

Minutes of the McGovern Medical School Faculty Senate

Thursday, March 19, 2019, 4:30 p.m. MSB 2.103 & LBJ UT Annex 217 Auditorium

Dr. Parks brought the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

Approval of Minutes. Secondary to social isolation requirements, we were unable to officially achieve a quorum in person. There were, however, 100 participants logged in to the WebEx meeting. The minutes from the February 20, 2019 meeting were approved via WebEx.

NEW BUSINESS

Honored time opening for Dean Stoll & Dr. Kevin Morano

Dr. Kevin Morano would like to thank everyone for your willingness to work through the challenges we are currently facing.

A few years ago we added the www.care.com package for faculty and staff use. Dr. Morano would like to remind faculty that there is child and adult care available upon request. The caregivers have been screened to ensure they are symptom free.

In addition, care.com has added a component entitled Personal Network that allows people to hire their own babysitters and be reimbursed under the backup care program we already pay for. It is a good option to have given the current public health situation.

COVID-19

Dr. Luis Ostrosky, MD, FACP, FIDSA, FSHEA, FECMM, CMQ [isEp] Professor and Vice Chairman of Internal Medicine, McGovern Medical School Division of Infectious Diseases, Medical Director of Epidemiology and Stewardship

Dr. Ostrosky discussed the fact that Covid-19 is now a pandemic. There are 83 confirmed cases and 3 deaths within the state of Texas. We need to screen all of our patients and staff for possible exposure, offering treatment and quarantine, where appropriate. We are limiting the number of visitors who enter the hospital daily.

One focus currently is to replenish the stock of PPE. There have been challenges in the supply chain so we are trying to be smart in managing our current supply and are preferentially providing it to the faculty and staff who are most at risk.

Dr. Ostrosky wants to assure everyone that we are fully following national and international recommendations and best practices by the [CDC](#) and the [WHO](#), considering we are experiencing very real and unforeseen PPE supply chain issues that are not likely to improve in the short term. Under these conditions the priority is to use PPE rationally and to protect our HCW that may experience exposures during known high risk procedures and situations.

Testing has been incredibly challenging initially because the CDC was trying to limit all testing. In the last two weeks we have had testing available at MHH. The turnaround time for test results is between 48-96 hours, which makes clinical decision-making and work-ups challenging. The process should be increasing in speed very soon.

Dr. Ostrosky is confident that social distancing will be very beneficial in decreasing the overall spread of COVID-19. There will be expected spikes during spring break and when travel restrictions are relaxed in the future.

Closing remarks before Q&Q:

- 1.) We are still working on an OR process with nursing for suspected / confirmed COVID patients. More to come on that.
- 2.) As a reminder, please be cognizant of HIPAA. This applies to the patients and colleagues.
- 3.) Per Dr. Katz, we have full inventory with regards to blood status. Gulf Coast has been able to provide all our needs.

The phone number for UT employee health is 713-500-3267. For more info, see [Employee Health Services](#).

Please note that research is ongoing thus the answers provided during Q&A are subject to change.

Questions/Comments: How long does the virus remain airborne?

Answer: Under all other circumstances (like sneezing, coughing and talking), the virus travels in droplets up to 6 feet, but would then fall onto surfaces and NOT remain airborne.

Questions/Comments: Is there a test being developed to determine who may have already had the disease?

Answer: This is currently in the works and should be available within the next month or two.

Questions/Comments: Asymptomatic spread?

Answer: The presence of high viral loads and viral shedding are most common in symptomatic patients. There is limited data available at this time, but there is evidence of fecal-oral transmission. The advice is to thoroughly wash your hands frequently.

PPE should be reserved for known COVID-19 positive contact.

Questions/Comments: What is the concern regarding NSAIDs?

Answer: The information/research on this is still pending.

Questions/Comments: Age related mortality?

Answer: The CDC is reporting that 40% of US patients with COVID-19 are between the ages of 25-40 years. This is likely due to social distancing working already.

Questions/Comments: How many cases in Texas? At MHH?

Answer: There are 83 cases currently reported in Texas. There have been only a handful of cases at MHH.

Questions/Comments: What are the key differences between this pandemic and previous pandemics?

Answer: SARS and MIRS were more lethal, but COVID-19 is more contagious. It is difficult to compare COVID with the flu because there is not currently a vaccine available for COVID.

Questions/Comments: Is the strain in China the same as the one in Italy?

Answer: We do not know at this time.

Questions/Comments: Do you recommend routine testing of asymptomatic patients?

Answer: We do not recommend routine testing for asymptomatic patients. The test is now available via LabCorp. Anyone who has privileges is able to order the test.

Questions/Comments: What is the sensitivity of the test?

Answer: We do not know definitively. The test is also user dependent. It is important to get a posterior nasal swab for accuracy.

Questions/Comments: What are you considering symptomatic?

Answer: Fever, cough, and shortness of breath

Questions/Comments: What comorbidities worsen outcome?

Answer: Immunosuppression, heart disease. Obesity was a huge factor in H1N1, but its influence on CoVID-19 is not currently known.

Questions/Comments: co-infection?

Answer: There is currently a huge spike in rhinovirus and enterovirus.

Questions/Comments: Criteria for admission?

Answer: SOB

Questions/Comments: What is the role of hydroxychloroquine?

Answer: It has been postulated to be prophylactic, but this information should be carefully considered secondary to the risks of QT prolongation.

Questions/Comments: Should we be pooling PPE resources from our research colleagues to the clinical settings if they are not being used?

Answer: We are currently investigating whether it is safe to do so. We are very thankful for these offers.

Questions/Comments: Are there currently clinical trials in the US?

Answer: There is one experimental agent that seems very promising. It is currently being released on a compassionate use basis by the company. There are a couple of clinical trials in process in the US. We are in line for participation.

Questions/Comments: Are the construction workers going to have reduced access to the medical school?

Answer: Currently the answer to that is no. The contractors are following the standards and rules set by the University.

Questions/Comments: Is McGovern closed?

Answer: No

Robert Emery, DrPH, CHP, CIH, CSP, CBSP, CHMM, CPP, ARM  Vice President of Safety, Health, Environment & Risk Management Safety 

Bob discussed challenges regarding PPE supplies, hand sanitizer, appropriate signage, etc. There has been constant communication between risk management, facilities, and university leadership. He is in constant communication with Dr. Ostrosky several times per week.

Karen Spillar, J.D.  Associate Vice President for Planning 

Karen discussed that the University has restricted domestic and international travel for all faculty and staff. Faculty are able to engage in personal travel, if necessary, but they must check in with Employee Health for clearance prior to returning to duty.

Questions/Comments: Are the basic scientists/researchers not encouraged to work remotely where possible?

Answer: The basic scientists have been offered shift work and other means to reduce the amount of on-campus time. We are aware this may not work in all research cases. Please contact Karen Spillar with any specific questions:

uthealtherm@uth.tmc.edu

No current end date on travel bans.

Questions/Comments: Is the University restricting both personal and business travel?

Answer: We cannot restrict personal travel. Go through normal requests for vacation. When employees return, they are required to be screened by Employee Health to determine the appropriate precautions that need to be taken.

Announcements

Nathan Carlin has announced that an email will be forthcoming regarding self-nominations for two vacant spots that will be available on the Committee on Committees.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Next meeting April 16, 2020, 4:30pm

Dr. Kenya Maria Parks – Chair^[SEP]

Dr. Catherine Ambrose-Chair-Elect^[SEP]

Dr. Rhashedah A. Ekeoduru – Secretary

Dr. Zi Yang Jiang-Secretary-Elect

Dr. Nathan Carlin – 2018-2019 Past-Chair

<https://med.uth.edu/faculty-senate/ms.facultysenate@uth.tmc.edu>