To: UCM and BSD Faculty and Staff  
From: Kenneth S. Polonsky, MD, Dean and EVP for Medical Affairs  
Sharon O'Keefe, UCMC President  
Date: Sunday, March 22, 2020  
Subject: #COVID-19 — Social Distancing at UCM

Even as we stand together in caring for patients, we need to stay apart.

Social distancing is critical to slow the spread of COVID-19. Unfortunately, we have lost the contribution of hundreds of colleagues to furlough and some to illness after exposure to not just patients, but to other healthcare workers and colleagues with infection. These events are a consequence of individuals coming to work sick and congregating while performing their duties.

Other hospitals have faced this same challenge. Some have conceded that COVID-19 will spread among their clinicians and other staff and have decided to abandon even the most basic controls, including furlough. At the University of Chicago Medicine, we are not prepared to give in.

Effective immediately, all members of the UCM community are expected to apply the following guidance on campus. Implementation, adoption and adherence will be the responsibility of local managers, area leaders and executives, including clinical chairs, but also will be monitored centrally.

- First and foremost, absolutely no employee should come to campus with any of these symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose or nasal congestion, or diarrhea. In addition, per the communication sent March 19, take your temperature twice a day. If 100.0°F or greater, stay home and call the sick-healthcare-worker triage number at 773-702-6819 (x2-6819). If you don’t have a thermometer handy, subjective fever can count (meaning if you feel feverish).
- “Bedside” rounds should include no more than 1 individual absolutely essential to communication with patients and elements of the examination that cannot be otherwise attained. The rest of the team should round remotely. In some cases, like consultation, the entire clinical care should be provided remotely. It is up to the team to decide who, if anyone, will be the examining clinician each day. Conversations with patients and family should be done remotely when at all possible.
- Provide care and advice remotely if a bedside visit is not essential. Again, many clinical encounters can be made remote and should be whenever possible. This may be the case for consultation visits or follow-up.
- Team discussions of patients (“card flipping”) must be done remotely via Zoom, Skype, phone or similar platforms. To congregate for such activity is to put the entire team and service at risk, owing to the hazard of COVID-19 transmission during the pre-symptomatic period. Many on-service clinicians should not need to come to the hospital at all.
- Workrooms and common areas should be used sparingly, if at all. We advise a 1/6 rule: for every 6 chairs in a work area or conference room, ensure that only 1 chair is filled.
- When conferring face to face is essential, strictly adhere to a 2-meter (about 6 feet) distance space between those involved.
- We recognize that many care environments and practices, including procedures and some physical spaces do not permit strict adherence to these standards. We encourage those of you in such spaces to consider how you can mitigate local risk. Your personal health and safety, as well as that of your colleagues, friends and family are at stake. Many of us have older or immunocompromised family at home and are relying on everyone to do their part in order to keep their loved ones safe.
Every UCM leader is expected to reinforce this message and to review routinely with their teams. Monitor adherence in real time and provide immediate feedback by contacting our 24/7 staff resource line at 1-800-683-5704. We want to empower every UCM team member in the responsibility of crowd control. When you see colleagues gathering in violation of these expectations, no matter their place in the organization, remind them to “break it up.”

We are grateful to all of you who have reached out to ask what you can do to contribute to our COVID-19 response. This message serves as an answer to every one of you.

#standtogetherstayapart