

CMSR Implements COVID-19 On Campus and Off Campus Workplace Protocols

COVID-19 precautions forced CMSR investigators to temporarily spend some or most of their work days offsite and away from the lab, but its culture – and technology – ensured that scores of active research projects didn't skip a beat – and even launched new research related to COVID-19 itself.

CMSR reengineered its workflows as COVID-19 cases peaked in western New York in early spring, in response to University of Rochester Medical Center and New York state social distancing guidelines designed to prevent the spread of the virus. URMCC sent hundreds of workers work off-site to reduce the risk of transmission on its campus.

The team of 140 CMSR researchers, who are used to working collaboratively in their lab space on URMCC's campus, quickly adapted to the disruption in standard research practice. Everyone at CMSR worked off-site for some or most of their work time.

The change was dramatic, but the CMSR culture that encourages fluid and creative collaboration made the transition easier, according to Edward Schwarz, Ph.D., Richard and Margaret Burton Distinguished Professor of Orthopaedics and Director of CMSR. "We have 12 research labs in the CMSR, but no silos. Investigators from different labs are encouraged to work collaboratively within their own teams, and with extended CMSR team members."

"The ability to reach out to anyone in our organization for help with a problem, or to pursue a new research endeavor, enriches the learning environment here and elevates the quality of our research. So when COVID forced us to rapidly adapt to a new way of working virtually, off-site, for extended periods of time, I'm pleased that our entire team stepped up to support the new regulations from New York State and the NIH, and succeeded in driving their investigations forward."

CMSR researchers also directly participated in COVID-19 related research. The Eliseev lab performed testing for a local biotech company working on an anti-COVID drug. The testing was recommended by the Food and Drug Administration to facilitate the drug's approval. After getting CMSR and URMCC leadership approval, the Eliseev lab evaluated the drug's mitochondrial toxicity in cell cultures.

"Researchers willingly changed work patterns during this extraordinary time to keep ourselves, our URMCC/University colleagues, and the entire community safe. It speaks to our culture that we were able to do so successfully and continue at the same pace with our work."

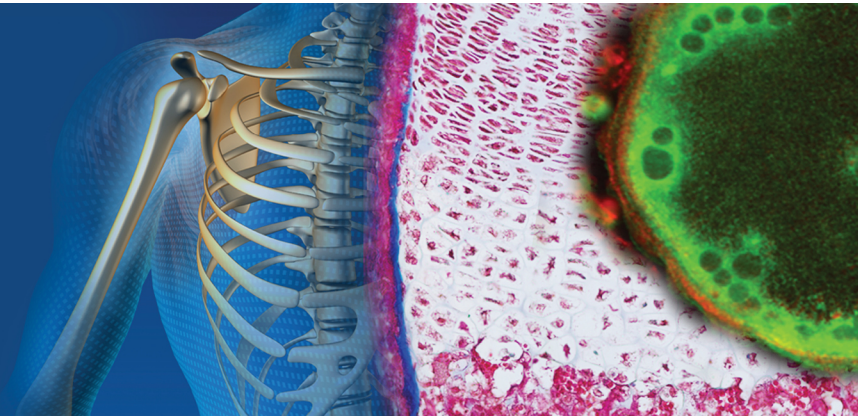
Supporting their efforts: a formal code of conduct for the CMSR was established that outlined standards for working off-site and onsite. The code, which was signed by all CMSR members,

set clear expectations, including following New York State health precautions for social distancing and masking, as well as completing URMĆ's daily online health screening that help track presence of COVID – data that's essential for the Medical Center to safely reopen.

Technology tools, including virtual meetings and team-based Google calendars, enabled labs to pursue their research and collaborate with colleagues even while working from home.

August 2020 update: With cases in Monroe County declining, URMĆ is bringing back selected faculty and staff; 80 to 90 percent of investigators are returning to work on-site.

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CMSR Code of Conduct During the COVID-19 Pandemic

- I, _____, acknowledge and respect all of the New York State laws, local ordinances, and URM C guidelines that have been enacted to limit disease and death from COVID-19 infection. In addition to abiding by these laws, rules and regulations, I vow to obey the following Code of Conduct that has been adopted by the Center for Musculoskeletal Research (CMSR) at the University of Rochester Medical Center, Rochester, NY.
- 1) I will complete the employee health survey emailed out by the University of Rochester or online at healthlab.urmc.rochester.edu/EmployeeHealthScreen before coming into work each day. If I have any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 infection I will contact my supervisor, seek appropriate medical attention, and not come into the CMSR.
 - 2) I will wear a mask at all times while I am in the U of R Medical Center, except for personal offices with the door closed. I know that the CMSR will supply me with a mask every week, and I know how to get this mask from Tiffany Totman Tiffany_Totman@URMC.Rochester.edu or Susan Liebelt Susan_Liebelt@URMC.Rochester.edu. I also know that I can use my own mask that appropriately covers my face including my nose and mouth.
 - 3) I know that there is to be no eating or drinking in the CMSR, except for personal offices, until the COVID-19 pandemic is declared over. I know that the Breakrooms and 1-8527 Conference Room are closed until the COVID-19 pandemic is declared over. Therefore, I will make plans to eat and hydrate in accordance with these rules before I come to work each day.
 - 4) I am aware of the Dean's Social Distancing rules prohibiting a density of more than one person per 250-300 square feet of floor space in any room at URM C. I am also aware that every lab and shared space in the CMSR has a COVID-19 protocol to maintain social distancing. I understand that access to some rooms in the CMSR are regulated by an online calendar (e.g. The Schwarz Lab, Animal Surgery Rooms), and some rooms are entirely governed by common courtesy (e.g. Hallways, Bathrooms). In order to obey these new Social Distancing Rules, I will educate myself on the active protocol for each room in the CMSR that I intend to enter before I enter. Some of these protocols are in Box <https://rochester.box.com/s/4c3ngawqxyjvwp0c81khtauklmcb5vg6>. If I am unsure of the Social Distancing Rules of a room in the CMSR, I will contact Tiffany Totman Tiffany_Totman@URMC.Rochester.edu before entering that room.
 - 5) I understand that failure to comply with the CMSR's Social Distancing Rules will put me and others at risk of COVID-19 infection, which may have grave health consequences including Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and death. I also understand that if one employee in the CMSR becomes positive for COVID-19, the entire CMSR will be closed for 14 days or more. Therefore, I agree with the CMSR's zero tolerance policy, in which first time violators of any of the aforementioned rules will receive an immediate 14 day suspension from the CMSR, and second time violators will be expelled from the CMSR until the COVID-19 pandemic is determined to be over by the University of Rochester.

Sign above & Type Name

Date



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