

# COVID-19 Health System Updates

April 6, 2020 Monday

Since the virus has escalated in our city and around the world, I've been thinking about bravery, strength, fear, and loss...but also hope. Every neighbor who practices social distancing, every one of you who makes care for our patients possible, every grocery store clerk and MTA conductor who keeps the world running for us—they are giving us hope. And your dedication each day, for your patients, your colleagues, your city, and your state, is giving the world hope during this immensely difficult time. You can see it each night at 7 pm, when your neighbors [clap for you](#) across the city.

I mean it from the bottom of my heart when I say you are heroes. Sportswriter Jeremy Schaap said it best in an [ESPN video](#) clip that pays tribute to those on the front lines of the COVID fight: "Sports heroes enrich our lives; these heroes are saving them. These are the heroes we need."

Since this pandemic reached our region, more than 1,100 patients with COVID-19 have been healed and discharged from Mount Sinai health System hospitals. A remarkable achievement. And, for the first time since the COVID-19 outbreak began, the daily number of lives lost in our state [went down](#). Our mission is a long way from over, but progress is happening. I am enormously proud of what we've done already—and the lives we'll save going forward.

A quick update on supplies and equipment. We continue to meet with success in sourcing personal protective equipment, and we are in significantly better shape than we were even a few weeks ago. As I mentioned in a prior note, at times you will see PPE that looks different than what you are used to. We won't release anything for use unless it has been fully vetted by our infection prevention and clinical experts and found to be as safe as your usual PPE. That is a promise that we have made, and we will keep it no matter what. We also have enough ventilators to meet the current demand. We are doing everything possible to source more, and we are prepared to split ventilators, if necessary, so that more than one person can use a single ventilator. This situation is highly dynamic, and we will not rest even for a second in our efforts to obtain what we need to keep you and your patients safe.

As of yesterday afternoon we had 1,917 COVID-19 positive patients in our hospitals. That included 415 patients in our ICUs. We had another 151 inpatients under investigation (PUIs).

## **COVID-19 Testing of Symptomatic Employees**

As I mentioned last week, starting tomorrow, April 7, we are implementing new testing procedures for any Mount Sinai employee with symptoms consistent with COVID-19. If you develop these symptoms, we would like to test for this viral infection using the PCR test with a nasopharyngeal swab within a few days of the onset of your symptoms. This will provide guidance to you and to Employee Health Services. If you were symptomatic prior to April 7, we would like to test you for COVID-19 infection using the serum antibody test. This will provide guidance to you on whether you did have COVID-19 infection, as well as whether you are a candidate to provide a plasma donation to help others. The serum antibody test is most accurate about 21 days after the onset of your symptoms. Donation would, of course, be voluntary. Further details and instructions on all of these testing procedures can be found on the updated employee website [here](#).

### **Mental Health Liaisons**

We have begun to roll out dedicated Mental Health Liaisons (MHL) for the EDs, ICUs, and COVID units across the Mount Sinai Health System. MHLs—psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health counselors, and social workers—will be available confidentially by text, phone, and email. They will also hold regular support groups both virtually and in person when possible. So far, we have assigned 55 MHLs across 30 units and will continue to assign MHLs for as many units as possible over this coming week. You can expect to hear from an MHL soon, and in the coming days we will be updating our website with more information. We'll let you know when that's available. This is in addition to the many other mental health and well-being resources that can be found [here](#) on our COVID-19 Employee Resources [website](#).

### **Final thoughts**

One of our many heroes, a social worker, was emailing with a colleague and concluded her note with such a perfect sentiment that I wanted to share it with you too...

May we see some light soon.

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