

Subject: Message from the Dean of Tulane School of Medicine
Date: Friday, March 13, 2020 1:15:57 PM

Dear School of Medicine Colleagues,

Like all of you, we have been anticipating the arrival of COVID-19 into our area. Our doctors (faculty, residents, fellows) have taken care of the first COVID-19 positive patients in New Orleans and are now caring for patients in several hospitals that we work in. This work began last weekend and continues. The good news is that all of the hospitals and clinics are approaching this safely so that potential exposure to providers is minimized. We are guided by some of the best experts in the world, and other medical centers that were hit sooner with the virus have been sharing their lessons learned and their approaches. We have incredible clinicians and scientists.

Several days ago, we initiated daily calls for leadership to communicate the current status, issues, and plans. In this manner we are attempting to stay as coordinated in our approaches and plans as possible. The situation and recommendations are changing daily, so these calls will continue until further notice.

There is a large amount of information coming from many sources right now. Please note that the University is sending frequent messages and we will be following University policies except in those aspects where there needs to be a difference. For instance, as you know, the university has suspended classroom work after Friday – we are following this policy, but clinical rotations and laboratory work will continue (more below). The University is suspending all non-essential business travel (exceptions require approval) – this certainly applies to us.

As mentioned, our doctors are taking care of several COVID-19 positive patients. You may have heard that a few of our health care providers (faculty, residents, and one student) were potentially exposed when some of the initial patients did not present with typical features. We are following the CDC guidelines on containment, and those individuals have been sent home to self-quarantine. All of them are doing fine, and we are continuing to monitor their condition.

There is much anxiety in the community about coronavirus right now, in part because of the amount of attention being focused on the disease. From my perspective, there are predominantly two issues that should be considered. First, older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes are at higher risk and should follow [CDC Precautions](#). Younger individuals seem to do much better and may only experience mild, flu-like symptoms (or no symptoms at all). Remember that at this point we are not even anticipating Coronavirus to cause the overall number of deaths that occur every year from the seasonal flu. The second issue is that by following the [CDC Recommendations](#) over the next few weeks, we can slow the spread of the illness to prevent overwhelming our health delivery systems (e.g., doctors, hospitals, etc.). You may have heard of efforts to “flatten the curve”- this is what I am describing. By following appropriate [Social Distancing Guidelines](#), we can protect the most vulnerable members of our community, and alleviate some of the fear and anxiety that we may all be feeling.

We are not powerless in the face of this situation. There are concrete steps you can take now to reduce your exposure and limit spread of COVID-19. Please adhere to safe health practices to reduce your risk for infection from this and many other infectious diseases:

- Wash your hands often (using soap and water for at least 20 seconds), especially after you have touched someone who is sick. If soap and water are not available, then use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- If you have cold or flu symptoms, do not come to work. Make sure to cover your coughs and sneezes by using the crook of your arm or disposable tissues. If you use disposable tissues throw them away after use and then wash your hands with soap and water.
- Avoid sharing drinks with others.
- Maintain a balanced diet, exercise, stay hydrated, and get plenty of rest.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- If you think you are sick, call your healthcare provider for assistance.

Additional prevention techniques can be found at the [CDC Site on Prevention](#).

Education Update

Med Student Update: Students will not be allowed to care for patients with suspected COVID-19. Some Clerkship sites will be evaluated for how they are managing patients with possible exposure. Match Day festivities have had to be cancelled unfortunately.

GME Update: Dr. Wiese has noted that while there is a concern on the part of many residents and fellows, for the most part programs are managing to continue to train and deliver care.

Graduate Programs Update: Drs. Garry and Blake have noted that students are being accommodated. For the 3rd year and up PhD students that are in labs, they are continuing that work. Didactics will be delivered on line. The annual crawfish boil is cancelled.

At present, the campus remains open and administrative and research operations are continuing. Guidelines around research programs operations were sent out yesterday. We are asking everyone to follow the University guidance, especially around travel, social distancing, and self-isolation. If you have any flu or cold-like symptoms, we ask that you stay at home and follow the self-isolation guidance, including seeking medical care. If you are ill, it is your responsibility to communicate with your supervisor and/or professors about your absence.

These past few days have been a powerful reminder of just how connected we are to one another—and how our choices today determine our options tomorrow. Now more than ever, we must do our utmost to support and protect those among us who are most vulnerable, whether physically or emotionally, and to treat one another with generosity and respect. To our faculty, staff and residents, please remember that the [Tulane Employee Assistance Program](#) is available to help you manage anxiety and stress. To our students, Campus Health

Services remains open as usual and there is a 24/7 CAPS hotline for you to call if you are feeling overwhelmed. Your mental health is just as important as your physical health.

And finally, be proud that Tulane is on the frontlines in this battle. The university would not be able to do this critical work without all of us doing our part each and every day to support the mission of this great university. I want to recognize and appreciate all of the faculty, staff, residents, and students who are putting forth so much additional effort in this challenging time. Thank you for your ongoing hard work, professionalism and flexibility.

Lee

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