

8/6 All Hands Research Institute Town Hall: Q&A With Leadership

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

UPDATES AND QUESTIONS FROM LEADERS

Bryan Wolf

Updates:

- The projections in early July indicate that the CHOP Enterprise was looking at a \$40 million deficit against budget at the end of Q1 (Sept. 30). However, we've done better than expected in patient volume and revenue, and financial contingencies (including those contributed by the Research Institute) have helped: We are now projecting a \$10 million deficit, which is much more reasonable and manageable. Hopefully, volumes continue through August. Plan to ramp up to 50% staffing for research groups July 6
- We will be continuing these financial contingencies (remember, there are still 11 months left in the FY).
- The Research Institute does not anticipate mandatory furloughs; we have focused on expense reductions and mandatory PPL and plan to continue to do so.
- Mandatory PPL does not apply to faculty or fellows (which includes all post-doctoral fellows irrespective of funding source).

Questions:

- **What kind of salary cuts have CHOP executives taken?**
 - *The Chairs and VP roles and above have taken salary reductions of 25-40% to reduce impact on the CHOP enterprise bottom line.*
- **What will happen in anticipation of Dr. Wolf's retirement?**
 - *There will be a national search, with the help of an external search firm and a search committee, led by Dr. Kassa Darge, Chair of Radiology at CHOP.*
- **How is the Research Strategy being affected by contingency planning?**
 - *We will continue to achieve research strategies, but perhaps not at the same anticipated pace.*
 - *Financial planning for the RI is dictated by patient volume at the hospital. We're working closely with the CFO team, but until we have more information (at least three more months of FY data), we cannot make definitive commitments on how many faculty recruitment positions we can fill.*
 - *Bev: Pre-COVID recruitment activity depended on our ability to build research space that could support that recruitment activity, and right now, we have limited to no space for recruitment. We likely will need to take a pause on recruitment until this situation is resolved.*

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- *Bryan: I'm optimistic about the future. The financial news shared at the beginning is very encouraging; it's been the first positive news we've had since April. The RI has not missed a beat when it comes to productivity, ramp-up, writing grants, from the start. Now, we are turning the corner, and looking forward to a vaccine, and we can be cautiously optimistic.*

Bev Davidson

Questions:

- **When will we ramp up to 100%?**
 - *The Research Ramp-up committee looks at the data and makes decisions about what is safe. There are no plans right now to ramp up to a higher density. Notably, the labs have been remarkably compliant – thank you!*
 - *The Research Ramp-up committee sent out a [Return to Research Employee Survey](#) – please take time to fill it out, as it will guide our decisions moving forward:*

Richard Aplenc

Questions:

- **What is being done to address the needs of research patients and Radiology services?**
 - *As we've communicated before, there are limitations in the amount of time available in the radiology research and clinical scanners for research. The time needed to clean in between patients and research study subjects is substantially longer. There is also a clinical backlog that needs to be worked through. We are working closely with Radiology to try to meet research scheduling needs by either later evening slots or weekend slots. Radiology is doing everything they can to create as many research slots as possible for study participants. Of course, we will not be at the same capacity for using these scanners right away, as we were before the pandemic.*
- **On the question of primary care practices being closed to research – when will they be reopened?**
 - *Alex Fiks and team at PERC are working to identify when these practices can open up. Much like Radiology, there are substantial operational constraints on the practices due to the need for physical distancing and spacing patients throughout the day.*
- **Why don't we do temperature checks like Penn does?**
 - *Our understanding is that temperature checks are not effective as screening measures, which is why temperature checks were never implemented on the clinical or research side. We are fortunate that PIs and staff have stepped up in responsibility and accountability for opening up research safely. As a result, we've been able to open up*

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for research quicker than the Penn side and many of our pediatric peer institutions.

- **How about eye protection? The hospital mandated it to be used in patient encounters.**
 - Yes, we are mirroring this in our research when it comes to subject encounters. Eye protection can be ordered via a central website. Details will be uploaded to our Clinical Research FAQs so you can access them.

Michelle Lewis

Questions:

- **Will there be a more permanent AWA, and when can we expect a determination to be made about continuing AWA beyond Sep. 30?**
 - *UPDATE: With careful assessment of staff and patient safety needs and based on expert guidance from Infection Prevention and Control and Supply Chain leaders, we are requiring employees who are non-location critical to remain in a remote working status through December 31 while we continue to evaluate the right timing for returns.*
 - *We must allow HR to discuss this with leadership and wait for an enterprise decision to be issued. There will be no separate communication coming out from the RI regarding the extension of AWA. The likelihood is we will mirror whatever guidance comes out of HR, with discretion.*
- **As a leader at CHOP, I tried very hard to be transparent to my team with contingency plans, but the announcement from RI with different guidelines and expectations than of the hospital threw a curve ball. I wish RI higher leadership gave the managers a prior notification and had a meeting similar to the hospital just with leaders, so we are prepared to have a conversation with our teams and be prepared with answers. I did not feel supported the same way I felt with Hospital's leadership calls. I would have appreciated if talking points were dispersed to RI managers prior to a general announcement to all staff. So much rapid change has been going on in the hospital, RI, and in life that it's been a constant struggle to keep everything in balance, therefore, having more intimate conversations with RI managers on overall experience so far and how you can support us (who are supporting teams) is very much needed.**
 - *We are all dealing with an unprecedented amount of information and challenges as well as the need to identify solutions; we are trying our best to lead by example. It's important to highlight we have been making efforts to remain transparent since March via the Research Web Strategy Team and Research Creative Services, including posting updates, FAQs, and clarification of information on the COVID-19 page <https://www.research.chop.edu/covid-19-updates> (external) and <https://at.chop.edu/osmo/eop/bioresponse/Pages/Research-Resources.aspx> (internal). These platforms ensure everyone has access to information that is disseminated.*

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- *Prior to March, the research town halls were only open to research administration personnel and now includes invitations to faculty, researchers, and non-research institute personnel. We also increased the frequency of the research town halls, which were initially scheduled quarterly, then earlier this calendar year shifted to every other month, and since April have convened monthly.*
- *In addition, Research Creative Services disseminates research news stories, highlighting the tremendous research efforts expended by the researchers and physician-scientists at CHOP, some of whom have completely shifted their research endeavors to participate in the global response to combat, mitigate, and better understand the coronavirus and its impact on children and their families.*
- *In advance of the research town halls, we circulate a survey to invite the research community to submit questions to the CSO leaders in advance to assure that our updates focus on addressing issues of importance to the research community or to provide necessary clarification on information disseminated in-between meetings. The CSO leaders' response to the pre-submitted questions are then posted on the @CHOP Research website as well as the public facing Research Institute web page. In an effort to assure that information disseminated is clear, the information shared in the CSO connection messages is vetted by multiple constituents, and we often bounce ideas off of the Center Administrative Directors, my counterparts at the CSO leadership level, and/or my direct reports to ensure that messaging is clear and consistent.*
- *There is a deliberate attempt to make sure we are getting the information out and to the level of leaders expected to cascade that information down to their managers. We will continue to maintain these communication efforts, and we ask you to bear with us as there is very rapid progression of change – we are doing our ultimate best to manage.*

- **Can you address questions about mandatory furlough?**
 - *Mandatory furloughs are not levers we have had to pursue at present thanks to other measures, such as mandatory PPL.*

- **Can we cash out our mandatory PPL?**
 - The opportunity to cash out PPL is only available once a year during the benefit enrollment period, so there will be no opportunity to do this as that time has since passed.

- **Will employees who had less than 80 hours when the initial announcement about mandatory PPL was made need to take mandatory PPL?**
 - Effective Monday, July 27, 2020, through Dec. 26, 2020, all Research Institute employees (except faculty and post-doctoral fellows), with 80 or more banked PPL hours are required to take eleven (11) PPL days between 7/27/20 through 12/26/20.
 - For example, as of 7/27/20 an employee banked 100 PPL hours. This employee will be required to participate in Mandatory PPL and take eleven (11) PPL days between 7/27/20 and 12/26/20.
 - Employees with less than 80 banked PPL hours (as of 7/27/20) are not required to participate in Mandatory PPL.

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- For example, as of 7/27/20 an employee banked 45 PPL hours. This employee is not required to participate in the Mandatory PPL program.
- If an employee with less than 80 banked PPL hours on 7/27/20 accrues PPL, increasing their PPL balance to be at or exceed 80 PPL hours between 7/27/20 and 12/26/20, they are not required to participate in Mandatory PPL.
 - For example, on 7/27/20 an employee banked 75 PPL hours. By 10/01/20 this employees' PPL balance now exceeds 80 hours. This employee is NOT required to participate in the Mandatory PPL program.
- We will revisit in December/January if Mandatory PPL needs to be extended beyond 12/26/20.

Updates:

- **Work-study/Co-operative/Undergraduate Students:** We will have more information in mid-September about allowing work-study, cooperative, and undergraduate students to be physically onsite. For now, only remote/virtual students are permitted to be onboarded via the NTP office.
- **Surveys:** Please participate in the [Financial Stewardship Survey](#), which will close at the end of September. Thank you to those who participate, and we welcome your continued input.
- At the end of August, the [Return to Research Employee Survey](#) will close. Please participate and share your thoughts.

Matthew Hodgson

Questions:

- **Please provide further clarification regarding the new "Virtual Research Collaborator/Digital NTP classification." It is noted in the recent guidance that a Data Use Agreement will be required, but does not mention IRB implications. Are there any changes that would need to occur in order to add those with this classification to our IRB protocols?**
 - *According to the IRB Office, there are no changes related to the IRB and this new category; as a reminder, collaborators working with CHOP study teams and are employees of other institutions should not be listed in the eIRB application. CHOP will need to enter into a reliance agreement with the collaborator's home institution, so if there are specific questions about research studies, please reach out to Amy Schwarzhoff in the IRB office, and she can answer those.*

Jeff Pennington

Questions:

- **How transparent is CHOP in our diversity and inclusion efforts?**

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- *I encourage you to go to the @CHOP site and look for “Diversity at a Glance,” which contains stats and information regarding this. You will find a number of links to [2018](#) and [2019](#); 2020 is forthcoming. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion publishes this with the help of people all over CHOP.*

Maxine Johnson

Questions:

- **What if I can work remotely, but am required to come in?**
 - *If you're an employee who believes your role is not location critical and your leaders are still having you come in, you can reach out to me or your HR Business Partner to look into it more. From an HR perspective, we cannot say what operations are location or not location critical, but we can collaborate to look into it.*
- **What happens to H1-B workers if they are asked to take mandatory furlough, and thus fall out of the status needed to maintain their visa?**
 - *Dr. Wolf mentioned we are not looking at mandatory furlough. But there are certain statuses that cannot be placed on furlough. If this situation does come up, and someone is a foreign national placed on mandatory furlough, please contact me or your HR Business partner because there are certain statuses that cannot be placed on furlough.*
- **Will tuition reimbursement be in jeopardy for the remainder of the year?**
 - *No, we are moving forward with it, and it is still an opportunity.*
- **Can colleagues donate PPL to fellow employees?**
 - *We have relaxed our eligibility for who can get PPL donation. So if you are looking to have donations for PPL, for reasons related to the pandemic, feel free to apply for PPL Donation; contact your HR Business Partner.*
- **Is reimbursement for city wage tax possible?**
 - **CORRECTION:** Yes, reimbursement for city wage tax is possible. We are asking managers **not** to make location changes for their staff and reassign them as permanent remote workers in Workday. Incorrect or incomplete tax withholdings will result.
 - We are recommending that employees track their time worked from home in Kronos.
 - Exempt/Salaried: For hours worked remotely exempt/salaried employees should use the "REG HOME" paycode.
 - Non-exempt/Hourly: The comment code “Worked from home” can be attached to non-exempt/hourly employees’ punches when they work remotely.

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- Any Pennsylvania, non-Philadelphia resident can file for a city wage tax reimbursement within 3 years from the date the tax was paid or due, whichever date is later.
- **What about traveling and quarantine?**
 - If you travel to a hotspot, and you are able to work from home in quarantine, you may continue. But if you are required to come into the office, you may need to use your PPL.
- **What about mandating PPL for those who are saving their PPL for maternity leave?**
 - This could be something worked out with your leader and addressed subjectively. For example, if you are looking to take your maternity leave very soon, you could perhaps use your PPL time; this is a question particular to when that leave will occur. Please work with your leader.