



PROVIDENCE HEALTH CARE

Research Institute

Pursuing **real life** health solutions

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March 23, 2020

Dear colleagues,

What a couple weeks that have hit us. Unfortunately, by all accounts there will be several weeks more. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your support of our decision to suspend non-essential research activities across PHC. You have likely seen that UBC, SFU, and all our research hospitals have now taken a similar and coordinated approach. Due to your efforts, this difficult process has gone as smoothly and quickly as could be expected. I know this curtailing of research will have significant impact to your research programs and graduate student progress and will affect the careers of your staff. It is the right decision and we will continue to work hard on ways to mitigate and support you through this in the coming weeks. I also want to say a huge thank you to a very dedicated team of staff behind the scenes: PHCRI managers, their office staff, and all the teams in PHC and PHCRI that have been working flat over the last week to assist during this rapid transition.

### What can and should you do now?

1. **Help PHC and our patients:** We have received great support from our Research Centres in our request for redeployment of clinically trained staff to assist in clinical activities across PHC to ensure it continues to deliver the best healthcare to those that need it most. A similar request has more recently been distributed for non-clinically trained staff and a database is being generated by Centre Directors and PHC/RI managers. This too is crucially important and the need for our staff to contribute will no doubt increase. Just to remind everyone that all PHC employees are eligible for redeployment and I encourage all of you, if you are well and able, to put your names forward. Note, however, that trainees – students and postdocs – are currently not eligible for redeployment, but will be asked to volunteer should they feel inclined.

The BC Life Sciences and UBC community has rallied support for increased access to essential laboratory, safety and PPE equipment. Similarly, there are plans to engage with offshore enterprises to increase our urgent and essential supplies. However, if anyone has unique ideas to support shortages in PPE, please let myself and/or Brian Simmers ([bsimmers@providencehealth.bc.ca](mailto:bsimmers@providencehealth.bc.ca)) know.

2. **Engage and support your staff:** In these uncertain times, it's critical that we, as principal investigators and leaders, ensure that our research teams feel safe and supported. I have heard many stories of PIs staying in touch through regular teleconferencing or on-line chat forums, maintaining weekly journal clubs/lab meetings, as well as 1:1 meetings. I encourage everyone to develop a similar plan for this regular communication using these remote tools. From a current personal experience, this is particularly important if trainees remain quarantined overseas.



In affiliation with:  
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3. **Continue to mentor your trainees:** The support and mentorship of our trainees remains one of our key responsibilities as leaders. The trainee group is feeling additional anxiety due to delayed timelines and what the uncertain funding landscape means for their projects, theses and careers (see pt 2 above). Several things can be done from home: Provide new learning opportunities. We all get multiple requests for manuscripts, so now is the time to write, or encourage trainees to write those reviews; or analyze data and write up results. Please do everything you can to support their research and development.

#### What is PHCRI doing?

1. **Communications:** In an ever rapidly changing environment, we will strive to provide appropriate communication to you in a timely manner. We will aim to provide regular updates on validated scientific evidence that supports best practice. We would like to continue to promote your stories.
2. **Research activity:** Over the past several weeks, there has been a tremendous upsurge in the amount of research activity around COVID-19. In addition to new CIHR grants recently announced, “real-world” analysis of transmission data and epidemiology, clinical trials examining potential treatments and new high throughput screening are already underway at PHC and several additional trials are being planned. We are engaging with our Foundation to create new resources to support COVID-19 research. If any investigators are able to “re-tool” their research activity to focus on COVID-19, there are mechanisms to provide rapid access to support. We are retooling our clinical research services team and REB to enable rapid study activation. So if you have developing studies, please let me know.

Finally, in these rapidly changing times, please remember to be kind to yourselves and those around you and if you need any assistance, as always please contact me.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Knight'.

Dr. Darryl Knight  
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Associate Dean, Research, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia