

COVID-19 Health System Updates

March 27, 2020, Friday

The Mount Sinai family continues to show incredible resilience. Every corner of our Health System is stepping up to overcome these extraordinary obstacles. Of course, these times are weighing on me, as I know they are on you. Whether at home or at work, there are unbelievable demands being placed on every one of us, and it's more important than ever that we take care of ourselves and each other.

Today, I want to give you some additional insight into the personal protective equipment situation.

Because of the scope and scale of the pandemic, worldwide PPE is in short supply. We have adopted the COVID-19 pandemic PPE guidelines from the CDC and the New York City and State Departments of Health. We have done this in close collaboration with our infection prevention experts, to make sure you are protected and safe while also ensuring that we don't let the unthinkable happen—to run out of PPE.

At any given time since this pandemic came to our region, and despite our increasing patient volumes, we have always been able to maintain at least a one-week supply of critical items on hand. We have thankfully never dipped below that level due to the incredible work of so many, including Drs. Davis and Charney, the Governor, and the Mayor.

That is why we are being so careful. As the volumes of patients have increased and the supply has remained at one week, we needed to make sure that we you were never in a situation where there was simply no PPE available.

We also know that at any given time there may be some units that are lower on PPE than others, while the institution as a whole has sufficient supply. We are reacting to this in real time and are working to smooth out the supply.

There is no doubt in my mind that this has created fear and anxiety and anger. It is all understandable. And for that I am profoundly sorry.

However, the tide on PPE is turning. Thanks to the relentless work of so many of your colleagues and others, our supply lines are opening up, and help is on the way.

In our first big breakthrough, at 3 am this morning, two airplanes landed at Teterboro Airport with about 130,000 N-95 respirator masks. That approximately doubles our supply. I will save the heroic story about what it took to get this done for another day. I promise you it is worth the wait.

We expect that an additional 350,000 N-95 masks will arrive in the next 48 hours, along with 1.2 million surgical masks. And we are seeing similar progress on gowns, gloves, face shields, and the like.

This is monumental.

Big picture, if the models hold true, it looks like we will need about 3.5 million N-95s and 20 million surgical masks before this is over. So we are not out of the woods yet. But these are very encouraging developments.

I don't want to leave you with the impression that we will go back to having all the supplies in piles in the clean utility rooms as we had pre-pandemic. We still need to be careful because, as we have learned, anything can happen.

But, I do believe, strongly, that we will be able to work with you to make it easier for you to have what you need when you need it—as you heroically provide life-saving care in this humanitarian mission of our lifetimes.

There is nothing more important than that.

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