March 10, 2020

UW Medicine Work Policy for Staff Who Both Are Asymptomatic and Have Had No Known Unprotected Exposure to a Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 Case – Message from UW Medicine Leadership

Our colleagues at Public Health Seattle & King County shared a message last week with the community with recommendations (not requirements), that people at higher risk of severe illness stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible. People at higher risk include:

- Over 60 years of age
- With underlying health conditions (heart disease, lung disease or diabetes)
- With weakened immune systems
- Who are pregnant

Examples of settings that could be avoided include concert venues, conventions, sporting events and crowded social gatherings. Public Health does not consider hospitals and clinics to be in those same categories as elective social events due to the use of additional measure such as personal protective equipment (PPE) to minimize risk of exposure.

The UW Medicine healthcare team is made up of individuals from many communities representing a range of abilities, skills, perspectives, and life stages. Some members of our team are working while pregnant; others work while facing illnesses or treatments that may make them immunocompromised as a result; others who are older than 60 years of age (there are over 2,000 people working in UW Medicine in this last category)

Based on what we know today about this novel infectious disease, COVID-19 does not appear to be associated with an increased risk for worse outcomes in pregnancy. Less is known about its impact in immunocompromised populations. At the same time, we recognize that we are still learning about how this virus acts in many different populations.

UW Medicine Policy Statement:

- **Staff over the age of 60:** UW Medicine Staff and faculty who are >60 years should continue to work per their regular schedules.

- **Staff who are pregnant, immunocompromised or over the age of 60 with underlying health conditions (such as poorly controlled diabetes; heart, lung, kidney, or liver disease):** UW Medicine Staff and faculty in this category should continue to work per their regular schedules. Individuals are invited to talk to their team leader or manager about any concerns. We understand the concerns with direct patient care of patients with known COVID-19 and suggest these individuals talk to their team leader or manager about this. If this is a difficult conversation, we are here to help navigate it.

All UW Medicine PPE policies, protocols, and recommendations for providing care for patients with infectious diseases are designed to protect all healthcare workers, regardless of their age, health or pregnancy status. If you are concerned about access or type of PPE that is being recommended for your work, please talk to your team leader or manager. We are also messaging the UW community to remain
home with respiratory symptoms that don’t require medical attention. This should also decrease potential exposure to ill co-workers.

We recognize and emphasize the need for each of us to prioritize our own health and well-being so we can best care for ourselves, our families and community for the long haul.

UW Medicine Leadership