

COVID-19 Health System Updates

March 23 2020, Monday

This weekend, Drs. Davis and Charney sent out a call to action for those not already fully engaged in the fight against COVID-19. The response has been extraordinary. If you haven't already signed up, you can do so [here](#). I want to answer a few questions about this that I know you must have.

What if I don't have a clinical background? We have many mission-critical jobs that don't require any clinical training at all.

What if I am at a higher risk for complications from COVID-19 infection? We can make accommodations to keep you safe. Many critical jobs can even be performed from your own home or a remote location.

What if I have a clinical background and am redeployed to a role that I am not trained for? We have you covered. We will provide training to make sure you are ready for your new role and will make sure you have the support you need while you are performing that role.

Current Status of COVID-19 in Our Hospitals

As of Sunday afternoon we have 393 COVID-19 positive patients in our hospitals. That includes 89 patients in our ICUs. We have another 91 inpatients under investigation (PUIs). We have 60 open ICU beds. Our predictive models continue to show increasing volumes for another 40 days or so before they start to drop again.

The Governor and the New York State Department of Health are calling on all hospitals to develop the capability to care for 50 percent more inpatients than under normal circumstances. We are aggressively working toward that goal and have a lot of work ahead of us.

Regional Response

Governor Cuomo accepted the Army Corps of Engineers' recommendations for four temporary hospital sites: the Javits Convention Center, SUNY Stony Brook, SUNY Westbury, and Westchester Convention Center. The city and state are also working aggressively to get us additional equipment and supplies, including personal protective equipment (PPE).

Personal Protective Equipment

To get you what you need to be safe for the duration of this crisis, the entire organization—including the Boards of Trustees—has mobilized and they are leaving no stone unturned. I am beyond impressed with the creativity and the bold risk-taking that is being applied to ensure that you have what you need to do your best for our patients, yourselves, and each other. It feels great to work for an organization that gets it: we can't take care of our patients if we don't take care of our people. This effort has been awe-inspiring. And it is working. More on this in the coming days.

Medline Reprocessing of N-95s and Face Shields

On a related note, Medline, Inc., will soon be reprocessing our used N-95 masks and face shields using an FDA-approved process to get them back to us so that we can reuse them. The process includes many steps, and they will carefully examine each N-95 and face shield to ensure that all equipment is fully sterilized, functional, and not damaged or torn. Many of the masks that they work to reprocess won't be acceptable to reuse and Medline will throw them out. But the ones that do get through their entire process will be 100 percent safe to use and meet all FDA and regulatory requirements that a new mask meets. We will not allow any faulty or unsafe PPE to pass to you under any circumstances. Tomorrow I will update you on where to place your used N-95s and face shields so that they can be shipped to Medline.

Offers of Supplies and Equipment

If you receive offers to donate supplies and equipment, or offers from vendors looking to sell us supplies and equipment, or offers of monetary donations, redirect them to [this webpage](#). If you lose track of the webpage you can find it on the COVID-19 [employee resources site](#). By the way, the offers are being managed by a team of our Health System colleagues, including our graduate students and others, who have signed up for the fight. Huge thanks to them for playing this vital role.

Proper Eye Protection

We have noted in past updates when and in what circumstances [the use of N-95 respirators](#) is appropriate. Today, I want to remind everyone about proper eye protection for COVID-19. Eye protection, plus surgical mask or N-95 respirator, should be worn when caring for COVID-19-positive patients and PUIs who are on Special Droplet Precautions. Acceptable eye protection includes a surgical mask with an attached face shield, a full face shield, or goggles, which, according to the CDC, offer an effective alternative to face shields. A full face shield is preferable as it helps with the conservation of surgical masks or N-95 respirators, which are less likely to be contaminated during any encounters with COVID-19 patients and PUIs.

Finally, I wanted to share a must-read [article by Atul Gawande](#) on the lessons learned from the outbreak in Asia. I guarantee that you will find it worth the time.

Amidst all the work of the last few days I found myself reflecting on what we have already accomplished together and on your awe-inspiring bravery. It left me profoundly humbled. God bless you all.

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