April 15: COVID-19 Clinical Update
Panel Discussion and Inside the LFH ICU

This daily communication is intended to facilitate the sharing of important clinical information during the COVID-19 healthcare crisis and to help respond to questions from physicians across Northwestern Medicine.

In today’s issue, you will find information about the second Clinical Insights Panel scheduled for 7 to 8 am on Thursday, April 16, and a Q&A with Pulmonologist and Medical Director of the Lake Forest Hospital ICU Randy Orr, MD.

CLINICAL INSIGHTS PANEL

- 7 to 8 am tomorrow
- Available to employed and independent physicians
- Submit questions ahead of the session by emailing COVID-19MD@nm.org
- To participate, join the Microsoft Teams meeting when it’s time
- Topics include:
  - Updates on the treatment of COVID-19
  - Lab Testing
  - ICU Management of COVID-19 patients
  - Leveraging the EHR
  - Using NM EDW for COVID-19 related clinical care and research

INSIDE THE LAKE FOREST HOSPITAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

How are you and your team in the LFH ICU managing the COVID-19 pandemic?
The short answer is teamwork. A tremendous amount of effort went into preparing the hospital and ICU for the expected surge of patients with COVID-19. We expanded capacity to more than six times our normal licensed volume of critical care beds — an enormous feat made possible by creative solutions and countless hours of teamwork from individuals from across the system.

I am incredibly proud of the way my team has risen to the challenge of managing a growing volume of patients. Nursing has deployed thoughtful staffing structures to ensure critical care nurses have the appropriate resources, and staff from other specialties have joined the critical care team to provide top-quality care to our patients.

What is different about working in the ICU during this crisis?
Anxiety and uncertainty are common in any ICU. COVID-19 has amplified that to a level I have never experienced. There are so many unanswered questions. How long will this go on? Will we have enough ventilators? Are we doing enough to protect our staff? Will I get sick? Due to the worldwide coverage of this pandemic, front-line healthcare workers are now receiving praise they deserve for the courageous work that they do. Courage is not the absence of fear, but the ability to
act in the presence of fear. I would argue that it is normal to feel nervous right now. I think the heroes are those who can continue to provide the highest level of care to critically ill patients despite their fear.

**Is there anything you’ve been surprised to learn from this experience?**
The biggest surprise has been the impact of visitor restrictions on my day-to-day experience. The value of regular communication with a patient’s family and loved ones to navigate a critical illness is immeasurable, and the inability for the patient’s decision-makers to see the situation with their own eyes poses new challenges. Thankfully, our team is leveraging technology to provide an audio and visual connection to the patient, and we post photographs of patients and their loved ones in their hospital rooms for comfort.

**Is there any advice you would give ICU physicians?**
Delegate the workload whenever possible. I have empowered my Nutrition team, speech therapists, physical and occupational therapists, respiratory therapists, APPs and pharmacists to practice at the top of their licenses and help care for the many complex critically ill patients we are seeing.

Second, stay true to the fundamentals of high-quality critical care by performing interdisciplinary ICU rounds, for example, which we perform at LFH twice daily. There is a critical need for intensivists to be adaptable and play a role at any patient’s bedside. Furthermore, stop and consider that this is a novel disease, and therefore prior data or papers focused on ARDS management, for instance, may not fully apply to every patient.

**How are you and the team relieving stress?**
I like to find opportunities to add humor to the day and show my lighthearted side. This will surprise no one who knows me. As a team, coming together and talking about our fears and anxieties, and the challenges in managing patients, and focusing on the positive outcomes has helped a lot.

Finally, the outpouring of support from the community has buoyed our spirits. I have been overwhelmed by the generosity of friends, family members, colleagues and local businesses that provide meals or other support for caregivers and staff daily. This is greatly appreciated.

Thank you to all Northwestern Medicine healthcare providers on the front lines of this crisis. To honor and celebrate your extraordinary work and courage during the COVID-19 crisis, we have launched the **Heroes for Better** campaign. If you would like to share the story of an NM hero, or if you have any questions, please submit them to **COVID-19MD@nm.org**.

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