COVID-19 Research Update

Week of 12/14

Dear Colleagues,

As we move into the holiday season, a season of giving and gratitude, let’s also make an extra effort to connect and be supportive. We know that around the holidays loneliness and depression worsen, especially for those of us far from family and friends. In times of stress, loss or loneliness, we turn to those close to us, often gathering to have a cup of coffee or to share a meal, to be comforted and to give comfort. COVID has taken this from us in many ways, for now. There is hope on the horizon, but many of us will still be facing stress and hardship for a while longer. So please think of those around you, especially those who may seem a bit removed or are struggling. Reach out, offer to listen, provide a kind word and support. And may your holiday season, however you celebrate, bring joy and gratitude.

Please review the following updates.

Coronavirus Vaccination

Earlier this week URMC began vaccinating faculty and staff at high risk for workplace exposure to COVID, including scientists who work closely with COVID+ research subjects and with live SARS-CoV-2 virus in the Biosafety Level 3 facility. This is a moment we’ve all been waiting for, and we can be proud that URMC’s own researchers helped to make it possible.

Vaccines are being distributed in accordance with guidelines developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and New York State. Within the Medical Center, we will be making vaccinations available to employees based on their work location and risk of exposure. We will have a limited supply initially, but anticipate being able to expand vaccinations to more of the URMC community in the coming months. We will share more information about vaccination in future email updates.

In the meantime, you can earn more by watching this virtual town hall where our experts discuss vaccine distribution, safety and efficacy. You can also find information about vaccine safety and efficacy and review frequently asked questions on our new coronavirus vaccine web page.

Despite the excitement around vaccines, we must continue to wear masks, wash hands often and stay at least six feet away from others.

Holiday Travel and COVID-19 Testing Information

For Graduate Students: UHS COVID-19 Testing through January 4

University Health Service will continue to administer pre-departure tests to asymptomatic students who plan to depart in the coming weeks. This one-time pre-departure test is recommended for graduate students. Appointments are required.
• **Pre-travel testing:** Students traveling to an international location should call UHS at (585) 275-2662 to discuss their travel testing requirements with a UHS nurse and to schedule an appointment. Students traveling domestically should schedule their appointment online using the instructions on the [UHS website](#). Testing from December 21–30 will take place in the UHS Building.

• **Students staying on campus:** These students do not need to be tested; however, testing is available for free upon request, even when asymptomatic, one time during the semester break.

• **Testing from December 21–30:** Testing will be available at UHS for students with symptoms, for students who will be traveling, and for students who are returning to Rochester. During this time, students should call UHS at (585) 275-2662 to schedule an appointment.

• **Beginning January 4:** UHS will be testing students who are returning to Rochester. Appointments are scheduled online using the instructions on the [UHS website](#).

• **Other personal health questions:** Contact UHS at (585) 275-2662.

*For Postdocs, Living On and Off Campus*

**Asymptomatic testing to travel back to NYS and contiguous states after personal travel per NYS guidance:**

- Gallagher health insurance will not cover the cost
- You can use [Employee Health, NYS](#) or [Monroe County](#) resources to locate testing sites and self-fund as needed.

**Symptomatic testing or asymptomatic testing if determined to be medically appropriate by a health care provider:**

- Gallagher postdoc health insurance will cover the cost with no co-pay
- You can use [Employee Health, NYS](#) or [Monroe County](#) resources to locate testing sites

*For other personal health questions, contact:*

- UR Medicine COVID-19 Automated Support Line: 1 (888) 928-0011
- Monroe County Department of Public Health: (585) 753-5555 or COVID19@monroecounty.gov

*For Faculty, Research Staff and Postdocs: Avoid Waiting on Hold for the Employee Health COVID Call Center*

Employee Health has improved processes to prevent you from having to wait on hold for the Employee Health COVID Call Center. Here are the key points to follow:

- **Send an email to** [SMHEHTesting@URMC.Rochester.edu](mailto:SMHEHTesting@URMC.Rochester.edu) if you were tested for COVID because you had symptoms and have received your results (if Employee Health has not already contacted you). For data security, we strongly recommend using your URMC email account. If your symptoms have resolved, or are mild and resolving, you may be able to return to work. An Employee Health nurse will help you to make the determination.
• **Complete Dr. Chat Bot daily before coming to work on site.** We strongly recommend you complete it even if you’re not working on site. If you screen positive (for symptoms, travel or an exposure), an Employee Health nurse will reach out to you later that day or the following morning so you don’t have to wait on hold!

• **Symptomatic staff should not report to work on site.** Complete Dr. Chat Bot and notify your supervisor. An Employee Health nurse will call you.

• If you develop symptoms while at work after you’ve already completed your daily Dr. Chat Bot, notify your supervisor, email Employee Health at SMHEHTesting@URMC.Rochester.edu, and go home. An Employee Health nurse will call you.

Thank you for your cooperation and resilience. As always, if you have any concerns about safety compliance or other issues related to work, please email research_covid_concerns@urmc.rochester.edu.

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