

3 May 2020

Dear Colleagues,

**COVID update. Division of Pediatric Hematology Oncology, IWK Health Centre.**

I hope this finds you all well and coping with the tremendous changes that have overtaken our health care system over the last two months. This note is an update to my previous communication about 4 weeks ago.

1. The Division of Pediatric Hematology Oncology **continues to accept referrals and see urgent and semi-urgent patients** under the rules established by the IWK Health Centre. At the present time, restrictions on seeing less urgent patients are in effect **until the end of May**. These restrictions are being reassessed on a regular basis.
2. Children who screen positive for COVID symptoms who are scheduled for a visit or procedure at the IWK should be discussed with the oncologist on call. **All patients with COVID symptoms must have a negative COVID swab prior to undergoing a procedure that requires sedation**.
3. To reduce the risk of COVID to our clinic health care providers, the offices have been restructured and **most of our out-patient nursing staff and oncologists are rotating between working at home and at the hospital. They will continue to respond to voice mail and emails.**
4. We have developed an **active telehealth program** and will continue to “see” suitable patients by phone or videoconference. Please direct patients to the Zoom Telehealth information sheet on the APPHON website.
5. We have encountered several patients with delayed presentation of their illness for fear of coming to a health centre with possible COVID illness in the institution. Please take the opportunity to **remind patients not to delay in presentation with concerning symptoms or fever**.
6. There has been conflicting advice from a variety of organizations regarding vaccines. The IWK Infectious Disease and Hem/Onc services **recommend that children should continue to receive their vaccines** as close to on schedule as possible.
7. As day care and school setting begin to open in the Maritimes, the present recommendation from the IWK Infection Control and Infectious Disease services is that **immunocompromised children should NOT be going back to day care or school** even if these settings are open to the general public. Advice on this issue will be updated as available.
8. The resources document has been updated with information directed at patients, working parents and health care professionals; posted on the APPHON website. For those who may require professional assistance **the Canadian Psychological Association is providing free care for front line health care professionals**:  [https://cpa.ca/corona-virus/psychservices](https://email.nshealth.ca/owa/redir.aspx?C=OoYWJ46L4XrK8389rzIW59jd0Sr9zP2JSlDyDP_HFbuZqdUQuu7XCA..&URL=https%3a%2f%2fcpa.ca%2fcorona-virus%2fpsychservices)
9. We will continue to provide **out of province patients with a travel letter** to assist them in crossing the provincial border.
10. At the present time, the **one care giver rule remains in effect at the IWK.** Only one caregiver may accompany the child into the hospital for out-patient or in-patient services.
11. All patients should **enter the IWK through the University Avenue Women’s site entrance**. Free parking remains in effect.
12. Please continue to reach out to myself, Elizabeth Schurman (Hematology Oncology service manager) (Elizabeth.schurman@iwk.nshealth.ca) or Carol Digout Executive Director APPHON (carol.digout@iwk.nshealth.ca), if you have any regional concerns that may impact the care of the pediatric hematology oncology patients we serve.

Best wishes,



Conrad Fernandez MD, FRCPC

Professor and Head

Pediatric Hematology/Oncology

IWK Health Centre and Dalhousie University

5850 University Avenue

Halifax, NS, B3K 6R8 Canada

office: 902-470-6839

fax: 902-470-7216 (administrative)

fax: 902-470-7208 (clinical)

conrad.fernandez@iwk.nshealth.ca