

# COVID-19 Health System Updates

May 11, 2020 Monday

Just one month ago, our inpatient census of patients with COVID-19 infection was about 2,000. Just two weeks ago, that number was closer to 1,100. And now, that number is closer to 550. When we stop even for a brief moment and turn and look back at the mountain we just climbed, it is almost impossible to fathom how we did it. And yet here we are. Step by step, we are working our way down the mountainside.

There is endless speculation about how long COVID-19 will be with us and about what happens next. Will the virus disappear on its own without the need for a vaccine? If a vaccine is needed, when will one be available? Will there be a second wave or even a third wave after that?

There is so much we don't know.

But here is something we do know. This pandemic is a test of our endurance. And, no matter what the future holds, we are more resilient and adaptable when we treat each other with kindness and compassion; when we forgive our colleagues' mistakes and faults, and our own; and when we take the time to express our gratitude and appreciation for each other's contributions. Let's rededicate ourselves to taking the best possible care of each other as we continue on this mission together, no matter how long the journey or how many hills and mountains lie ahead.

As of yesterday afternoon, we had 559 COVID-19-positive patients in our hospitals. That included 155 patients in our ICUs. We had another 143 inpatients under investigation (PUIs).

## **Testing You for COVID-19 Infection**

We have received many questions about opportunities for antibody testing and also about nasopharyngeal swab (PCR) testing. Today we have a significant update to share.

We are offering two testing programs to employees who want to know their COVID-19 health status. Both programs are voluntary, and your work status will not be affected by your decision to take or not take the test. More information about our testing programs can be found [here](#) and below.

## ***Antibody Testing***

We are offering all faculty, staff, and students an opportunity to be tested for COVID-19 antibodies. A positive test result indicates that, at some point since

this pandemic came to our region, you have been exposed to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. We do not yet know whether having antibodies means you are immune to COVID-19. More information about this test can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

If you are in a front-line role, we will contact you about scheduling your antibody test. Once front-line colleagues have had a chance to take the test, we will also make it available to everyone else.

### ***Nasopharyngeal Swab (PCR) Testing***

Faculty, staff, and students who are concerned that they may have SARS-CoV-2 but have not developed symptoms of COVID-19 may request a nasopharyngeal swab test, also known as a PCR test. This test will show if you have active COVID-19 infection. This test is available to all health care workers (including corporate employees) once every 28 days, except for employees who have previously tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 antibodies (unless they are experiencing new symptoms of COVID-19). If your PCR test is positive, we will need you to remain away from work for at least 10 days—and possibly longer if you develop COVID-19 symptoms.

PCR testing can be arranged through Employee Health Services via their [EHS Redcap](#) form.

**Please note: If you develop new symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or believe you have had a high-risk exposure we still need you to register with EHS via [EHS Redcap](#).**

### ***PPE Recycling***

In another sign of progress, we are now able to discontinue our recycling program for N-95 respirators and face shields. All collection boxes will be removed from our sites over the next two weeks.

### ***Language and Communication Access Services***

Care of patients with COVID-19 is challenging in so many ways. As a reminder, we have many communication and translation services available to patients and/or family members who prefer to communicate in a language other than English. Assistive devices are also available to people with disabilities to help them communicate with providers and staff during their visit. All services are provided free of charge.

To view a list of assistive devices and services available through the Health System, along with other resources for our patients, please click [here](#).

### ***Meet Our Scientists***

A team led by Valentin Fuster, MD, PhD, the Mount Sinai COVID Informatics Center, and the Hasso Plattner Institute for Digital

Health at Mount Sinai made the groundbreaking discovery that treating hospitalized COVID-19 patients with anticoagulation therapy may improve their chances of survival. The study, just published in the [Journal of the American College of Cardiology](#), is based on an analysis of data from more than 2,700 patients treated in our hospitals. In Dr. Fuster's words, "This research demonstrates anticoagulants taken orally, subcutaneously, or intravenously may play a major role in caring for COVID-19 patients, and these may prevent possible deadly events associated with coronavirus, including heart attack, stroke, and pulmonary embolism,"

You can read more [here](#).

### **Final Thought**

I received the following note from Malorie Meshkati:

*My name is Malorie and I am a NICU fellow who just completed a month of deployment in the COVID ICU. It is almost hard for me to describe the experience but words that come to mind are humbling, testing, and rewarding.*

*I am writing you because I read an article in the Times this evening about nonmedical workers.*

*I do believe that Sinai has done an amazing job of appreciating ALL hospital workers and I believe everyone greatly appreciates it. After reading this moving article, I was wondering if there was any way we could specifically thank our nonmedical workers who have been working tirelessly in our units.*

*Over the past month on my unit, I noted how our business associates would work tirelessly and even would do things that were not often in their job description in order to help the teams, how tirelessly environmental services team members worked to empty garbage bins full of PPE to help keep us safe in the unit, how security guards at the doors are keeping us safe, and how the transporters are moving our COVID patients between units or off-unit for their studies allowing their medical plans to be carried out.*

*I was wondering if there was any way to show special appreciation for our nonmedical workers as well who are so integral to this mission.*

*Thank you so much for taking the time to read my email.*

I whole heartedly agree with you, Malorie, and am so grateful that you took the time to share your thoughts and observations. I am sure they will resonate as strongly with our entire Mount Sinai family as they do with me.

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