

VMG COVID-19 UPDATE

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2020

Issue # 77



Here are the headlines:

- **The virus is still here. It is still highly contagious**
- **We will see infections again**
- **Baystate Medical Center just reported an outbreak of more than 30 staff and patients attributed to visiting from hot spots and “forgetting” to use masks and social distancing**
- **The Governor has issued new travel rules for anyone entering Massachusetts from most other states and there are significant fines for violating the guidelines**
- **These rules do apply to our staff and practitioners**

Mistakes were made (but not by me). This is the title of a book by Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson about “why we justify foolish beliefs, bad decisions, and hurtful acts.” This is what we are hearing now from policy makers at the federal level and in some states. It’s a step, I guess, but it’s had a cost in lives and misery. But that’s not my concern today.

My concern today is that it’s hard for all of us humans to remain vigilant, deliberate, and careful when things appear to be “calming down,” “when we need a break,” “when we’ve got things to do.” Sometimes this is especially true if we compare what we see “over there” (other cities, states, countries where things are “really bad”) with what we see with our own eyes around us. It’s a blessing and a (potential) curse that we have gotten through the early stages of this pandemic with as little in our region as we’ve seen. Up to this point, most of us don’t know anyone who has had COVID-19 or died from the disease (though some of us do and I’m sorry for the pain). And we have been relatively good about wearing masks or face coverings, hand hygiene, socially/physically distancing, and staying home when sick.

But now it’s easy to fall into the business as usual mindset and that’s when mistakes get made. There was an outbreak traced to a party on the Cape a few weeks ago. Visitors from “out of town” probably transmitted the virus. And we are seeing that here (at Baystate, for example) too as we see visitors and family from out of town or when we travel. As hard as it is, PLEASE stay alert: even, and perhaps especially, with family and friends who visit or whom we may visit. And remember that as you are interacting with your family and friends, you are also at risk from their contacts with family, friends, and acquaintances who may not have been as observant of the measures we take to avoid viral spread.

Baystate did a really great job of making risks known to staff and patients, setting up all the necessary systems for controlling, and reminders about, viral spread and they still had this outbreak. It can happen here but let's make sure it doesn't happen because we let our concentration lapse. When you see someone at VMG forgetting to wear a mask (or not wearing it properly – covering the nose and mouth), getting too close for social/physical distancing, gathering in groups in enclosed spaces, please remind them of our need to protect each other, our relatives and friends, and our patients and communities. If you need help, let one of our supervisors know. If you are the receiver of a reminder like this, please accept it graciously. It's meant for the good of all of us. We all forget (30 minutes ago, I left the office without a face mask). We all make mistakes. It's not just "them, out there."

As for the new travel guidelines, you can read them here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-travel-order>

Here's the quick summary:

All visitors entering Massachusetts, including returning residents, who do not meet an exemption, are required to:

- Complete the [Massachusetts Travel Form](#) prior to arrival, unless you are visiting from a lower-risk state designated by the [Department of Public Health](#).
- Quarantine for 14 days or produce a negative COVID-19 test result that has been administered up to 72-hours prior to your arrival in Massachusetts.

If your COVID-19 test result has not been received prior to arrival, visitors, and residents must quarantine until they receive a negative test result.

Failure to comply may result in a **\$500 fine per day**.

Exemptions are for people

- Traveling through the state or to a transportation connection (plane, rail, etc.)
- Traveling from a low risk state (currently New England, Hawaii, New Jersey, NY)
- Commuting for work or school
- Patients seeking or receiving medical treatment
- Military personnel required to travel to Massachusetts
- Workers providing critical infrastructure

At VMG

We are in agreement with, and complying with, the Governor's travel restrictions. If you are a VMG staff member or practitioner and you travel to any of the states that Massachusetts deems a "hot spot," please consult the information in the mass.gov link above and consult with your manager or supervisor about return to work plans.

It has been almost 6 months of pandemic now. It's been a long time:

<https://enchantmentathamilton.org/20200601ForTheLongestTime.mp4>

That's it for today. Do what we know works:

- Please wash your hands (often),
- Don't touch your face,
- Maintain social/physical distancing (it works),
- Definitely wear a mask (it is not a political statement; it's a public health good),
- Don't come to work sick
- Continue to be in touch with and take care of each other, and help to educate everyone.

Joel

Be patient; be mindful