

**Subject:** UHN-wide shutdown of non-essential research

**COVID-19 Update as of March 16, 2020, 1 p.m.**

**Purpose of today's message:**

- **All non-essential on-site research activities at UHN are suspended until April 6, 2020**
- Research studies that are part of essential clinical care, specific projects related to the COVID-19 pandemic, or those that have significant cost- or time-related implications will be assessed. Any laboratories that wish to remain open for such purposes, or who may require an exception must contact Brad Wouters directly.

**Other trusted resources:**

- [COVID-19 Intranet page](#): Visit for the most up-to-date information.
- [COVID-19 Research Intranet page](#): Visit for information specifically related to research.
- **Additional research-specific questions?** Contact [www@uhnresearch.ca](mailto:www@uhnresearch.ca) with research-specific questions.

Dear colleagues,

**Suspension of research:** Effective today, UHN is taking the step of suspending all non-essential on-site research activities **for an initial period of three weeks until Monday April 6, 2020**. This is being done as part of a larger effort across UHN and our peer hospitals in Toronto to limit non-essential and elective activity to focus on the immediate needs posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also being done to support larger community efforts in Toronto and across Canada of more social distancing to slow transmission of the coronavirus.

While the initial research suspension at UHN is for a period of three weeks, you should anticipate this will be extended.

**What you need to do now:**

- All principal investigators at UHN are instructed to initiate closure of their research labs and non-essential clinical research activities. Within the next 48 hours, in-person access to laboratories should be limited to a small number of essential personnel, such as those responsible for equipment/facility monitoring and maintenance, filling liquid N<sub>2</sub>, or maintaining animal colonies. For studies using animal models please contact Dr Badru Moloo. (See below for exceptions)
- Suspend all non-essential clinical research activity. With consideration for continuity of care and participant safety, suspend initiation of new projects, halt recruitment, and conduct remote visits where possible. Limit in-person visits for ongoing trials to treatment, safety, and critical endpoint visits. (See below for exceptions)
- Principal investigators will establish approaches for their teams to work remotely. Mentorship for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows is expected to continue through online and other tools. Please note that some UHN employees will need to be redeployed and assist with clinical services on site.
- Hiring of research employees—including summer students—is suspended until further notice. Planned summer students (i.e., those to whom an offer has already been committed), should be cancelled or at a minimum be notified that their position may not be possible and to consider other opportunities.

- ***Our research support teams will remain available to assist with this process and the subsequent disruptions it will cause.***
- We would urge investigators to retain their research staff at this time and not lay off individuals due to COVID-19. While the situation is fluid, we will work with our investigators and funders when necessary to assist with costs due to retaining staff during this unique and challenging time. Staff may also be able to support other areas of the hospital (see below).
- We will continue research studies that are part of essential clinical care, specific projects related to the COVID-19 pandemic, or those that have significant cost- or time-related implications (e.g., experiments that have been going on for several months). *Any laboratories that wish to remain open for such purposes, or who may require an exception to the 48hr timeframe must contact me directly.*

**Is this really necessary?** I realize that some will find this unnecessary or doubt the reasoning behind it. It is a very difficult decision for me personally—both for my own lab and as someone who is in the enviable position of being able to see so much of the impactful work of our research community. I recognize the negative impact it will have on our output and on the careers of our research staff. However, as Kevin said to me this weekend: we will only regret the things we didn't do. Our decision is consistent with many of our peer organizations in the United States and across the world, including Harvard, MIT, Stanford, UPenn, and others. It is also consistent with the current escalation of school and other business closures. We will continue to assess the situation on a real time basis and prepare for scenarios that allow restoration of research activity as soon as possible.

**A request:** Finally, we will be asking our research employees to assist our clinical colleagues through redeployment as part of UHN's broader response to the pandemic. The immediate need is for assistance with screening individuals before they enter the hospital. We will reach out separately through the Research Institutes for your assistance.

**Trusted sources of information:**

- [UHN's COVID-19 Preparedness page](#) for UHN-wide guidance
- [UHN Research's COVID-19 page](#) for research-specific information