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To: AUB and AUBMC Researchers

Subject: Precaution measures and guidelines for research conduct during COVID-19 outbreak

1- Research targeting participants who were not exposed to COVID-19:

Screen participants for COVID-19 exposure by asking subjects to confirm the following:

- Subjects are **asymptomatic** with no fever or respiratory symptoms such as cough or shortness of breath
- Subjects have **no travel history within the last 14 days** and with **no exposure to a suspected/confirmed COVID patient within the last 14 days**

Only those who answer affirmative to the above statements can participate in research-related activities that involve person to person contact with researchers. Researchers are asked to keep a log of this screening activity for audit purposes.

2- Research targeting COVID-19 patients:

- a. Remote interaction with participants is highly encouraged. It is encouraged to use phones or tablets to document consent.
- b. Follow the below instructions, as per infection control, if close contact is necessary (blood withdrawal, diagnostic tests ...etc.). Always check for latest updates on AUBMC website.
 - **ICU patients: wear overall suite, impermeable gown, gloves, N95 mask and eye protection (goggles or face shield).**
 - **Regular patients: wear impermeable gown, gloves, surgical mask and eye protection.**
 - **Recovered patients:** research assistant and participant shall wear surgical masks provided that the below criteria are met:

Discontinuation of isolation for patients with confirmed COVID-19 infection	
Patients with mild to moderate illness who are not severely immunocompromised:	Patients with severe to critical illness <u>including those admitted to ICU</u> or who are severely immunocompromised :
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared and • At least 24 hours have passed since last fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and • Symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) <u>have improved</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 20 days have passed since symptoms first appeared and • At least 24 hours have passed since last fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and • Symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) <u>have improved</u> • Consultation with infection control program/infectious diseases division

- 3- Screen research team members on a regular basis for COVID-19 exposure through temperature readings while keeping a log of this activity for auditing purposes.
- 4- Implement **hand hygiene** before and after every interaction with participant while avoiding handshaking.
- 5- **Face mask** shall always be worn by researchers and participants. Encourage respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes.
- 6- For **high risk participants**, including those over 65 years of age or those with known comorbidities, who are not presenting for clinical purposes, the decision about in-person research visits to our site should be made by the study **principal investigator on a case-by-case basis**, weighing risks of person-to-person contact against the potential benefits of the study intervention and monitoring.
- 7- Implement and maintain **physical distancing** for at least 2 meters.
 - a. Marking out a distance of **2 meters** or blocking chairs between seats in common or shared spaces (i.e., reception areas, meeting rooms, waiting rooms, offices and other workspaces).
 - b. Choose strategies for recruitment that help minimize face to face interactions.
 - c. Discourage research team members from using other members' phones, desks, offices or other work tools and equipment, when possible.
- 8- Limit presence of participants to less than 3 at a given time while dedicating specific hours to high-risk populations, such as subjects who are above 65 years of age or those with known comorbidities.
- 9- Regularly **clean/disinfect** high touch surfaces and when visibly dirty (shared materials, equipment, workstations, keypads, etc.) using approved AUBMC disinfectants.

- 10- **Ventilate** the workplace daily, preferably with natural ventilation by opening the window; In case of AC, maintain recirculation with outdoor air. Avoid the use of individual fans.

- 11- For research protocols to be held outside AUBMC, these will be approved on a case by case basis upon ensuring that suitable arrangements have been put in place to protect participants and research team members during person to person encounters.