

Date: **3/12/2020 12:00**

To: Employees, Volunteers & Medical Staff

From: Michele Finney, CEO
Christine Langenwalter, RN, Chief Quality Officer
Scott Morey, RN, Chief Nursing Officer

Re: COVID-19 Preparedness Updates

*****FOR INTERNAL DISTRIBUTION ONLY *****

COVID-19 UPDATES

We are providing this memo to help keep you up to date on our preparedness efforts to deal with COVID-19 in our community. Please reach out to your department manager if you have additional questions, or reach out to the House Supervisor to escalate issues. You can also call Administration at ext. 6760 directly if you need additional help on an important situation. We are committed to ensuring you have the right information and the right equipment to do your job.

Q: What's the current status of COVID-19?

A: The County of Riverside's most recent report has 7 confirmed COVID-19 cases among county residents. Experts advise that the number of cases will increase as testing expands in our communities. The County has declared a local public health emergency. You can read the latest from Riverside University Health System Public Health on its COVID-19 page. (<https://www.rivcoph.org/coronavirus>)

Q: Which agency has authority for issuing guidance on COVID-19?

A: Riverside University Health System - Public Health, which is the County Health Department, has authority to issue the guidelines as long as those guidelines meet or exceed CDC guidelines. We follow the County's higher standards.

Q: Have we instituted visitor restrictions at Desert Regional?

A: We have limited the number of entrances to the hospital. We have placed signage at entrances and we are requiring that all individuals including visitors stop and sanitize their hands before entering the hospital. As doctors, nurses, staff and volunteers here at DRMC, you must also meet this standard. Thank you for your cooperation for the health of our patients. Each visitor is asked about coughs and other symptoms at the check-in desk. Those who present with signs or symptoms are instructed to return when not ill. If that is not possible, a surgical mask is provided and the visitor is further instructed to sanitize hands on the unit.

Visitors will no longer be allowed in the pre-op/PACU areas. Visitors accompanying patients will be asked to wait in designated public areas, such as the surgical waiting room near the OR.

A COMMUNITY BUILT ON CARE

We have been asked by physicians and nurses to adopt further restrictions. A decision will be implemented no later than Monday in consultation with medical staff leadership.

Q: Have we made changes to our Emergency Room procedures for patients?

A: Yes. We have adjusted our check-in procedures to identify, mask and segregate patients with fever and respiratory symptoms. We will be utilizing the ER Annex building as needed to ensure that those with respiratory symptoms are kept away from others as much as possible.

Q: What are the restrictions for a patient who is identified as a Person Under Investigation (PUI) for possibly having the coronavirus?

Any patient who is a Person Under Investigation (PUI) – meaning they meet the requirements to be tested for the virus – will be placed in a private room with the door closed and the patient will don a surgical mask. We will then move appropriate patients to a negative-pressure room.

DRMC staff caring for the patient will wear N95 masks and take appropriate precautions entering and exiting the room. For staff who have not been fitted for N95, they will utilize PAPR equipment (powered, air-purifying respirator)

Q: Do we have enough isolation rooms to care for patients if they are diagnosed with COVID-19?

A: We have increased our negative pressure rooms from 11 to 27, and we have capability to add more rooms if needed. The House Supervisors have the list of isolation rooms. Contact them for information as needed. We are pre-planning placement of patients using the three-bed-ahead process.

Q: What if we receive a positive test for a patient?

A: If we receive a positive test notification, we will do a look-back and notify any staff who may have come into contact with that patient. At that point, we will take appropriate measures, following guidance from the County's Public Health officials.

Q: I have heard complaints that we do not have enough PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). What is the situation?

A: We have adequate PPE to protect our employees that are caring for the designated patients. We have the ability to deploy isolation carts to floors where a patient may have been designated PUI. We also have been in regular touch with the County of Riverside and our Tenet command center, which has been deploying additional PPE to ensure we have a backup supply as the number of cases increase.

Q: Can physicians take PPE from the hospital in order to use it in their private practices?

A: No. All PPE ordered by the hospital, including N95 masks, are reserved for use by employees and medical staff while caring for patients within the hospital. Private practices must make their own arrangements for PPE for use in their private outpatient practices.

Q: What about N95 masks? Do we have enough?

A COMMUNITY BUILT ON CARE

A: We have a good supply of N95 masks, but we are asking staff to follow the recommended guidelines for use. We want to ensure that we are using the N95 masks in care situations that are appropriate. You should never have an N95 mask while walking in the hallways. If you have had a flu shot, you do not need to wear a mask in the hallways. If you wish to wear a mask, wear a surgical mask. If you see a visitor coughing in the hallway, ask them to wear a surgical mask. Please reserve the N95 masks for those areas that need them, and only for those who have been appropriately fit-tested.

All nurses should check in with their clinical managers who will ensure that you have all the N95 masks you need to care for PUI patients. Please notify your manager if you see inappropriate use of N95 masks.

Please be aware we have had reports of N95 and surgical masks being inappropriately removed from the facility. We ask your help in ensuring that supplies are used only where needed so we have enough for staff.

Q: What about fit-testing for N95 masks?

A: We are currently providing additional education to the staff on the use of PPE, including N95 masks. We will provide fit testing to all nurses and to all physicians who need it. The directors have been provided a list of all employees and the size mask for which they were fit-tested. A schedule for fit testing will be coming out soon with available times beginning tomorrow. See your clinical manager for information. Physicians should look for a Tiger Text notification.

Q: How are we testing patients who are PUI?

A: Currently, the attending physician must contact the county -- Riverside University Health System Public Health -- to request a PUI number and a test for any patient who meets the criteria for testing. Only designated laboratories can test for coronavirus. The hospital laboratory is not able to do this testing. The designated labs are reporting heavy volumes that are affecting turnaround times. We are experiencing delays in results.

We expect that the testing recommendations may change. We will update employees and medical staff as we receive more details. Check the eTenet hospital intranet for more information.

Q: How should a physician facilitate an admission to the hospital during coronavirus? Can they avoid sending patients through the emergency room to limit potential exposure?

A: Yes. We have a direct admit process and encourage physicians to use this process when admitting their patients. This will not only limit possible exposures, but will help our patient flow during a time of expected increase in emergency room visits. **Call the One Call Center at 760-323-6101.**

All IPAs and SNFs have been instructed to mask symptomatic patients and call prior to transferring patients to Desert Regional to minimize exposure to others.

Q: Who do I call if I don't think I should report to work?

A: If you are sick, do not report to work. Contact your manager. If you are a nurse, call the One Call Center at **760-323-6101.**

Q: What do I do if I've been exposed to someone with verified coronavirus?

A: If an employee has been exposed at our hospital and if the Department of Public Health declares the employee must be quarantined, the hospital would pay for pre-scheduled shifts during the required quarantine period. If in doubt, call your manager.

Q: I've heard there are travel restrictions for employees. What must I do if I've planned travel?

A: If an employee voluntarily visits one of the identified countries – China, Iran, Japan, Italy, South Korea – the employee must stay home for 14 days after their arrival in the U.S. and they would not be paid by the hospital during that quarantine. Only those who return from the identified countries must be quarantined. At this time, others can return to work if they have no symptoms.

Q: What about the Philippines? I have family there and heard that Tenet is eliminating travel to that country.

A: Currently the Philippines is not on the list of countries requiring mandatory quarantine upon re-entry to the United States. Tenet has some business operations in the Philippines and has restricted its own business travel to that country, but that does not include personal travel.

However, travel restrictions change rapidly. On March 11, The U.S. Department of State issued the following advisory: "The Department of State advises U.S. citizens to reconsider travel abroad due to the global impact of COVID-19. Many areas throughout the world are now experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks and taking action that may limit traveler mobility, including quarantines and border restrictions. Even countries, jurisdictions, or areas where cases have not been reported may restrict travel without notice."

For more information on international travel, check out the State Department's web site at:

<https://travel.state.gov>.

Other important information is available on the hospital's eTenet intranet site, and the County's coronavirus site: