From the desk of the CMO

Who Would Have Imagined?

*Spike Lipschutz, MD, Chief Medical Officer*

In our last (March) newsletter, I spoke about being “in the midst of a pandemic.” None of us realized how much our lives would change, here at the hospital, in many of your office practices, and in our personal lives.

None of us realized how many accommodations we would be required to make – telehealth visits, seeing only sick patients in your office, figuring out how to get food at home, remote communicating with loved ones and friends, loss of facial identity as face masks have become part of our daily wardrobe. Very few, I suspect, predicted in late February how many seriously ill and terminally ill patients would come to us for care.

Some information of interest: As of May 6, YNHHS had more than 3,000 COVID admissions, with more than 1,900 discharges. Unfortunately, there have been 360 deaths. Greenwich Hospital had 514 admissions, with more than 400 discharges. (*See article on page 2 for additional COVID-care-related statistics.*) Many of these patients demonstrated the varied manifestations of this virus, with cardiac, renal, hematologic, neurovascular and aggressive pulmonary symptoms. Greenwich Hospital was at the center of the Connecticut COVID-19 explosion, a true medical emergency that began locally in Westchester and spread with an intensity that no one could have predicted.

In the last issue, “all hands on deck” were the words I used. It has been, and continues to be, an incredible “all hands on deck” effort with extraordinary performance by EVERY department in our hospital. Our front-line nursing staff and medical staff have been extraordinary. And every one of our clinical support staff – respiratory therapists, pharmacists, food service, environmental services, physical therapists, radiology and laboratory teams, social services and case management, palliative care and spiritual care, safety and security, transport, surgical and peri-op and SPD teams, et al, et al, et al. Our Supply Chain team has been unbelievably able to support our care teams with the appropriate PPE (personal protective equipment). Our IT and Facilities teams have literally transformed our capabilities, including structural changes to patient rooms and remote access into patient rooms that have helped minimize staff exposure and maximize efficiencies of care. We have had continued support from our health system, with nurses from other hospitals coming to staff the ICU, physicians and advanced practice professionals from NEMG and our system hospitals also stepping up to assist on site at GH. Human Resources helped procure locums staff. Our medical staff office team helped
assure disaster privileges for over 130 additional medical staff. Members of our medical staff were granted additional privileges in order to assist our hospitalist staff. Our House Staff was plunged into clinical challenges that neither they nor we could have predicted. I hope I didn’t miss any group.

Most outstanding has been our administrative team led by Norm Roth. He, along with Diane Kelly, Anna Cerra and Marc Kosak, have helped assure not only that we care for all of the COVID patients in traditional and innovative ways, but that our staff has been supported, recognized and celebrated. The results of their preparation and execution have truly been extraordinary, managing through one of the greatest crises to ever face our hospital. Thanks to their work, our patients have received compassionate, empathetic and incredibly supportive care.

We don’t know where this journey is taking us, or when we will experience some relief, but we can be proud of what we have achieved by working together.

COVID-19 patients receive experimental plasma therapy

At least 10 patients (as of the printing of this article) critically ill with COVID-19 have received plasma therapy, an experimental treatment that involves blood plasma from people who have recovered from the disease. Greenwich Hospital is participating in a nationwide clinical trial overseen by the Mayo Clinic to administer what is known as convalescent plasma to treat COVID-19.

To qualify for the experimental treatment, patients must have a severe or life-threatening infection with COVID-19 or be judged to be at high risk of progression to life-threatening disease. Patients or their families must also give informed consent.

Greenwich Hospital is getting the plasma from the New York Blood Center. GH plans to screen recovered patients who were tested at the hospital to determine if they can register as potential COVID convalescent plasma donors with the New York Blood Center.

Yale New Haven Health COVID-19 support statistics

See the following assorted statistics (as of May 6, 2020) documenting support and activities at YNHHS related to the COVID-19 outbreak:

- The COVID Call Center, 833-ASK-YNHH, had answered more than 77,000 calls from the community and staff.
- More than 1.6 million pieces of PPE had been donated, including 8,700 handmade masks and 107,000 N95 respirators.
- More than 16,000 N95 masks had been safely cleaned and reprocessed.
- YNHHS had credentialed more than 800 new medical staff members to support our staff in caring for COVID-19 patients.
- Nearly 53,000 meals had been donated or promised to hospitals throughout YNHHS from local restaurants and community organizations.
- More than 91,000 outpatient telehealth visits had been conducted between YNHHS physicians and patients.
- Nearly 35,000 people had been swab tested for COVID-19 at YNHHS testing sites.
- There were 1,400 notes of thanks and encouragement for staff on the YNHHS Kudoboard website (www.ynhhs.org/kudos).

Update from Pharmacy Services: Potential for Biotin Interference with select laboratory test results

A reminder for YNHHS providers that biotin (vitamin B7), often found in dietary supplements, can significantly interfere with certain laboratory tests and cause incorrect results that may go undetected. The recent trend of consuming high dose biotin supplements for both cosmetic and health-related reasons has drawn attention to the potential for biotin interference in laboratory tests.

In accordance with available recommendations, unless medically contraindicated, the American Association for Clinical Chemistry (AACC) guidance document
Continued from page 2

recommends that patients abstain for a minimum of either 8 or 72 hours before blood collection, respectively, depending on whether they are taking a lower (5-10 mg/day) or high (≥100 mg/day) dose of biotin.

If there are concerns regarding biotin interference, please contact the performing laboratory. Biotin cannot be measured by the laboratory. Interference thresholds are to provide a general sense of when bias can occur. See the full Laboratory Medicine Update with detailed information or contact Julie D’Ambrosi, Medication Safety at Julie.DAmbrosi@ynhh.org or 203-688-8643.

Epic Storyboard update delayed

The launch of the Epic update Storyboard, originally scheduled to roll out this month, has been delayed indefinitely due to the COVID-19 crisis. Details and more information on a new launch schedule will be announced in the future.

Newsmaker

Greenwich Hospital physician honored by NBA player

A pro basketball player on the NBA’s Utah Jazz team, Donovan Mitchell, recently dedicated his jersey to GH’s Cassandra Tribble, MD, Anesthesiology. Mitchell joined other professional athletes who are replacing the names on the back of their jerseys with those of frontline healthcare workers as part of the NBA’s “The Real Heroes Project,” to honor healthcare heroes.

Mitchell thanked Dr. Tribble for everything that she has done to treat patients during the pandemic. According to KSLSports.com, he noted “Dr. Tribble, you’re a superstar! On behalf of myself and the NBA, thank you for being on the frontlines fighting to keep us safe. I’m honored to dedicate my jersey to you.”

The Jazz guard tested positive for the coronavirus disease, COVID-19, in March and has since been cleared to return to the NBA.

Newsletter submissions

Deadline for submission of content for the June 2020 issue of Medical Staff News is Friday, May 29. Please submit items for consideration to Spike Lipschutz, MD, at 203-863-3904 or spike.lipschutz@greenwichhospital.org or Myra Stanley, Yale New Haven Health, at 203-688-1531 or myra.stanley@ynhh.org.

Check yourself!

Remember STAR to help your brain catch up with what your hands are getting ready to do.

Stop – Pause for 1-2 seconds to focus on the task at hand.

Think – Consider the action you’re about to take.

Act – Concentrate and carry out the task.

Review – Check to make sure the task was done correctly and you got the correct result.

STAR reduces your chances of making an unintended mental slip or lapse by more than 10 times.

CHAMP for safety

High reliability organizations operate successfully in high-risk industries. For hospitals, CHAMP is a mnemonic used to help eliminate instances of preventable patient harm.

C – Communicate clearly

H – Handoff effectively

A – Attention to detail

M – Mentor each other

P – Practice and accept a questioning attitude
Medical Staff Changes (March and April 2020)

Appointees

Pedro Coutinho, MD (Neurosurgery)
Yale Medicine Neurosurgery
260 Long Ridge Road
Stamford, CT 06902
Phone: 203-785 3765
Fax: 203-785 9798

Tara Parmelee, PA (Surgery)
Greenwich Hospital
5 Perryridge Road
Greenwich, CT 06830
Phone: 203-863-3501
Fax: 203-863-3544

Change in Status

Khalid Abbed, MD (Neurosurgery) was granted a leave of absence
Jesus Santiago, PA (Neurosurgery) was granted a leave of absence

Office Move

Franklin Loria, MD (Medicine)
Northeast Medical Group Concierge Medicine of Rye Brook
90 South Ridge St.
Rye Brook, NY 10573
Phone: 914 305 9555
Fax: 914 305 9551

Miscellaneous

Greenwich Rheumatology – Northeast Medical Group (Lana Bernstein, MD and Bradley Schlussel, MD) has changed the practice phone number to 203 302-4181.

In Memoriam

Walter Camp, MD (Neurology) passed away in May. Dr. Camp was a former Neurology Section Head and member of the honorary medical staff.

Timothy Nolan, MD (Urology) passed away in April. Dr. Nolan was a former Chief of Staff, Urology Section Head and member of the honorary medical staff.

Neil Shapiro, MD (Gastroenterology) passed away in March. Dr. Shapiro was a member of the medical staff from 2000-2015.