Communities of color are disproportionately weathering the impacts of COVID, and the realities of COVID are reminding us, yet again, of disparities that have always existed in medicine and in health. It must change.

As you know, we stand in solidarity with the protests across the country and with their inarguable message: Black Lives Matter. It has been just over 100 days since our region's first COVID case, and as New York City has begun its first phase of reopening, we're at a hopeful moment during which we must all strive to do more. Peaceful protests continue to sound the clarion call for social justice across America, and we too must reflect on the gaps that exist in our own industry, and act. Where there are disparate outcomes, we must do everything in our power to close them. Where there are unequal trends, we must redouble our efforts to reverse them. We will be working to address these issues in a transformative and sustainable manner, and as a component of that, the Office for Diversity and Inclusion is developing more resources to help guide all of us and provide opportunities for dialogue. We must aim for and achieve meaningful and lasting change.

As of yesterday afternoon, we had 142 COVID-19-positive patients in our hospitals. That included 45 patients in our ICUs. We had another 96 inpatients under investigation (PUIs).

PTO/Travel Policies

Especially in light of the toll that this pandemic has exerted on our Mount Sinai family, we encourage you to reach out to your supervisors and managers to plan some time off. We have updated our COVID-19 PTO and Travel Policies to reflect the lower volume of COVID-19 patients in our Health System. We have

resumed our standard PTO policy and are relaxing certain travel restrictions. Personal travel is now permitted, while work-related travel is still limited. At this time, PTO is welcomed and encouraged with pre-approval from supervisors. More information on these policies can be found [here](#).

Meeting Policy

We want to remind everyone that the COVID-19 meeting policy is still in effect and likely will be throughout the summer. As such, all in-person large group lectures, events, and meetings across the Health System should be canceled or offered virtually, and all in-person meetings are restricted to less than 10 people. Please visit [here](#) for more information.

Parking

To make things a bit easier for everyone as New York City reopens, Mayor de Blasio announced this week that alternate-side parking will be canceled for the next two weeks, until June 21. As the city moves toward a complete reopening, we can expect parking enforcement to come back to normal levels, so we encourage you to be mindful of that as well.

MTA Updates

As MTA service ramps up, the most updated information about service for subways and buses can be found [here](#), the Long Island Rail Road [here](#), and Metro North [here](#).

The MTA will be routinely deep-cleaning and disinfecting stations and vehicles, reminding riders about precautions to keep everyone safe, including floor decals and station announcements, and offering hand sanitizer, masks, and other protective equipment in stations. When you ride with the MTA, please remember to wear a mask, travel during less busy times if possible, and practice hand hygiene. You can see more about the MTA's ramp-up efforts [here](#), and can plan your trip [here](#).

#FitForTheFrontLine

From now until Sunday, June 14, you can still participate in #FitForTheFrontLine, a nationwide event led by Mount Sinai with participation from more than 20 major hospitals, to benefit our nurses, physicians, and first responders on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. All you need to do is pick an activity that fits with your lifestyle—meditation, running, walking, yoga—and post it to your network on social media using #FitForTheFrontLine, along with the donation [link](#).

There is no obligation or expectation that you use the event to raise money for Mount Sinai, but if you choose to do so, all donations received from the #FitForTheFrontLine initiative will support the Mount Sinai Center for Stress, Resilience, and Personal Growth. This one-of-a-kind center was created to address the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 on the mental health and lives of

our health care heroes at Mount Sinai and will serve as a model for institutions and communities around the globe.

Your Questions and Concerns

As a reminder, our COVID-19 Employee Resources website is [here](#). And you can always email CovidQuestions@mountsinai.org if you have any other questions or suggestions for us.

Final Thought

Several weeks ago, amid the growing fear around COVID-19, Vivian Choi, a teacher at P.S. 22Q, the Thomas Jefferson Elementary School in Flushing, Queens, asked her third-graders: What is courage? They responded with personal definitions of courage, and later expressed their ideas in the form of mythical creatures you can see [here](#). Ms. Choi sent them to one of our colleagues to share with our staff, writing: “These *Emblems of Courage* are expressions of our students’ sincere gratitude to you—the Hospital Heroes who embody intelligence, compassion, and valor in your everyday actions to care for our community. We appreciate you, and we are inspired by your courage.”

Vicki R. LoPachin, MD, MBA
Senior Vice President
Chief Medical Officer
Mount Sinai Health System