March 17, 2020

Dear colleagues,

As you know, several of our peer institutions have already moved to ramp down lab-based research activity. As more cases of COVID-19 are diagnosed in our local community, we need to develop plans for the same possibility. Planning ahead and ramping down will allow labs to maintain critical operations or experiments. We cannot say the same if we fail to take these precautions and an entire lab or floor is quarantined.

Please use the attached checklist (also available on the web) to help you develop your ramp down. We expect all PIs and all labs to complete this checklist, and to develop a lab-specific ramp-down plan, by COB on Friday, March 20.

As you develop plans for your specific laboratory, please keep in mind these key principles:

1. The health and safety of our scientific family, and the broader Rochester community, are the highest priority.
2. A controlled ramp-down is greatly preferable to a sudden, enforced, quarantine. Developing plans for social distancing and reduced lab activity now, although painful, will allow us to avoid more drastic measures down the road. And it will allow to restart our research more rapidly once this immediate crisis passes.
3. In developing plans for a ramp-down, we should seek to preserve unique/irretrievable resources, and to abort/not start costly long-term experiments, wherever possible.
4. Wherever appropriate/feasible, lab team members should not come into the laboratory, but should instead work from home. As noted in other communications, we are working closely with HR to make this possible.

The following considerations should be applied, in order to ensure the safety of the community, ramp down research activity and assure social distancing:

For individuals

- Any person with even minor symptoms of illness, including but not limited to cough or fever, should stay home. If in doubt about whether you feel well, do NOT go to work.
- For PIs: We expect that PIs will not make any immediate changes to the support of staff members, students and postdocs. Please continue charging to grants as normal — see more information on federal guidance here.

For laboratories

- Complete the attached checklist. This will require consultation with the entire lab group, led by the PI.
- Conduct all lab meetings by Zoom.
- Ensure that you have contact information for your students, postdocs and staff members.
- Immediately consider cross-training research staff to fill in for performance of critical tasks for those who are out sick or unable to come to work.
- Reduce lab activities where possible. Cease all non-essential activities, wind-down ongoing experiments, and focus only on essential operational activities.
- Define processes and procedures for shutdown of expensive and sensitive equipment, particularly if incorrect shutdown might harm the equipment. If equipment should not be shut down, please inform your department/center administrator.
- Ensure that high-risk materials (radioactive material, biohazards, chemicals) are secured. Contact EH&S if you have questions.
- Do not start expansive or long-term experiments.
- Designate a limited number of people per lab (two per lab or 10% of the lab, whichever is more) who are allowed to come in, to continue essential operations such as attending to mouse/animal colonies, changing LN2 tanks, etc. Staff should maintain an appropriate distance (six feet) from one another at all times.
- Identify critical experiments that are at a critical phase, such that abandoning them would cause a major or irreversible loss in project viability. This high priority work should be a very limited set of ongoing experiments.
- Research on COVID-19 itself can continue, following review and approval at the level of (initially) department chairs/center directors and (subsequently) research deans.

For departments and centers: identify key personnel who will:
• Help to keep LN2 tanks stocked and respond to alarms
• Receive and distribute deliveries
• Help to maintain animal colonies
• Submit grants (this can be done off-site)
• Ensure all doors with swipe access are locked, with access provided only to key personnel (see individual laboratory guidance)
• Coordinate the disinfection of laboratory spaces, should an exposure to COVID-19 be discovered. Volunteer disinfection teams will be trained in disinfection protocols, as they are used in the hospital, and will be coordinated by Dirk Bohmann. If you would like to volunteer to be a member of such a team, please contact Dirk directly (dirk.bohmann@urmc.rochester.edu).

We will be setting up a series of forums to address your questions and concerns. More information to follow shortly. In the meantime, please direct your questions to ResearchHelp@urmc.rochester.edu.

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