

Dear colleagues,

I am writing this email as a proud colleague after the most difficult year I have experienced as a professional and as an adult.

I have been at Holy Cross for almost 18 years and 2020 has been the most challenging. We all would have been touched by Covid one way or the other – I lost a close family member!. We should be very proud of how we managed through the Covid waves and safeguarded our patients. There was commitment, hard work, sacrifice demonstrated by all of us at various junctures. Many at the frontline staff caring for the patients day after day selflessly, ignoring the risks posed by this unpredictable virus and many behind the scenes playing their part and going an extra mile to support clinicians to carry out our jobs effectively. We shall hope that we are in the last leg of this journey and will come out stronger later in 2021 when things settle down. One way of reaching this goal is for us to get vaccinated. We are trying different avenues for our staff, patients and sisters to get vaccinated.

While we wait to arrange the vaccinations, we are going through a time when the infection rates, hospital admissions and deaths are increasing at an alarming rate. Post-Christmas and the festive period, the risks are higher, exacerbated by the newer, more transmissible strain of the virus. We have continued with no relatives/ friends visiting and have closed the outpatient physiotherapy department for the next two weeks as an added precaution.

Mass swabbing:

Considering the risks above, we have arranged for all patients and staff to be swabbed on **Monday 11th January**. Please get hold of **your NHS number and complete the form** (will be available from reception/ wards/ St Hughs from Tuesday) and bring it for the swab session. You will hear details for swabbing from HR in the coming days. Any questions, please speak to Sue, me or Gina. Please invite agency staff on duty to be swabbed as well.

Precautions:

Please continue with the precautions in place

1. Alert a senior clinician if any patients show signs/ symptoms of Covid. Isolate them and follow the procedure in place
2. Do not come to work if you or your household members are not well – please call HR and seek advice
3. Wear a mask at all times – especially when in patients rooms or when within 2 meters of other staff
4. Use other PPE as appropriate to the clinical activity you are involved in
5. Continue to work in block rota
6. Work in the zones during your block
7. Alert any new staff member to these precautions

Relaxing our lockdown:

Ventilated patients to continue to stay in rooms. They can go outdoors to the patio, sensory garden or outside when weather is reasonable.

Patients with a tracheostomy can attend activities and therapy sessions. Please take precautions to treat them at the end of a session or end of the day. If trache patients are attending group sessions or activities, please ensure they are from the same ward and maintain social distancing.

Activities continue within bubbles – one ward patients at a time with a very few exceptions agreed with Charles/ Adam.

Visitors:

Very few families have been allowed to visit – All of them have stayed away considering the seriousness of the situation.

Travelling abroad: Holidays and international travel restrictions are severely restricted. The situation in some countries is dynamic with some locally enforced lockdowns coming into place. Please talk to your line manager, me, Sue or Gina if you plan to travel abroad in the next few months.

We do understand that staff may have pressing family commitments related to this travel and we want to make arrangements that does not affect you or the hospital's staffing numbers and skill mix. We will be following the governments guidelines with regard to quarantining i.e. If staff travel to and back from a country which is in the quarantine list, staff will have to quarantine for 10-14 days. Staff travelling to and returning from other countries (that are not on the quarantine list) will have to be swabbed/tested before returning to work.

1. **PPE situation** and stocks remains under constant review. The critical PPE i.e. FFP2 masks are in good stock. Full gowns are low in stock. Please use all PPE judiciously.
 - a. Use surgical masks, aprons and gloves when treating all patients
 - b. When treating any patients with a risk of splashing (Both trache and non-trache patients) please feel free to use visors. Preferably, use the plastic robust visors that can be spray cleaned after each use.
 - c. For Suspected or positive Covid patients please follow the guidelines below.
2. **PPE use for Positive patients**
 - a. Continue waste management protocol as per attached document
 - b. Continue enhanced cleaning of patient rooms
 - c. Continue PPE use as discussed
 - i. Full hand aprons
 - ii. FFP masks
 - iii. Visors
 - iv. Gloves
3. **PPE use for Suspected patients:** If there is a patient developing clear, severe symptoms (temperature over 37.8 degrees or Persistent dry cough and/ or loss of taste or smell – PLEASE USE PPE SIMILAR TO A POSITIVE PATIENT DESCRIBED ABOVE
4. **PPE use for Suspected patients:** If you suspect any patients to be developing mild/ unsure symptoms, please use precautions.
 - a. Use PPE use as follows
 - i. Normal aprons
 - ii. Surgical masks
 - iii. Visors
 - iv. Gloves
5. **PPE use for Holy Cross Patients returning from Hospital (after admission as an inpatient):**
 - a. All patients who have been tested negative at the hospital before discharge can be treated with normal surgical masks, visors, normal aprons and gloves for 7 days upon readmission.
 - b. Patient remain in their rooms for the 7 days
6. **PPE use for New admissions:**
 - a. All new admissions will be admitted after a negative swab result.
 - b. They will be isolated for 14 days upon admission. A swab will be done on day 6/7 and the patient can attend therapy (if not ventilated) and activities after a negative swab result is obtained (most likely around day 10).

- c. If they do not show any symptoms, they can be treated with normal surgical masks, visors, normal aprons and gloves until a negative swab result is obtained

Feel free to talk to one of the managers if you have any concerns or questions.

Kind regards

Rasheed