UConn Health

COVID-19 Preparedness & Community Impact

December 1, 2020

PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE

UConn Health has implemented a comprehensive COVID-19 surge plan based on state, county, and hospital COVID-19 positive volumes and prevalence rates.

- Secured current sufficient PPE to maintain at least 60 days of operation at our maximum COVID usage, in addition to handling 100% of our non-COVID capacity.
- Implemented enhanced monitoring of stock to ensure adherence to proper conservation measures and allow faster identification of potential shortages.
- Developed ongoing relationships with seven well-vetted vendors to expand available options for fulfilling institutional needs.
- Testing supplies stocked to perform 300-400 tests daily.
- Testing tent relocated to Garage 1 to accommodate testing during inclement weather.
- Pedestrian testing site established to meet the needs of people who utilize public transportation.
- Ongoing and sustained employee screening program, with four phases completed.
- UConn Health utilizes four unique predictive models to forecast number of hospitalized COVID-19 positive patients.
- UConn Health established a variety of resources to ensure the safety of our community, from clinical support to facility improvements to academic and research endeavors.
Clinical Resources:

- Established a dedicated COVID Call Center staffed by physicians and nurses.
- Established dedicated biocontainment areas within UConn John Dempsey Hospital units for COVID positive patients.
- Established safe campus community for patients, visitors and employees, through visitation restrictions and consolidating 44 points of entry on the Farmington campus to 14 fully staffed screening stations.
- Implemented a drive-through testing site which has collected over 16,000 test samples to date.
- Implemented the first triage site in the state as part of our ED to evaluate suspected COVID patients.
- Established a COVID-19 Think Tank composed of faculty to review, evaluate, and summarize the most current studies and literature relating to COVID-19 to guide our treatment and safety protocols.
- Provided testing for pre-operative and pre-procedure patients, the UConn community (student athletes, students, faculty & other employees), outside entities (Jackson Laboratory, private schools, DEEP firefighters, etc.), and symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals in the greater community.
- Shifted healthcare appointments to virtual visits (telephone and video visits), with approximately 40% of our visits conducted via telehealth portals during the pandemic peak.
- Implemented new technology (20 devices) to allow inpatients and their loved ones to visit by video through secure iPad connections.
- Leveraged our information technology systems to develop a bi-directional interface with The Jackson Laboratory, facilitating over 370,000 tests from seven sites.
- Selected as one of the four sites in the state for initial vaccine distribution, responsible for vaccinating our own healthcare workers and those in the greater Farmington region.
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

- **Mask Manufacturing:** Within six weeks of announcing a successful method to fabricate custom-fit mask frames to optimize production from the spread of COVID-19, UConn Health’s Connecticut Convergence Institute for Translation in Regenerative Engineering has a licensing deal with a Connecticut manufacturer to produce them.

- **Oral Rinse Development:** Faculty from UConn Health have proven that a simple method of rinsing with a diluted version of over-the-counter Povidone-Iodine oral rinse can kill viruses like the SARS CoV-2 coronavirus and prevent transmission.

- **Diagnostic Testing:** Researchers of the Department of Biomedical Engineering — a shared department in the schools of Dental Medicine, Medicine, and Engineering — have been working to develop a new, low-cost, CRISPR-based diagnostic platform to detect infectious diseases, including the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2).

- **Intubation Hood:** Two UConn Health doctors have devised a piece of equipment to protect health care workers from contagion while intubating COVID-19 patients.

- **UConn Health TIP Companies:** UConn’s Technology Incubation Program (TIP) remains open, allowing companies to maintain business activity. TIP startups ImStem and CaroGen are working on technologies to help address the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **COVID Rapid Start Fund:** UConn’s Office of the Vice President for Research created a new fund to advance COVID-19 related projects. Two research teams from UConn Health received $50K each to advance their technologies.

FACILITY MODIFICATIONS

- **Reduced seating for social distancing,** added 6 ft. distance markers at all campus desks and locations, including over 36 clinical waiting rooms and 25 common areas throughout the institution.

- **Installed plexiglass at all check-in locations,** including more than 70 patient-facing points, and more than 195 plexiglass installations for team work rooms throughout the health system.

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SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATIONS

- **With the state and National Guard**, UConn Health repurposed physical space in its Connecticut Tower and University Tower to provide a surge capacity of 446 beds.

- Collaborated with the Department of Correction to provide a seamless process for the assessment and transfer of COVID-19 positive inmates to the hospital, and to share best practices with DOC to support the care that agency provides within its facilities.

- In partnership with the UConn Foundation, more than $1 million of supplies and monetary donations were accepted or raised to support the UConn Health COVID-19 response.

- Engagement of over 160 health and pre-health professions students through **CT AHEC program** to provide 4,766 community “touches,” including participation at community-based COVID testing sites, telephonic monitoring of COVID-19 symptoms and basic needs gaps as well as distribution of COVID Cares bags containing face masks, hand sanitizer, thermometers and CDC prevention guidelines.