

Just the Facts

NEW REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

Each week, “Just the Facts” provides information about a key aspect of the new regional medical center being built by Mohawk Valley Health System (MVHS). It is designed to keep our medical staff, employees and volunteers updated and to share with family, friends and neighbors so we keep our community informed about how we’re transforming healthcare in our region.



TOPIC FOR TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2020:

As the world focuses on the Coronavirus (COVID -19), we believed today’s Just the Facts needs to provide our community an update on what Mohawk Valley Health System (MVHS) is doing to keep our patients, employees and medical staff, and our entire community as safe as possible. It is important for you to know your local healthcare organization is taking this threat very seriously and making this our priority.

MVHS Incident Command Activation and Emergency Preparedness

After a busy weekend of work, effective Monday, March 16, 2020, at 9 a.m. we implemented our Incident Command Center which is a standardized approach to the command, control and coordination of emergency response. It provides a common hierarchy for the immediate operation of an efficient, effective system for an immediate emergency response by integrating facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures and communication within a coordinated structure. MVHS, like healthcare organizations everywhere, drill on these practices in preparation in the event they are needed. Unfortunately, Incident Command is now needed.

A centralized coordinated team meets at least twice a day and is supported by the effort of several work teams. Our goal is to protect our patients, employees, medical staff and community while also continuing to care for our patients. We are absolutely working hard to do our part to stop the spread of this virus.

We do this through the development and implementation of a phased operational plan. Presently we are in our first phase (green) in which plans are being implemented in preparation for our second phase (yellow) during which we will have patients positive for the virus in our building. As of this moment, we do not have a confirmed case in any of our facilities. That can change at any moment. Our third phase (red) would be that time when we have a large surge in cases in our community. We are planning for each phase.

Steps Taken to Stop the Spread of COVID-19

As you may have heard, we have implemented visitor restrictions in our facilities, to include NO visitors at our long term care facility (RNC), and are limiting the age of hospital visitors to over 14 years of age and only one for a limit of two hours. We expect that we will soon implement NO VISITORS at all our facilities to decrease the risk of the transfer of the virus. We have travel limits for staff. We are screening staff daily upon entrance to work in our riskiest areas. We have eliminated all unnecessary meetings and for groups larger than 10 people, we are doing conference calls only. We have canceled all events and have “uninvited” vendors, visitors, consultants, etc., from coming to our facility. Even our board of directors is meeting telephonically.

We have identified patient processes and pathways to limit exposure of patients in the emergency rooms and lobbies and physician practices. We have educated our staff – in priority order based on patient interaction – on proper “donning and doffing” (that is, putting on and off) of personal safety equipment.

Our cafeteria is closed to visitors, we've eliminated the salad bar and even thrown out the salt and pepper shakers.

We are concerned about our exhausted staff getting run down and increasing their own risk. We've asked them to "tap out" when needed, and ask for the rest and relief they need. If they don't, their supervisor is to do it for them.

Issues We Are Working to Address

Major concerns are our labor availability and supplies. We have teams working on identifying labor pool potential and have developed supply utilization predictions and identified additional sources for supplies, while putting supply conservation efforts in place, particularly related to Personal Protective Equipment - PPE. We have shared our supply needs with the County Executive's office to ensure we can be a priority when state supplies are available.

Since the school closings, we have also been struggling with day care availability for our young mothers and fathers and have centralized coordination through our human resource department. Physician specialties are meeting to develop their own staffing plans as an increase in positive cases will put additional demand on intensive care, for example.

We are concerned about a dwindling blood supply and are asking the American Red Cross to conduct blood drives.

We have limited some services, and are experiencing cancelations. As of this moment we are still doing elective surgeries but are anticipating the governor will soon impose restrictions. We have the availability of bed capacity between our two facilities. We have ICU availability and respirators and have orders in for more.

New MVHS Drive-through Coronavirus Sampling Station Established

Yesterday, we implemented a drive-through testing service in coordination with the County and with Rome Hospital. All patients **MUST** have an appointment and be referred by a physician. We repeat our consistent message that anyone with a specific concern about the virus **MUST** call their physician. Stay home. Do not go to an emergency room or walk-in center. Call and confer with your physician. If you do not have a physician, call a walk-in center or urgent care center and talk to a physician about your symptoms and potential exposure.

What's Next?

We stay glued to updates from CDC and the State. We listen intently to our infection control experts. We are committed to keeping you informed about what we're doing to prevent and prepare for COVID-19 and how we'll be ready to care for those who become ill enough to need hospital care.

We are obsessed about cleaning, washing our hands and our own personal space. And we encourage you, our community, friends and staff, to do likewise. Wash your hands. Don't participate in groups. Limit your exposure to others. Listen to your doctor. Personal space is a good thing.

To those of you whose businesses have been impacted, you have our support and empathy. It is a hardship, but it is necessary for us as a community to slow the threat of the spread of this disease. If we all do our part, hopefully we can get back to our coveted lives as soon as possible.