



November 12, 2020

Dear Fellow Employees,

Due to the continued increase in COVID positive cases in our area, our COVID leadership team will be meeting more frequently so that we continue to stay on top of new requirements as well as current trends within our organization and community. The spike in cases is real and currently without the vaccine, there is no end in sight to this increased incidence of COVID positive individuals. This will, no doubt impact the school system as well as continue to negatively impact our economy.

There is some important information that I wish to share with you today. Please be aware of the following:

1. PPE- We are at a critical low level of small size teal N95 masks. Any individual who is currently using a small teal N95 must be fit tested for our other N95 products. Respiratory Therapy is open all day in the fit testing area. Please reach out to them and schedule yourself. Failure to do so will put you in jeopardy in regards to your ability to use the appropriate sized face mask when caring for patients.
2. Testing kits- Due to the nationwide increase in COVID 19 cases, we are experiencing a significant reduction in the availability of our rapid testing kits. Although we have a contract with the supplier, the supplier is unable to deliver due in part to both the Federal and State governments stock piling rapid testing kits. As a result, we will be reverting back to the send out to Quest PCR testing for elective procedure patients on Friday, November 13<sup>th</sup>. That will be the last day that a provider may order a rapid test for that patient population. In addition, on Monday November 16<sup>th</sup>, we will be offering only PCR testing in our testing center for individuals presenting who are symptomatic or require a test due to exposure. The remaining rapid test kits that we have will be used for admissions and for employees who need to be tested in order to return to work. We cannot afford at this time due to staffing and high demand for our services to not be able to rapid test our employees.
3. Testing Center- In addition to the above changes regarding the type of test offered in the Testing Center, we are working to expand hours and would like to go to 7 day a week coverage once staffing permits. This will ease the volume that we do each day and allow us to expand capacity to meet the increased demand for testing.
4. Symptomatic Employees- We have seen an increase in employees with symptoms that require testing. As a result, we are opening up the PAT space off the main lobby of the hospital on Monday-Friday, from 1:30-2:30 to perform rapid tests for symptomatic employees. You need to call the Employee Health Office at 315-361-2907 and schedule an appointment. Walk-ins are prohibited. So please, contact the Employee Health Office if you require a test if you are symptomatic. Again, this service is for employees and medical staff members only.

5. Sick Employees- Even if you have been COVID tested and are negative but are still not feeling well and have symptoms of an upper respiratory infection, you need to stay home until those symptoms are gone. Although we appreciate the dedication of staff who have in the past come to work not feeling 100%, at this time, it is in everyone's best interest that ill employees stay home until feeling better. If you are ill and calling in because of that fact, you need to share with the individual you are speaking with what symptoms you have. Simply saying you are not feeling well is not acceptable. Please be specific so we can document and determine whether we need to do tracing or warning on our end in the event you may have exposed your co-workers. This is very important in helping us control the spread of illness within our organization.
6. Travel- With the upcoming Thanksgiving Day holiday, I understand many people are planning on traveling or having family or friends traveling here to celebrate. Due to the current situation in this country as well as this region, this is not a good idea. As I stated in yesterday's update, we cannot afford to have more employees out of work due to illness as it makes it impossible for us to provide care to our community members and residents. In regards to travel, I wanted to clarify one item regarding travel to contiguous states. We are seeing significant increases in COVID positive rates in those contiguous states and therefore, consider travel to them as we would for any state on the restricted travel list. So if you travel to a contiguous state (Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania), you will need to receive testing 3 days before you return to NY from the state and then test once again 4 days after your return from that state. At this time I strongly discourage any travel because of our current pandemic situation. I have attached a link from the CDC on their recommendations for Thanksgiving. You will see from these recommendations that they are saying don't celebrate Thanksgiving other than with those who you normally have daily interactions with i.e. spouse, children, significant other, etc.
7. Meetings- There have been a number of meetings within the hospital where social distancing is difficult. As a result, I request that in person meetings stop for now and that if a meeting is necessary, that they be done virtually. Obviously, if it is a small group meeting where social distancing can safely be adhered to, having an in person meeting will still be permitted.
8. COVID Numbers- We performed 93 rapid tests yesterday and received 12 positive results. We currently have 4 COVID positive inpatients. We have 148 tests pending, many being ECF staff weekly testing. As you will note from the number of positives seen yesterday, the problem in our area is real.

I wanted to apologize for not recognizing our Veterans during yesterday's celebration of Veteran's Day. Although we did have a LED board recognizing our Veterans, I do want to add that your service to this country is appreciated by all and thank you for that. In addition, this week is also National Radiology Technology Week and I would like to thank our Radiology Technologists for all they have done for this organization and for the patients we serve.

Please continue to wear your PPE when at work. I strongly suggest that you continue to wear your mask when out and about. I will send a brief update tomorrow just so you are aware of where things stand as we continue to battle this virus.

With Sincerest Gratitude,

  
Gene F. Morreale