

COVID-19 Health System Updates

March 26, 2020, Thursday

Our friends, family, and loved ones outside Mount Sinai are no doubt living through a confusing and anxiety-inducing time. For those on the front lines of this fight, we are being tested like never before. And we need to rely on each other like never before.

A colleague sent a note about our Mount Sinai family that I want to share with you:

“Some staff have fallen ill, several have family members ill, and some have lost loved ones already. In some way we should acknowledge that during hardship, people are still coming to work, fighting the good fight, and working like the community that we are. I see that in everyone everywhere: the remarkable sense of duty that we owe patients and other colleagues. I see that in you and everybody in leadership, I also see that in all the staff. We are all in it together. We should all be thankful for each other’s presence, the sacrifices that we are making, and perhaps why are we doing all this.”

I couldn’t agree more.

In these challenging times, we’re also seeing so many of us step up in extraordinary ways. In my note yesterday, I mentioned a treatment called human convalescent plasma. Those who tested positive for COVID-19 at least 14 days ago, who have fully recovered, and who now show high levels of immunity, have antibodies in their blood that may be able to be transfused into very sick COVID-positive patients in our hospitals to help them with their illness. Within the first hour of my request to you for help, we received more than 500 responses. The outpouring of offers is absolutely inspiring.

As of yesterday afternoon we had 767 COVID-19-positive patients in our hospitals. That includes 144 patients in our ICUs. We had another 134 inpatients under investigation (PIIs). We have 53 open ICU beds. There are some early indications that the density control measures and social distancing in our region may be starting to have an impact on the infection rate. We are following this very closely.

We continue to work aggressively to obtain more PPE, ventilators, and other needed supplies. We have what we need for now, but we still need much more based on the predicted volumes and timeline. Our own efforts are paying off and we are getting some supplies from the state as well. We are grateful for the many donors who have also stepped up to help. Surge planning and activation is in full swing. New units are going online at a steady pace with more to follow.

New Well-Being Resources

In these challenging times, your mental and physical well-being is more important than ever. It is critical to help us meet the challenge of COVID-19. We have created [a new page](#) with a variety of staff resources—from basic needs like child care, to your mental health and spiritual needs—to support your well-being. Each of us should find the time to become familiar with what is there.

Dress Code Changes

It is now acceptable for any staff or faculty member who will be wearing scrubs during their time at work to wear appropriate casual clothes to and from work. Of course, clothing considered inappropriate for work should not be worn to work. Let's use our best judgment.

COVID Plasma Volunteers

As noted above and in yesterday's note, employees who have recently recovered from COVID-19 have high levels of immunity in the form of antibodies in their blood that may be transfused into very sick COVID-19 patients in our hospitals. We hope to start treating patients soon. If you had a confirmed COVID-19 test at least 14 days ago and all your symptoms are now gone, please email us at COVIDSerumTesting@mountsinai.org to have your blood tested to see if you have high levels of antibodies. It could save lives.

Remote Access Guide

IT has posted a detailed guide to VPN and other work-from-home software issues. Should you have questions or issues, the Remote Access Reference Guide can be found [at this link](#). It has also been added to the "Work from Home Guidance" section [here](#).

Final Thoughts

I want to end on this note: Not everything you read in the papers is true. That certainly applies to today. As we mourn the loss of a cherished colleague, I hope you will use your good sense and judgment to sift through the facts and draw your own conclusions.

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