

Dear Colleagues,

The repercussions of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak continue to have an impact here in the United States and around the world. While there are currently no patients with COVID-19 in Vermont, we are working on preparedness in the event that this outbreak reaches our community.

As always, and throughout this outbreak, our highest priority is to provide quality care to our patients while maintaining a safe work space for our staff. To that end, we are working with our colleagues across the Network to coordinate efforts. In addition, leadership at every level is fully engaged to ensure we are as prepared as possible.

Here at UVM Medical Center, we have a system in place that we have developed based on previous experiences with similar health care scenarios – and we can flex that system as needed. A multidisciplinary team meets weekly to discuss where we are with our preparedness. The group includes front line health care providers, senior leadership, patient placement, supply management, industrial hygiene, staff educators, emergency preparedness practitioners, facilities management, pharmacy, communications, infection prevention and infectious disease. Our conversations are both specific and comprehensive.

Stemming from this work, we continue to address the following:

- Remaining up-to-date with current CDC and VT Department of Health recommendations, including:
 - Risk assessment for those people who may be at risk for COVID-19 (to allow for early identification, isolation and testing)
 - Personal protective equipment (PPE) and isolation precautions – **we are encouraging front line health care workers to contact their unit staff educators or infection prevention to review donning and doffing of PPE**
- Monitoring and managing medical supplies, as shortages may become a challenge
- Devising a training refresher for donning and doffing PPE and disseminating this to front line staff
- Defining the logistics of patient placement while achieving the required level of care (ICU vs general inpatient status) if patients do require admission
- Planning for surge capacity if COVID-19 reaches epidemic levels in Vermont

Finally, it's very important to keep in mind that the flu and other respiratory illnesses have hit our region hard. The basics of infection prevention remain paramount for all of us:

- Get a flu shot.
- If you're sick, stay home.
- Practice vigilant hand hygiene.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing.
- If you have a cough, wear a mask.
- Keep your hands away from your face.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- If you have a fever or cough, consider not visiting a loved one in the hospital.

These are simple things you can do to help prevent the spread of illness.

We will continue to keep you updated as this situation evolves. In the meantime, please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Cindy Noyes, MD, Infectious Disease
Dawn LeBaron, Vice President, Hospital Services

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