

6/25 All Hands Research Institute Town Hall: Q&A with Leadership

This Town Hall Q&A included updates and questions from the community about research ramp-up and COVID-19.

A note from Bryan on racism and social injustice:

- In 2018, Bryan's team started gathering data (with the help of Wendy Williams and Paulette McRae's group in ATOP) on gender and race demographics at the Research Institute staff and faculty level.
- Data was sobering: Minorities were underrepresented at the RI, especially faculty on the tenure track.
- The approach in 2018 was to improve the pipeline: An employee resource group (iSTEM) has worked on targeting high school, college students to increase minority representation. This was described in CSO message that was distributed.
- Today, Bryan announced he wants to refresh the data, so they will do new analysis and see if there has been any improvement.
- Commitment: The CSO team will be much more active in sharing the data broadly with the Research Institute and how they will develop data-driven action plans to improve.

UPDATES AND QUESTIONS FROM LEADERS

Bev Davidson

Updates:

- Summary from ramp-up group:
 - Data shows very low risk of infection among CHOP employees since implementing measures in March (i.e. masks, physical distancing, COVID-19 resources like hotline, tracing center)
 - On May 26, we ramped up to 25%, and workforce did a fantastic job in adhering to these guidelines.
- Plan to ramp up to 50% staffing for research groups July 6
- As we ramp up, we're continuing to identify areas to enhance vigilance; for example, make sure to maintain space for eating and taking breaks. Putting up occupancy guidelines for common areas (like conference rooms, break rooms)
- Safety will continue with walk-throughs and monitoring PPE supplies
- PIs are encouraged to maintain flexibility with staff, continue working with them so they can do what they can from home (i.e. data entry, extended learning modules, etc.).

Questions:

- **Can you discuss the 25% capacity, and how can we give employees their full-time hours?**
 - *Some investigators have been creative in designing learning sessions and at-home work. But fortunately, in a few weeks we will be increasing research staffing to 50%.*

6/25 All Hands Research Institute Town Hall: Q&A with Leadership

With regards to small labs (6 or less people), the research task force is suggesting they can go to 100% if they can maintain physical distancing.

- **What's going to be done to accommodate researchers with at-risk family members?**
 - *We are asking all PIs to be flexible with staff working remotely - include data entry, online learning, etc.*
- **What is the timeline for increasing staff beyond 25%?**
 - *We hope that it's July 6, but we will keep a close eye on situations in the community.*

Richard Aplenc

Updates:

- Clinical Research task force recommends moving to next level (IIIB) on June 29; this includes the ability to schedule new research visits
- Please remember that resources for some of this clinical work are limited; i.e. radiology resources limited due to the need for sanitizing. In general, investigators have been very understanding of these limitations; this understanding allows us to move forward confidently with scheduling new research visits
- Transmission risk – there have been 1,200 COVID tests done on employees who had contact; none has turned positive in those who had a low-risk exposure.
 - This data provides substantial reassurance that with masking, physical distancing, and hand washing, we are able to manage that transmission risk effectively.
- There will be substantial updated resources, like PI Protocol checklist, Clinical Research FAQs, Study Subject checklist, available today (June 26).

Questions:

- **Will you be reconfiguring office carrels?**
 - *We're not planning any additional reconfigurations to carrels. These carrels are 6 feet in width, and will be used to guide physical distancing requirements in Roberts.*
- **Will CHOP have validated antibody testing for employees?**
 - *There is no current validated antibody test anywhere, and we are not at this point planning to provide that.*
- **When will onsite visits resume?**
 - *We're making processes available to allow onsite visits to happen in a scheduled ramp-up that allows physical distancing. Those visits should be able to take place shortly.*

6/25 All Hands Research Institute Town Hall: Q&A with Leadership

Work that is necessary to move clinical trials forward can happen in person (remotely is encouraged).

- **Can new subjects be enrolled to biobank studies?**
 - Yes.
- **How about the recent uptick in COVID-19 cases? Will they affect move to IIB on June 29?**
 - *We are able to effectively control and mitigate transmission risk with use of physical distancing, hand washing, sanitizer, and masks. As long as we continue this, we are able to move forward.*

Michelle Lewis

Updates:

- **Onboarding of NTPs/Students during Ramp-up:** Clarification document will be forthcoming to address the many questions about onboarding of students and NTPs during the ramp-up phase of Research. This document will come soon, and it will be shared among key stakeholders across CHOP.
- Specific NTP/Student onboarding guidance is as follows:
 - For students enrolled in the **federal work study program**, CHOP and RI have agreed to revisit onboarding of federal work study students in the fall, but we will not be onboarding them during the summer.
 - For **graduate students, medical students, rotation students (Master's, PhD, Medical School-level personnel)** we will continue to honor the onboarding of these NTPs. They do not need prior approval or an exception in order to be onboarded during the ramp-up.
 - For **interns (typically high school level students)**, we will not onboard high school interns in July and August and will revisit these guidelines in Fall 2020.
 - For **postdoctoral candidates**, we will continue to honor all commitments to onboard postdocs at CHOP, particularly when their academic program requires they do so in order to maintain matriculation and/or to ensure their preparedness to transition to an academic faculty position.
 - For **research stipend fellows**, we will continue to onboard these personnel and will maintain our prior commitments to this cohort of NTPs.
 - For undergraduate students, to qualify for onboarding they are required to fulfill specific exception criteria. The onboarding of undergraduate students is allowable in July/August but these students must be able to participate in a 100% virtual/remote experience. They will not be given badges or granted access to CHOP facilities. Also, must be receiving payment from an external source specifically earmarked for that student.
- **Travel Approval System:** Research personnel who wish to travel for business will be required to obtain approval from the Executive Vice President (Dr. Bryan Wolf). A travel approval system has been established by RIS and information will be forthcoming on how to access this system in

6/25 All Hands Research Institute Town Hall: Q&A with Leadership

order to submit requests for Bryan’s approval for business-related travel in FY21. Please do not email Bryan for these approvals if you can avoid it.

- **Research Workday Improvement Taskforce:** This taskforce was established in mid-May and announced in two separate broadcast emails sent out on 6/16 and 6/17/2020 and is charged with identifying ways to improve and resolve issues with grant reporting, business process workflows, and data views within Workday. This taskforce was established in partnership with and with representation from key leaders across Research Administration, Finance, Strategic Integration, and the Hospital Practice Plans. The Research Administration Faculty Advisory Council (RAFAC) comprised of scientific leaders and Research Administration Leaders will get regular updates on progress being made with the Research Workday Taskforce. RAFAC scientific leaders will be provided with updates on all Workday Improvement efforts and activities underway by the taskforce in an effort to keep faculty engaged in our efforts to improve their experience with Workday.
- **Research Creative Services Survey:** Research Creative Services (formally Research Communications) launched a [survey](#) a few weeks ago intended to find out how best to improve communications to the Research Institute. We were disappointed to see that not many faculty participated in the survey which is challenging because we are constantly struggling with how to get faculty “in the know” about what’s going on real-time in Research. Some faculty advised that they don’t read many of the broadcast emails distributed, others prefer in-person meetings instead of emails, and many report not receiving information when they need it. The purpose of the Research Creative Services survey was to get input on how best to improve disseminating important information to the research community. The Research Creative Services survey results showed that we didn’t get many faculty responses to address the gap in communication. If you can participate in the short, five-minute survey, please do: <https://redcap.chop.edu/surveys/?s=XWAgTAFJTJ>

Questions:

- **Expenses are being incorrectly charged; how will those errors be fixed?**
 - *We need more specifics/details. Connect with your RBM so we know about incorrect charging of personnel salaries to clinical cost centers.*
- **“My manager is having team members come in for non-location critical tasks like data entry – who should I report this breach to?”**
 - *When it comes to employees feeling pressured, that employee can submit their concerns confidentially to the [Compliance Hotline](#). The employee can also reach out to the [Human Resources Business Partner](#) for guidance as well.*

Matthew Hodgson

Updates:

- Research safety has been doing rounds to answer questions, make sure people are physical distancing and wearing PPE

6/25 All Hands Research Institute Town Hall: Q&A with Leadership

- Reminder for those working in labs to please respect others and yourself and wear appropriate PPE
- For everyone else, wear masks throughout the building.

Questions:

- **Who is coordinating the distribution of hand sanitizer and oxivir in Roberts? Teams who are returning at low capacity have noticed that these products aren't very available.**
 - *Contact the Office of Research Safety by submitting a PPE request form; they have some small gel hand sanitizer they may be able to provide. We're working on getting a resupply of hand sanitizer for the lobbies. Oxivir should be ordered in Coupa; if there are problems with ordering this, contact Quenika Smith in Supply Chain*
- **Door handles are high-touch surfaces. Will CHOP provide hand sanitizers by every door that is used by multiple labs and groups?**
 - *Due to concerns about flammability with hand sanitizer, there are some limitations to where we can place hand sanitizer. The recommendation from Infection Prevention Control is to practice conscientious, frequent, and rigorous hand hygiene at all times especially after touching any high-touch surfaces. Do not touch your face, specifically your eyes, nose and mouth. As an added layer of protection, you could use paper towels to open knobs, press buttons, etc.*
- **There is considerable delay in opening new studies at CHOP. IRB, CTFM and contract staff were backlogged before the pandemic, and it has become worse now. Will additional staff be recruited to ease their burden?**
 - *Since the beginning of the pandemic, the IRB Office experienced an increased submission volume with the submissions of COVID-19 research and requests for in-person contact. At that time, the office prioritized the review of these submissions, and it was a pretty significant lift for the office and other administrative units like the CRSO.*
 - *Now that these submissions have slowed down the IRB Office has been able to re-direct resources to non- Coronavirus submissions. And, they've recently filled the final open position and they are committed to minimizing the time to review of all submissions.*

Zev Sunleaf

Updates:

- Thank you RCS and IS for updating websites. Remember to go to the Innovation page on the RI website for information on submitting agreements, etc:
<https://www.research.chop.edu/innovation>

6/25 All Hands Research Institute Town Hall: Q&A with Leadership

Questions:

- **Will there be additional requests for mandatory furloughs, etc.?**
 - *HR and CHOP have been clear those possibilities are still on the table. We won't know until we get further into the ramp-up to see what finances look like, and to see what needs to be done to stay economically healthy. For now, there are no immediate requests beyond what's already been done. Voluntary furlough is being rolled out on July 1.*

Jeff Pennington

Updates:

- Thank you to those who have returned to research as well as those who continue working from home
- Resources to help you stay productive doing data work: In ARCUS program, we launched a program to provide data education (100 webinars taught by 40 volunteer instructors); this effort is evolving to introduce concept of ARCUS lab, a secure environment to work with curated data at CHOP. Stay tuned!

Questions:

- **Could AWA continue further than September? Are there options for people to work remotely more than was accepted before?**
 - *The intent is to increase flexibility for remote work. The institution sees that as a way to manage space more effectively and efficiently. There are people taking a hard look at entry/exit logs on turnstiles not just during COVID but pre-COVID to understand occupancy utilization. Remote work will increasingly become part of our lives at CHOP.*

Maxine Johnson

Updates:

- We are coming near the end of mandatory education; last day is June 30, so please complete courses by then.

Questions:

- **If you volunteer to furlough, are you able to collect unemployment?**
 - *If you are approved by leadership to take this, you can apply, but the bottom line is unemployment compensation will be determined by the state.*

6/25 All Hands Research Institute Town Hall: Q&A with Leadership

- **Are you considering early retirement options?**
 - *We are not looking at that right now.*
- **Any recommendations about talking to staff who are uncomfortable about returning to work, where location is critical?**
 - *Think about learning experiences you can offer to staff to keep them involved in the lab.*
 - *On the HR side, try to support employees including working with Safety leaders to make sure we're doing everything we can to provide safe working environment. If there's more that's needed for an employee, we can offer them our EAP so they can talk through that. We also partner with leaders to see if there's any way employees can continue working from home.*
- **Will the talent marketplace remain in effect after July 1?**
 - *Yes, it will remain in effect so there will still be postings. Leaders can still post needs.*

Additional Questions

- **In the event that exploratory work has been performed prior to obtaining IRB approval using clinical samples and data, is this considered non-compliance? If IRB approval is later obtained and the project is published, was the acquisition of data prior to obtaining IRB approval considered to be research misconduct?**
 - *IRB approval or an exempt determination from the IRB is required before any research (including exploration or pilot testing) of samples with identifiers. If research is conducted prior to IRB approval/determination, this is considered non-compliance with the federal regulations and CHOP policies. Please contact the IRB Office to discuss the specifics of this.*
- **When will onsite monitoring visits and site activation visits resume?**
 - *Onsite monitoring visits for all trials will be permitted to resume Monday, June 29, as long as CDC and PA Department of Health guidelines for physical distancing are followed. Remote monitoring must continue to be encouraged when study-related data and materials can be securely reviewed electronically.*
 - *If monitors need access to the IDS, there will be two monitoring visit slots available each day between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. You may reserve a 2-hour slot if the monitor confirms that a longer visit duration is required, but visits cannot exceed 2 hours. Up to 2 monitors at a time will be permitted in the IDS for each study visit. Guests must remain in the monitoring area at all times to comply with physical distancing requirements. And, a member of the study team must escort the monitor to and from IDS Pharmacy. All of this is outlined on the IRB's homepage under FAQ 17.*

6/25 All Hands Research Institute Town Hall: Q&A with Leadership

- **If patients are opting for telemedicine visits during the pandemic, are research staff allowed to introduce a study to the family (after the physician completes the visit) without obtaining IRB amendment approval?**
 - *If the research has IRB approval and the study team is complying with the Research Institute's restrictions on Clinical Research During the Pandemic (<https://www.research.chop.edu/announcements/faqs-for-clinical-research-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>), the study team may be able to introduce the study to the family without an amendment. To determine if an amendment is required, the investigator should consider the activities that are currently outlined in the protocol and eIRB application. In addition, the investigator should ask if the introduction will be limited to recruitment or will introduction include obtaining consent (e.g. does the study team have approval to obtain verbal consent)? Contact the IRB Office IRBOffice@email.chop.edu to discuss in more detail.*
- **Can non-medical masks be reused?**
 - *Masks can be reused; however, if they become visibly soiled or wet, they should be thrown away, and a new one should be obtained. There's no specific number of uses for each mask.*