



UCSF Department of Medicine ZUCKERBERG SAN FRANCISCO GENERAL

DEDICATED AND PREPARED TO PROTECT

We never know when a crisis will arise. We are fortunate at ZSFG to have two programs that keep both our patients and our workforce safe: the Infection Prevention & Control Program and Occupational & Employee Health Services. Lurking in the background we sometimes take them for granted. Now we are grateful for the work they quietly perform to protect us from the danger of COVID-19 that we are now experiencing. In this newsletter, we recognize and highlight the leaders and staff of these programs.

Preventing Spread: ZSFG Infection Prevention and Control Program

“ZSFG and the City and County of San Francisco have a long history of responding to epidemics – including HIV – and that spirit is incredibly alive in our current response to COVID-19,” said Vivek Jain, MD, MAS, Associate Professor in the ZSFG Division of HIV, Infectious Diseases and Global Medicine.

Jain and ZSFG Hospital Epidemiologist Lisa Winston, MD, Professor and Vice Chief of Inpatient Medicine, serve as co-medical directors of the ZSFG Infection Prevention and Control program. Their team plays a crucial role in the response to infectious threats including this latest epidemic.

“Our goal is to prevent the spread of any infectious illness within ZSFG, and to keep patients, staff, and visitors safe,” said Infection Prevention and Control Program Manager Elaine Dekker, RN. Other team members include Infection Preventionist Mariel S. Lontoc, RN, and Healthcare Analyst Lingling Ji, MPH. They have done this day-in and day-out before the current pandemic.

The Infection Prevention and Control Program has also created a dedicated COVID-19 team at ZSFG, providing 24/7 pager access to infectious

disease specialists. “We’re fielding inquiries from every sector of hospital operations, including the emergency department, radiology, pediatrics, OB/GYN, internal medicine, intensive care, surgery, and many others,” said Dr. Jain. The COVID-19 team visits ZSFG departments to provide educational talks, troubleshoot problems, explain best practices for using personal protective equipment (PPE), learn about operational challenges, and get feedback about newly developed COVID-19 algorithms. “We’re doing everything we can to help people craft this evolving response,” he said.

“The lack of tests for COVID-19 has been an area of national crisis, and we’re working very hard with our colleagues to address this,” said Dr. Jain. His team collaborates with labs at the San Francisco Department of Public Health and the California Department of Public Health to test as many people as possible. UCSF Medical Center



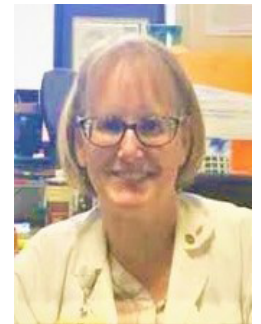
Vivek Jain, MD

has developed their own in-house test for the coronavirus, and they are working together to make this available to ZSFG patients. Dr. Jain also hopes to partner with commercial labs, which are scaling up testing capacity. The Infection Prevention and Control team geared up to participate in the cross-campus COVID-19 Task Force, which includes experts from ZSFG, UCSF Medical Center, and the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Medical Center. They are meeting twice a week to share updates on diagnostics, treatment, operational challenges, and research, and produce a twice-weekly digest (ti-

nyurl.com/COVID-19-Digest). “This epidemic is moving quickly, and we want to put out the most up-to-date, accurate information,” said Dr. Jain.

Advance planning is essential, and the Infection Prevention and Control team has long partnered with others at ZSFG and hospitals throughout San Francisco to prepare for worst-case scenarios. “COVID-19 is a novel

coronavirus that can spread rapidly and cause severe disease in certain patients, so we pulled out our pandemic flu plan and have modeled our responses based on that,” said Ms. Dekker. That includes strategies for handling



Elaine Dekker, RN

a potential surge of acutely ill patients, and making the best use of limited respirators and PPE. ZSFG has also activated its Hospital Incident Command System. Leaders from every department meet daily, in person or electronically, sharing COVID-19 updates and ensuring optimal implementation of their pandemic flu plan.

Even before COVID-19 emerged, the Infection Prevention and Control team had a full plate, partnering with departments across campus to ensure that food prep is done hygienically, medications are mixed safely, and cleaning products are working properly, all of which are important during this COVID 19 epidemic. They also hunt down other infections in the hospital and use every tool to stop transmission.

“Infection Prevention and Control is here to keep everyone safe,” said Ms. Dekker. “For COVID-19,

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as for any other respiratory illness, cover your coughs and sneezes, wash your hands, and stay home if you're ill. The thing to know is, we work with pathogens every day. Be respectful of them, but don't be afraid. We have the tools and support we need to be safe in our jobs, and we're all together as a team."

"We're here for patients, and ready to take care of them," said Dr. Jain. "With COVID-19, we need the public's help to practice social distancing, flattening the curve of the epidemic to prevent a true surge that could stress hospitals' capacity.... I've always been so proud to work at ZSFG, and never more so than now. It's an extraordinary and unpredictable time, and I'm so grateful for the collaborations with my colleagues, which are key to responding quickly to new challenges."

We are grateful to have an experienced team working in the background and are now prepared to step forward to respond to this crisis.

Staying Healthy at Work: Occupational and Employee Health Services

From police officers and firefighters to librarians and nurses, the ZSFG Occupational and Employee Health Services (OEHS) promotes a safe work environment for thousands including workforce protection during the COVID-19 epidemic.

"Our mission is to provide comprehensive medical evaluations to ensure that workers are safe to perform their jobs, and that their jobs are safe for them," said ZSFG OEHS Medical Director Jessica Chuang, MD, MPH, Assistant Professor in the ZSFG Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. "People spend most of their days at work, and it provides their livelihood. We want to help them do what they love, while also protecting public safety and the individuals themselves."

The OEHS is located on the first floor of Building 9, and annually provides about 7,000 visits to workers based at ZSFG, and about 10,000 visits to other employees based across the City and County of San Francisco (CCSF).

"Occupational medicine has an inherent cross-disciplinary nature to it," said Paul D. Blanc, MD, Professor and Chief of the Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, a three

campus division that spans ZSFG, Parnassus-Mount Zion, and San Francisco Veterans Affairs Medical Center. At ZSFG, Dr. Chuang oversees a team of about 28 people, including a physician, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, licensed vocational nurses, an audiologist and administrative staff.

ZSFG OEHS cares for employees dispersed across many worksites, including the San Francisco



Paul Blanc, MD



Dr. Jessica Chuang (5th from left) with ZSFG Occupational and Employee Health Services

Zoo, Laguna Honda Hospital, and Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, and partners closely with industrial hygienists. "They measure exposure levels onsite, and work with safety officers to identify workplace hazards and minimize safety risks," said Dr. Blanc.

One of OEHS's core services is providing pre-employment screenings to assess whether workers can perform essential job duties. For example, if a prospective bus driver has been offered a job but has sleep apnea, they must demonstrate treatment compliance – such as using a continuous positive airway pressure machine at night – and the ability to stay alert. "We provide a medical opinion about a person's physical abilities to perform their job, but the employer and human resources determine whether reasonable accommodations can be made," said Dr. Chuang.

After illness or injury, OEHS evaluates whether employees can safely return to work without limitations. The team also helps to prevent and detect illness early by monitoring workers in high-risk jobs. They periodically measure lung function of employees exposed to high levels of dust, test hearing for those who work in noisy environments, and check blood lead levels for those potentially exposed, such as plumbers. "We're comprehensive,

providing blood draws, spirometry, and audiometry, all in one visit," said Dr. Chuang.

In addition, OEHS treats all CCSF workers after needle stick injuries and exposure to bloodborne pathogens, monitoring them as appropriate to the exposure for HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C. They also seek to prevent these incidents. "My favorite part of occupational medicine is the preventive aspect," said Dr. Chuang, "Getting rid of the causes of disease."

For employees based at ZSFG and the San Francisco Health Network, OEHS provides hepatitis B vaccinations, flu shots, and respiratory protection equipment fit testing – determining the best type and size of N95 mask to ensure a tight seal. "We are more places than you would think, and we're here to help," said Dr. Blanc.

Importantly, OEHS also works closely with the ZSFG Infection Prevention and Control team to evaluate employees following an infectious exposure at work. They are currently partnering to respond to employee health concerns regarding COVID-19 such as health worker testing and return to work guidance after upper respiratory illness. Employees with questions should email OHS@sfdph.org and include a call back number. OEHS staff are working through emails quickly.

The OEHS team is helping our workforce tremendously as we combat the COVID-19 pandemic. We are grateful for their dedication.

Elizabeth Chur

Editors: Neil Powe, Laurae Pearson, Brooks Bigart

Please visit www.coronavirus.ucsf.edu for updates regarding the UCSF community and COVID-19.

