**MEMORANDUM**

**TO: ALL EWFHT STAFF**

**FROM: KIM BELL, ON BEHALF OF THE EWFHT MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**SUBJECT: PANDEMIC MEASURES**

**DATE: MARCH 12, 2020**

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As you know, the status of COVID-19 is being very closely monitored and our staff response has been tremendous in increasing all measures to protect against risk of contamination and spread. My sincere thanks to all of you for these extra efforts. They will not only contribute to the health and safety of our patients but to all of us working within our clinics as well.

Given the global spread of COVID-19, the management team has been developing a pandemic plan. Given that updates are occurring daily, regarding the international high-risk areas, it is prudent to communicate health and safety guidelines for EWFHT staff engaging in personal travel abroad.

As you are all aware, there are now many active travel health notices for COVID-19. Each country or area may have a different level of risk. These risk levels may change as the COVID-19 event evolves internationally.

I would like to encourage you to reconsider any upcoming travel plans you may have, and avoid any air travel both foreign and domestic. In order to keep our patients, our staff, and our community as safe as possible, we are requesting that you closely monitor and follow the Government of Canada guidelines and travel advisories found at:

https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html

The following plan has been prepared to ensure business continuity during the COVID-19 crisis and to protect the health and safety of EWFHT employees. Adherence is mandatory.

1. Both employers and employees are responsible for ensuring the safety of our workplace. Given our health care setting, it is especially important that we take reasonable steps to protect our patients and our staff. With this in mind, any staff who are proceeding with travel plans are required to make your supervisor aware of plans before departure. If you travel internationally, you will be required to self-isolate for 14

days, upon return to Canada, until further notice, working from home in all cases where feasible.

1. In-person attendance at conferences and training shall be determined on a case by case basis, depending on the location and size of the event. All requests to attend events shall be directed to your manager. Active participation via webinar or telephone is encouraged and preferred.
2. All EWFHT community programs and group appointments have been cancelled for the month of March and we will re-evaluate as circumstances unfold.
3. In addition, we have put a temporary halt to routine, non-urgent appointments for patients 70 years and older and/or immunocompromised. This includes memory clinics, hypertension and lung health clinics, smoking cessation, and allied appointments for stable patients.

While it’s recognized that, as a health care facility, we are well-versed in protective measures, the following is worth emphasizing.

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to reduce the risk of infection is to practice general infection prevention control. This includes:

* Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
* Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
* Avoid close contact with people who are ill.
* Stay home when you are ill.
* Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands.
* If you don’t have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm.
* Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

**Protocol for Symptomatic Employees**

* The following are the common symptoms of COVID-19:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Almost Always** | **Common** | **Sometimes** |
|  |  |  |
| • Fever | • Fatigue | • Nausea |
| • Cough | • Muscle Aches | • Vomiting |
| • Difficulty breathing | • Sore throat | • Diarrhea |
|  | • Headache | • Pneumonia |
|  | • Decreased appetite | • Kidney failure |
|  | • Runny nose |  |

* Any staff member experiencing any of the above symptoms should immediately contact their local public health authority for advice and instructions as well as your supervisor.
* At the first sign of any of the above symptoms, employees must stay home and not come to work (working from home in all cases where feasible). If you do come to work and symptoms are ascertainable, you will be asked to leave.
* Any symptomatic employees will be required to work from home for a minimum period of 14 days, from the onset of symptoms, or until symptoms resolve. You will be required to provide a medical note stating that you are healthy and able to return to work, prior to returning.
* Public Health, at the moment, is not supporting any patients who are screening positive for symptoms but negative for travel in hot spots or contacts from hot spots. Staff are better to call their primary care office for further direction. If they are positive for symptoms and travel, or contacts that have travelled, they are best to proceed to the ER or one of the testing centres when they are ready for testing. Note: William Osler opened today and Guelph will open no later than Monday.

**Modification of Policies Regarding Sick Time**

* The EWFHT’s current policies regarding personal time will apply in the event of any employee absence from work as a result of any isolation measures described above.
* In the case of employees who are able to work remotely while in quarantine, any days where the employee is able to substantially attend to their normal duties will not be counted as sick days.
* In the case of employees who are unable to work remotely due to the nature of their work, current personal day entitlements will be extended so any such employees are not prejudiced as a result of being placed in quarantine.

**Operational Contingency Plans**

* We have made extra laptops available to teams who do not ordinarily use them, ie. nursing and admin. Department managers will determine who will take these home and, should you be well but self-isolating, the expectation is that you will carry out the remote-capable duties of your department.
* All employees with access to laptops must take them home with them each night. This will enable you to be prepared and able to work from home in the event that you are required to do so.
* Clinical staff, if you have not already done so, please plan to consult with (Telemedicine Nurse), as per her email earlier this week, so that you have what you need to conduct virtual appointments should this become necessary.
* For those of you using laptops that are not in regular use, please check to ensure that VPN connections are working.

**Mitigation Plan Regular Review**

This Mitigation Plan will be reviewed on a weekly basis (at minimum) by the EWFHT Management Team, to determine if additional measures need to be taken or protocols implemented.

I understand that this is stressful. I also know that our team has shown time and time again how we come together to support each other. This means lending an extra helping hand when you see that a co-worker is struggling, letting the little things go that may not be according to plan or typical behaviour for someone, understanding and accepting that things will get behind because of the increased demand and anxiety, and focusing on how the TEAM manages this pandemic. I have absolutely every confidence that, when all is said and done, we will look back and say, “we handled that well”. We value each and every staff contribution and all that we ask is at the end of the day, you are able to say, “I gave my best”. Thank you all again for your efforts.