To School of Medicine faculty, staff and students: This is a follow-up to an earlier email you received from Johns Hopkins University about research and laboratory work.

Dear Colleagues,

We continue to closely monitor the outbreak of coronavirus disease, known as COVID-19. With the recent recognition of community spread of the virus in Maryland, significant statewide efforts were announced yesterday to mitigate viral spread through social distancing. Therefore, our laboratories and research cores should implement a significant transition from normal operations, and should rapidly move to protect people and research programs as well as key reagents and equipment. Below, we emphasize some of the key steps to be instituted now as each lab/program starts its continuity plan.

**Immediate social distancing in labs**

- An immediate goal is to “de-densify” laboratories and research programs. This should be thoughtful, but directed toward significantly reducing laboratory interactions within the next week.
- In order to enhance social distancing, we want you to undertake a rapid two-phase process. In phase 1, effective immediately, work in every laboratory should be staggered so that only 30% of all laboratory personnel are present at any one time. PI’s will be responsible for establishing a rotation to avoid overlap that exceeds this 30% quota in the lab at any time. Plans should be implemented so that, to the fullest extent possible, work can be done remotely.
- PI’s should immediately identify essential research experiments that are at a critical phase, meaning that abandoning them would cause a major or irreversible loss in project viability. This high priority work should be a very limited set of the current laboratory bench-based experimentation.
- PI’s should also identify experiments that can be ramped down, curtailed or delayed, and accomplish that process immediately.
- Ensure that people who need to work remotely can do so effectively—check in advance that VPN (cds.johnshopkins.edu/vpn/) and other functions operate. Consider setting up a lab Zoom account (jhjhm.zoom.us/) so that scientific interactions and discussions about research projects can occur regularly, even though most people may be at a distance.
• No new lines of research or experiments should be initiated at this time, until the trajectory of the infection becomes clearer. First-year students about to start new rotations should wait for instructions from their graduate programs.
• Laboratory work specifically related to COVID-19 should continue.
• Please note that we are in phase 1 of the Research Animal Resources (RAR) animal contingency plan (researchanimalresources.jhu.edu/contingency/), and we will escalate that to phase 2 on Monday, March 16.
• A person with even minor symptoms of illness, including but not only cough or fever, should stay home. If in doubt about whether you feel normal, do NOT go to work. For more information, contact Johns Hopkins Hospital Epidemiology and Infection Control (hopkinsmedicine.org/heic/).
• Disinfection of common laboratory areas and touch points (e.g., doorknobs, sink handles, freezer doors, telephones) with 70% ethanol should occur at least twice daily.

Preparation for additional steps

Phase 2 will begin Wednesday, March 18. The initial phase is to accomplish the orderly and safe migration of research activities away from direct bench work, in order to save and secure as much as possible in a very short time. By March 18, we expect that you will curtail all activities not critical to maintaining animals, unique reagents and essential equipment, at which point only two or three essential personnel (designated by the PI) will be allowed in the lab. Possible exceptions about extending the timing to conclude ramp down of essential experiments must be discussed first with the Vice Dean’s office. COVID-19 spread in Maryland and at the institution will be followed very closely, and will inform this decision. Updated information on the virus and how it relates to Johns Hopkins can be found at all times on hub.jhu.edu/novel-coronavirus-information/.

• These essential personnel will perform critical procedures, processes or equipment management that require regular personnel attention to maintain laboratory viability (e.g., liquid nitrogen tank filling, animal support). Notify your departmental administrator and Courtney Pierce (cbenne31@jhmi.edu) as soon as possible about who these people are.
• PI’s should clearly define processes and procedures for shutdown of expensive and sensitive equipment, particularly if long shutdown might be harmful to the equipment.
• Ensure that you have access to contact information for your students, postdocs and staff members.
• Immediately consider cross-training research staff to fill in for performance of essential tasks for those who are out sick or unable to come to work.
  o Ensure staff members have the appropriate training.
  o Consider documenting critical step-by-step instructions.
• Review contingency plans and emergency procedures in your group.
• Ensure that high-risk materials (radioactive material, biohazards, chemicals) are secured. If you need assistance, contact Johns Hopkins Health, Safety and Environment (hopkinsmedicine.org/hse).

We expect you will not make any immediate changes to the support of your staff members, students and postdocs. Please continue charging to grants as normal — see more information on federal guidance here. Our research administration offices are prepared for fully remote support. We have also been working with research sponsors as part of our business continuity activities to ensure that we continue to operate in a compliant and appropriate manner.

The School of Medicine has established a COVID-19 command group for Research, which will be available to assist investigators with any COVID19-related research issues. That group can be accessed by contacting any of the following: Antony Rosen (arozen@jhmi.edu), Geraldine Seydoux (gseydoux@jhmi.edu) or James Berger (jmberger@jhmi.edu), who will either answer questions or bring them to the command group.

Information related to the ongoing performance of clinical research will be provided separately.
We recognize how disruptive this virus has been to the lives of everyone in the U.S., and how these steps will affect us all. We recognize from many discussions with you that there is a broad recognition of the need to act early to minimize the impact on our institution and the broader community. We are profoundly grateful to you for all that you do, and for your support.

Sincerely,

Paul B. Rothman, M.D.
Dean of the Medical Faculty
CEO, Johns Hopkins Medicine

Landon S. King, M.D.
Executive Vice Dean

Antony Rosen, M.B.Ch.B., B.Sc. (Hons)
Vice Dean for Research

Geraldine Seydoux, Ph.D.
Vice Dean for Basic Research

James Berger, Ph.D.
Director, Institute for Basic Biomedical Sciences