March 23 2020 FAQs

Is the WELL Office still open?

A. Yes, the WELL Office is open at this very difficult time. The team is working both virtually and by phone, pending further directives. For more information on how to book an appointment or for information about other useful services, click here.

I am worried about catching the virus and – more importantly – spreading it to my family, including my children and elderly parents who need my care.

A. This is certainly the most common and most normal fear amongst health care professionals. It is also a pervasive stigma that physicians regularly face. We recommend trying to focus on what is in your power to control:

- Trying to take all the necessary precautions (e.g. washing hands upon arrival at home, showering, etc.).
- Staying home if symptoms are severe or if you have an immune disorder yourself.
- Avoiding very close contact with elderly family members (hugs and kisses) and considering making alternative arrangements within the extended family for the care of the elderly, if at all possible.

Beyond what is in your control, we would encourage you to keep reading about ways to tame the anxiety about what is not in your control.

We would like to encourage our residents with known health conditions that place them at elevated risk for complications should they contract COVID-19, to speak with their institution’s occupational health.

Some of us are alone in the country with no immediate support network and with the border closure, family/spouses are no longer allowed in the country. How can we cope with feelings of isolation?

A. We can completely appreciate how being alone in the country with no immediate support makes everything so much harder for many residents right now. Sadly, there is no easy way around it at the moment.

Feelings of isolation are bound to emerge, and this is why now, more than ever, it will be important to stay connected, albeit remotely, and choose your supports carefully. Speak to friends, colleagues, and family regularly, and try to limit conversations about COVID-19 (especially with individuals whose anxiety leaves you feeling worse), while discussing other topics, especially ones that make you feel good or make you laugh (and no, it is not insensitive to laugh at the ever-growing number of COVID-19 jokes related to the excessive consumption of toilet paper and such). It may also be helpful to create a routine, so the days are more structured. Try to avoid staying at work longer than needed and engage in self-care activities, such as reading for pleasure, watching comedies, taking bubble baths, doing yoga, jogging, and meditating.
We are concerned about the number of shifts we may need to cover, as quarantine and hospital restrictions become stricter, and we need to cover for coworkers. Some programs have removed their R5s from their study leave, adding to the anxiety.

A. It is entirely understandable and valid to feel stressed, even frustrated, about the prospect of having to work longer hours (if not already doing so). As we are functioning under emergency measures and planning, we have to be ready for a surge in patient numbers or redeployment outside our primary areas of expertise. Attendings are in a similar situation, too, and feeling the same level of discomfort. Many residencies are already scaling down the number of residents on services to minimize exposure. Our priority is to ensure your safety.

Please remember we are planning and preparing right now. When we do ramp up our clinical activities regarding care for COVID-19 patients as it becomes necessary, we encourage you to take breaks to recharge, and we will ensure adequate time off between shifts. If you feel that what is being asked of you exceeds your physical and/or mental capacities, please inform your program director immediately and Cc Dr. Fata.

What should we do if we receive bad evaluations from attendings due to self-quarantine?

A: Evaluations should not be affected by self-quarantine. If this happens, please contact Dr. Paola Fata immediately.