Subject: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Related Guidance to Researchers: Update #1
Date: Monday, March 9, 2020 at 4:23:09 PM Pacific Daylight Time
From: UCSF Office of Research
To: ALLACAD@LISTSRV.UCSF.EDU

Dear Colleagues:

As noted in Chancellor Sam Hawgood’s March 4 message to the UCSF community about the COVID-19 outbreak, teams across the campus and UCSF Health are actively monitoring and responding to the evolving situation to better understand the latest developments and share guidance. The UCSF Coronavirus (COVID-19) microsite contains important information for everyone in the UCSF community.

More specifically, I wanted to provide you with this guidance to help mitigate any potential impacts on your research activities as well as describe funding opportunities available for those interested in COVID-19 research.

With the ongoing concern about the spread of this disease, laboratories, and research facilities should begin to plan for the possibility of a significant disruption to routine operations. Each laboratory or research facility is best positioned to create a continuity plan that will meet their unique needs. This guidance is provided to facilitate the development of your plan.

The guidance provided herein is not intended to be all-inclusive, and is based on what is known at this time. I will update the research community as the situation develops and more information becomes available.

Research Continuity Guidance for Laboratories and Research Facilities

Assumptions that you can use for planning, based on a scenario with widespread COVID-19 communal transmission:

- A significant percentage of your laboratory workforce may be out sick or unable to come to work.
- Essential research infrastructure, such as power and telecommunications, will be maintained.
- The Laboratory Animal Resource Center (LARC) and the Office of Environment, Health and Safety will maintain their essential research support functions, although some lower-priority services may need to be curtailed (e.g., less frequent waste pick-up).
- Orders for critical supplies may be delayed.
- Processing of visas by the federal government may be delayed, resulting in delayed appointments.
- Core facilities and other fee-for-service resources may not be available.

Steps you can take now to ensure continuity of critical functions:

- Identify procedures and processes that require regular personnel attention (e.g., cell culture maintenance, animal studies).
- Assess and prioritize critical laboratory activities.
- Identify any research experiments that can be ramped down, curtailed, or delayed.
- Identify personnel able to safely perform essential activities.
- Ensure that you have access to emergency contact information for your critical staff, including cell phone numbers.
- Cross-train research staff to fill in for others who may be out sick or unable to come to work.
- Ensure staff have the appropriate training.
- Ensure you are documenting critical step-by-step instructions in your Standard Operating Procedures.
- Coordinate with colleagues who have similar research activities to identify ways to ensure coverage of critical activities.
- Review contingency plans and emergency procedures with researchers and staff.
- Maintain a sufficient inventory of critical supplies that may be impacted by global shipping delays.
- Communicate significant planned absences and/or lab closures to your EH&S Department Safety Advisors, business offices, and other key administrative units.
- Prioritize. Depending upon the nature of your research, consider prioritizing work that can only be carried on...
out in your research facility, and put off work amenable to remote support, such as data analysis. Stockpiling results and data now that could be analyzed remotely in the future is a potential option that might create future flexibility.

**Remote access:**

- Ensure that those involved in research projects have access to information they need to carry out work remotely (e.g., access to literature, existing datasets and research-related files, and meeting software, such as Zoom).
- Test and update remote work technologies such as VPN and Zoom conferencing.
- The UC Office of the President has stated that under no circumstances are researchers to take materials other than laptops, data storage devices, etc., offsite (e.g., to their homes).

**Measures you can take to prevent the spread of illness among your group:**

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home and do not travel or go to work or school when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze then throw the tissue in the trash. Then wash your hands with soap and water.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in your workplace.

**Research continuity summary:**

Advance planning will allow everyone in your research group to focus on their own efforts and work together as a team, rather than wondering how they and their team members are to proceed.

**Quick Checklist:**

1. Identify critical lab operations.
2. Identify critical lab personnel and ensure they know what to do in the event of suspended operations.
3. Remind lab personnel of your communication plan or create one if not in place.
4. Ensure remote access to files, data, servers, etc.
5. Prioritize experiments.
6. Cancel non-essential travel, and check travel restrictions before making travel plans. Check UCSF’s updated travel guidance.

**Research Involving Biospecimens**

According to UCSF policy, any research group that plans to handle/work with SARS-CoV-2 biospecimens (from COVID-19 patients) must initially submit a Biological Use Authorization (BUA) protocol (or modification to an existing BUA) prior to beginning any such research. Once submitted, each such protocol would be thoroughly reviewed by the UCSF Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) members to determine if the proposed research would then be permitted at UCSF.

If approved, all appropriate/applicable safety precautions and procedures would be established and subsequently followed by the laboratory that would be conducting this research. Such procedures would be specifically tailored to the research itself and the type(s) of SARS-CoV-2 samples that the lab will work with.

As part of the above process, a full risk assessment would be conducted that would entail an evaluation of the type(s) of SARS-CoV-2 samples involved (e.g., inactivated patient samples, active patient samples, or cultured virus) which would then dictate the applicable biosafety containment (BSL2 or BSL3). Currently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) generally recommends BSL2 containment for inactivated and active patient samples and BSL3 containment for cultured virus; however, the UCSF Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) will establish the specific containment level and procedures based on this and other information.

**Travel Guidance and Visitor Policy**
UCSF has significantly updated its travel guidance and visitor policy, due to the continued spread of COVID-19. In sum, it restricts non-essential UCSF-sponsored international travel and recommends against non-essential UCSF-sponsored domestic travel. Additionally, all non-essential visits to UCSF campus facilities from countries with a CDC Level 2 or 3 Travel Health Notice are indefinitely postponed until further notice. Please follow the links in this paragraph for more details.

**Sponsored Projects Administration**

We expect that the Office of Sponsored Research (OSR) will be able to submit proposals, even if personnel are working remotely. Typically, federal agencies are very flexible about deadlines under difficult circumstances beyond our control. However, if agencies are officially closed, proposals will most likely remain in a queue, pending resumption of agency operations – as has been the case during federal budget-related shutdowns. Additional information is posted on the OSR website. The OSR, Office of Clinical Trial Activation (OCTA), and Contracts and Grants Accounting (CGA) are working to ensure continuity of services for researchers, as well as prioritizing COVID-19 research and clinical trials.

**Human Research Protection Program (HRPP/IRB)**

The Human Research Protection Program (HRPP/IRB) has established a process for priority review of COVID-19 related protocols. Submissions are to be sent to Joanne Mickalian (Joanne.Mickalian@ucsf.edu) and Cheri Etter (Cheri.Etter@ucsf.edu), and include “COVID-19” in the subject line.

**COVID-19 Related Funding Opportunities and Current Research Activities**

Please refer to the OSR website for funding opportunities related to COVID-19, including specific NIH and NSF funding notices, as well as guidance for ongoing research.

UCSF researchers are currently engaged in multiple research projects related to COVID-19 that focus on the following:

- Rapid, accurate diagnosis of COVID-19 infection in <1 hour using gene editing technologies.
- Novel methods to diagnose COVID-19 infection based on the host immune response to the coronavirus, especially in individuals with no or minimal symptoms.
- Methods to track the spread and evolution of COVID-19 by real-time genomic sequencing.
- Methods to quickly recover the COVID-19 genome sequence directly from low-titer clinical samples.
- Understanding the pathology of COVID-19 and how infection can develop into a life-threatening pneumonia.
- Developing antibody-based therapies to treat COVID-19.
- Developing and testing vaccines to prevent infection from COVID-19.

My office stands ready to support you in both planning to ensure that your research activities continue with as little impact as possible as well as identifying funding for important COVID-19 related research.

Sincerely,

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Rheumatology Division Chief

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