

VMG COVID-19 UPDATE

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Issue # 11

I wish we could all go back to a time when most of us didn't know what "PPE" meant. But we can't.

The news on TV remains difficult to watch. The concerns of front-line healthcare and first responders, the lack of necessary supplies and ICU beds, and of course the numbers of reported cases and deaths. We may want to ignore it all, but it's hard. Reminders are everywhere (work, grocery stores, the UPS guy, etc.).

Our brains are usually able to compartmentalize difficult information and emotions and a certain amount of that may be necessary. But since we are in healthcare, we all have stories about how our patients, colleagues, and families are doing. We do our best work by relating to patients and their situations. It's important to go on but it's also just as important not to succumb to "compassion fatigue."

So if you get to the point where you feel "a cloud" over your caring and concern for others and their situations, make sure to find someone to talk with, take a break, stretch, walk, and give yourself a chance to breathe and recharge. It happens to all of us. Remember to Be Patient and Be Mindful. You can also contact HR for information on the Employee Assistance Program.

Local Situation

Unlike the metro areas of NY and Boston, we may be a bit protected by our geography and lower population densities. But that does not mean we won't see the effects of this epidemic here. We are seeing some cases in all of our communities of patients with confirmed COVID as well as presumed. Our hospitals are gearing up but are not yet overwhelmed. The ERs, for the most part, are functioning well. They are not yet overwhelmed. As of today, the state still expects the peak of the pandemic to reach Massachusetts by mid to late April.

We are doing what we can, as you probably know, to preserve the capacity and capabilities of our hospitals and ERs by seeing our own urgent patients as much as we can. Also, it's important to remember that keeping in touch with our patients by Virtual Visits helps to provide needed medical advice and calm anxieties and perhaps prevent an unnecessary ER visit.

Updates from our Specialty Departments

During the "early" part of our pandemic work, we've been necessarily focused on primary care and our workflows in primary care. This week, Gina, Martha and I began to meet with our specialty departments to stay in touch, learn more about their work and needs, and make sure we could get information out to VMG about what they are already doing and what they can do for our patients and our staff. I'll try to update on each department over the next several issues of this newsletter.

I'll begin with some information on Physical Therapy. All of our therapists are working from home though there is someone in the buildings on a daily basis or close by and on-call for any urgent needs that they can help with. They have geared up to do scheduled Virtual Visits by audio/video or telephone and their schedules reflect those changes.

Here's some more detailed information:

- Scheduled virtual Physical Therapy appointments are available from all VMG Health Centers. These are provided through an internet video application, easily accessed by a hyperlink sent via email to patients by Reception staff. Virtual appointments are also available by telephone, which are also scheduled by Reception staff.

- Virtual Physical Therapy evaluations may include:
 - o A detailed injury and medical history
 - o Postural, mobility, gait, and balance assessment
 - o Range of motion and strength assessment
 - o Neurological assessment
 - o Special tests and measures
 - o Home safety assessment
 - o Discussion of findings, establishing goals, and determining treatment plan.

- Virtual Physical Therapy treatments may include:
 - o Selfcare training, e.g. RICE, activity limitations, etc.
 - o Postural awareness training
 - o Stretching and strengthening training
 - o Mobility, gait, and balance training
 - o Soft tissue/fascial mobilization training
 - o Vertigo, BPPV CRM training
 - o Other specialized treatments
 - o Review and progression of written home exercise program.

- Virtual Physical Therapy treatments do not provide:

- o Manual therapy treatments
 - o Mechanical spinal traction
 - o Clinical modalities
- Advantages of virtual Physical Therapy:
 - o Decreased Covid-19 exposure risk
 - o Access to treatment for patients with shelter in place or quarantine restrictions
 - o Therapists are available for questions via the patient portal or email as needed between visits

Thanks to Jeffrey Reed and the PT department for the information above. Please consider sending patients to virtual PT and contact a PT Team Member for any questions about suitability for treatment.

Once again, thanks to all of you for stepping up in this public health emergency. Wash your hands, don't touch your face, and observe social distancing.

And, Be patient; Be Mindful.

Joel