

## FROM THE DESK OF KATE WALSH



Dear Colleagues,

As you likely know, the number of cases of COVID-19 worldwide and here in the United States continues to grow. As this is a rapidly evolving situation and a top priority across our Health System, I wanted to give you an update on steps we are taking to further prepare for additional cases in Massachusetts and at BMC.

We are activating our Command Center to centralize our preparedness activities, and to streamline coordinated efforts across the hospital and with our partners at the local, state, and federal levels. Ravin Davidoff, our Chief Medical Officer, and Nancy Gaden, our Chief Nursing Officer, will lead daily meetings with a multi-disciplinary team comprised of Infectious Disease, Emergency Management, ITS, Support Services, Communications, and other experts. In addition, Ravin and Nancy will be communicating directly with clinicians (and those of us with direct patient contact) as indicated. Please make every effort to read and share the information we distribute as this is an evolving situation and guidance may change as we learn more.

Coincidentally we are seeing a spike in influenza cases right now with symptoms very similar to those reported for COVID-19 patients. We have activated our evaluation process for COVID-19 for a number of patients and none has required CDC testing.

The planning we have done and continue to do will help us protect our staff, patients, families, and the community. While we need to remain incredibly vigilant and focused on our preparedness efforts, I know that we will all continue to focus on our roles of providing and/or supporting the care of our patients and health plan members.

Below is additional information that includes updates from the communication that was shared by Ravin on Friday, February 28. Visit the Hub's [Emergency Management section](#) for the latest guidelines and BMC-specific information, and for the most up-to-date information on COVID-19, please refer to the CDC's [website](#). We will continue to provide regular updates on our internal channels and information on [www.bmc.org](http://www.bmc.org) for our patients and broader community.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Walsh".

Kate Walsh  
*President and CEO*

*COVID-19 Information March 2, 2020*

### **Symptoms, Treatment and Testing**

- Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to the flu – fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
- BMC is following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention isolation precaution guidelines. There are currently no vaccines available to protect against human coronavirus infection, and treatment is supportive care.
- There are many other types of coronavirus. The comprehensive respiratory panel test done at BMC does not test for the new coronavirus. BMC only tests for other, "routine" coronaviruses, which cause mild to moderate upper respiratory tract illnesses.
- As of Friday, February 28, the Massachusetts State Lab has approval for testing for COVID-19. Information on collecting and sending samples will be sent in a separate communication when it becomes available.

### **Travel**

- International travel restrictions from the CDC are changing rapidly. The most recent information can be found on the CDC website.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) posted a [travel advisory](#) that recommends avoiding all nonessential travel to China, Iran, Italy, Japan, and South Korea. The CDC has also issued guidance on traveling to other heavily-impacted countries.
- The Working Well Clinic is following CDC guidelines to determine whether employees and providers who have traveled from high-risk areas can safely return to work. For questions regarding travel or planned travel by you or your staff to or from high-risk areas, please call or email the Working Well Clinic at 617-638-8400 or [workingwellclinic@bmc.org](mailto:workingwellclinic@bmc.org).

### **Conservation of N95 Respirator Masks**

- There is a worldwide demand for N95 respirators, which has put them in short supply. Our regular shipments of these respirators have been suspended by our suppliers, making it difficult to sustain our inventory. N95 respirators should only be used by staff who are caring for patients on airborne precautions and for the administration of certain chemotherapy agents.

### **PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)**

- Staff in direct contact with patients meeting the criteria for suspect COVID-19 are asked to follow Contact, Droplet, and Airborne precautions for these patients.
- Enhanced PPE is required for direct contact and includes a precaution gown, N95 mask, face shield, and 2 pairs of gloves.
- A donning and doffing [demonstration video](#) is available on the Hub. In person training sessions are being planned and will be communicated.

### **Preventing the Spread of Viruses**

There are simple everyday preventive actions outlined by the CDC that can help prevent the spread of viruses like the flu and COVID-19:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.