

# VMG COVID-19 UPDATE

March 25,  
2020

Issue # 7

I was just writing (last night) to an old friend (formerly a leader in healthcare in Kaiser Permanente, now retired). We were sharing family stories and developments and then we turned to talking about how our world has changed. And, how quickly! Just two weeks ago, we had plans to visit our kids in other cities, plans for travel, plans for meeting up for dinner, movies, etc. And now we are both essentially hunkered down, doing what we can do, and a lot of .... waiting to see what will happen and trying to plan for a return to some kind of normalcy in the future.

As to a return to some kind of normalcy, despite what some are saying at the top of our government, most of us believe that we have not yet seen the peak of this pandemic in our country and certainly not in our local communities or region. You probably saw the reports of what is happening in the metro New York and New Jersey area. That wave of illness and the preceding infections are probably coming here a few weeks following the peaks in metro New York. There will be no return to normalcy until months after that. I say this not to create fear and anxiety but to make sure we all are connected to what appears to be reality. If we can connect to reality, we can find ways to deal with it as best we can. We can have expectations. We can adjust as necessary. We can come together, share our experiences (even virtually), and we can cope. We need to be able to trust. And trust is based on being told the truth and sharing reality as it exists.

We will continue social distancing as much as possible. That's the main tool we have now to slow the spread of the virus, gain time for the healthcare system to be ready to treat patients in greater volumes than we had planned, and, eventually, find some treatments that work and a vaccine.

You've already seen, and are participating in, what social distancing means at VMG. We'll be announcing other measures and other procedures as we go based on evidence, best practice, and what we learn from other organizations, other regions of the country, and other nations.

## New Federal Programs and Regulations for Emergency Sick Leave and FMLA

You'll be getting some information from Human Resources on these new federal programs that will provide some greater security and comfort for sick leave for employees as well as caring for family members. The laws have been passed but the rules and regulations for implementing them are still being developed and getting clarified. HR will have that information for us as soon as it is clear. For now, just know

that it is coming and please DO NOT call HR as they are very busy working to get this information ready.

Once shared, there will also be information about how you can ask questions and access the benefit, if necessary.

### Current Changes at VMG

As you know, we are now screening all staff and patients upon entry to the building. We are taking temps and asking screening questions about possible symptoms. Entry to the building is dependent on these procedures.

### Masks for All Staff and Providers upon Building Entry

Beginning Thursday, March 26, all staff and practitioners will be asked to wear a surgical mask upon entry to the health centers. The mask will be provided, one per day, by the staff doing temps and screening at the entrances. The purpose is to avoid the possible spread of the virus from asymptomatic individuals to others in the building.

I want to thank Val Felton, Amy Rice, and others who have worked on acquiring enough inventory of these scarce supplies.

### COVID-19 RELATED SCAMS

It's hard for me to believe, but I'm seeing the beginning of a whole new scam industry centered on people's fears about the coronavirus and COVID-19. We've seen scams related to services to prevent and treat the disease, testing for the virus (there are NO mobile testing centers), financial scams to "protect" people from possible costs, and even hackers into telehealth platforms. If you see something that looks suspicious or too good to be true, pause and check it further. Don't buy it.

### Ongoing Planning for our Immediate Future

We are working proactively to anticipate how the scope of our work may change as the pandemic increases in our region. Everything from inventory of medical and business supplies, ideas for changing the shape of urgent care, processes for continuing to provide childhood and adult immunizations, drawing labs inside and outside the building for chronic disease management, further controlling access to the buildings, and collaborating with our community colleagues and more will need to be reexamined for best practice and optimal functioning for managing the pandemic as well as our "usual work" in caring for people.

You'll hear more about all of this as we make decisions and confirm what we can do in the near future.

Thank you once again for your caring for our patients, our communities, and each other.

Joel

*Confidentiality Notice: This email message, including any attachments, is for the sole use of the intended recipient(s) and may contain privileged and confidential information. Any unauthorized review, use, disclosure or distribution is prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please contact the sender by reply email and destroy all copies of the original message.*