From: Loyola Hepatology and Liver Transplant Program

Subject: A message to patients regarding Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19)

Loyola Medicine is committed to the health and safety of our patients with chronic liver disease, liver transplant candidates, and transplant recipients. Loyola Medicine hospitals, Loyola clinics and ambulatory care sites are closely following the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) protocols for evaluating any potential cases of the new coronavirus disease called Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Testing of persons suspected of having COVID-19 is performed in conjunction with local health departments and is processed at the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). Patients who are suspected of having COVID-19 based on characteristics outlined by CDC are immediately isolated from other patients, and hospital staff use appropriate protective equipment.

All care of patients with liver disease and transplant procedures will continue uninterrupted. We do not have enough information yet on whether COVID-19 is more severe in patients with chronic liver disease or transplant patients compared to others, but viruses often cause more severe disease in those with low immune systems. With growing concerns surrounding COVID-19, we are reaching out to explain the specific precautions we are suggesting for our patients to both ensure their safety and reduce exposure to COVID-19.

COVID-19 is transmitted through close, direct contact with someone carrying the infection. The CDC considers older adults and those with certain chronic conditions to be at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19. Therefore:

- At this time, we are advising that all patients with chronic liver disease and liver transplant patients avoid nonessential air travel and avoid any cruise travel in light of COVID-19.
- Keep space between yourself and others (6 feet of distance), avoid crowds if possible, and especially avoid anyone with symptoms of infection (including fever, cough or shortness of breath).
- It is best to avoid contact for 14 days with anyone returning from an area with high COVID-19 activity (China, Iran, Europe, South Korea, or Japan).
- Stock up on supplies (use mail order to deliver medications, have extra medications at home if possible, and have household items and groceries on hand).
- If you do need to go out in public, limit close contact in crowds, and wash your hands often.
  - Effective hand washing uses soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place.
• If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

• Clean and disinfect your home. Regularly clean frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs, light switches, handles, toilets, desks, faucets, sinks and cell phones.

• Avoid hand shaking and touching high-touch surfaces in public places such as elevator buttons, door handles, and handrails. Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hand or finger if you must touch something.

• Potential liver donors are screened for COVID-19 symptoms and travel history.

For more information, please review the CDC website or the American Society of Transplantation (AST) websites, as these are trusted resources.


If you are a transplant patient and you develop cough, fever, or shortness of breath, please call your transplant coordinator or the Hepatology department. The number for the Hepatology department is 855-483-7362. A nurse coordinator will speak with you regarding your symptoms and discuss next steps. If testing or hospitalization is necessary, the Liver transplant or Hepatology team will identify a safe location for testing and/or direct admission.

If you are healthy and feel that you would like to reschedule your clinic appointment to a later date, please give our Patient Access Center a call at 708-216-9000.

Loyola will continue to closely monitor this evolving situation. Please contact the Loyola Medicine Liver Transplant Center if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

The Hepatology and Liver Transplant Team at Loyola Medicine