

RESEARCH  
LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Thursday, March 19, 2020  
4:00 to 5:00 pm  
WebEx

**Attendees:**

Zhiyuan Shen, X.F. Steven Zheng, Shridar Ganesan, Anita Kinney, Eileen White, Adam Berger, Elisa Bandera, Linda Tanzer, Chang Chan, Howard Hochster, Cristine Delnevo, Stephen Burley, Janice Mehnert, Paul Novembre, Gina Londino-Greenberg

**Agenda**

1. CINJ response to COVID-19 (Tanzer)
  - Communication is changing quickly.
  - CINJ is waiting on guidance from Rutgers University on who are considered essential personnel. This situation is very different from a closure due to inclement weather.
  - Rutgers/CINJ has never had a situation like this before. Therefore, the cancer institute will likely have to do some unprecedented things such as changing the essential classification, work tracking, etc.
  - Answers from Rutgers University are being tracked. Linda Tanzer is sending out definitive answers as she gets them.
  - The question was raised about how new patient visits are being handled.
    - o CINJ is continuing to look at ways to push out non-essential surgeries.
    - o The Medical Oncology division is also pushing back follow up visits as well as looking at telemedicine options.
    - o IPV's and therapeutic visits are still being handled as if there was no COVID-19 emergency.
  - There was also the question of whether laboratory operations would continue, including sending samples to the Shared Resources. The laboratory staff will be present for now.
  - The question was raised of whether there have been some cases of potential COVID-19 exposure at CINJ.
    - o Rutgers Employee Health would notify those who might have been exposed.
    - o There are not enough COVID-19 tests to proactively test, not even for just the clinic staff.
  - Questions were asked about what communication has been given out on follow up visits.
    - o The COVID Command Center will be coming out with communication soon.
    - o Efforts will be made to conduct these visits by telemedicine, and then to push them back if necessary.
  - The question was raised of whether patients and visitors are being screened for COVID-19.
    - o All patients and visitors are to have their temperatures taken when entering the building. No one is to enter without screening.
    - o There was an incident of a patient entering CINJ for an unscheduled lab test who was not screened due to an employee error. That patient was positive for COVID-19.
  - It was noted that pediatric patients are still being allowed to have visitors with them at the cancer institute.
  - The CINJ administrative building at 120 Albany Street in New Brunswick was deemed relatively safe for employees.
    - o However, it was noted that staff who can telecommute should do so.
  - Other Rutgers Departments are telecommuting.

- Robert Wood Johnson Medical school is very much under quarantine. Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital has many cases of COVID-19 and is navigating the patient care.
- CINJ is not equipped to have all personnel work remotely.
  - o There are issues with VPN access.
  - o Recommendations were made to use the cloud-based Box system rather than VPN.
  - o It was stated that Steven Libutti is on top of the preparations needed to help CINJ shift to telecommuting.
- The question was raised of how many CINJ staff were left who could be moved to telecommuting.
  - o There were quite a few staff remaining, but this number could change based on Rutgers University's changes to its Operations.
  - o CINJ must be careful in its classifications of staff, as the Unions do not want to see a surge in the number of essential personnel.
- Research plans will likely need to be given to RBHS and Rutgers UHR.
- Managers will need to submit who will be essential. That information should be sent to Christie Gallant-Spiezio.
- It is unclear how faculty will be impacted.
- CINJ is waiting on guidance for how to proceed with post-docs and graduate students.
- The question was raised of whether PIs can electronically sign FBS invoices.
  - o It was confirmed that they can do so, as this is done even when PIs are just traveling.
- The question was raised of whether interviews could continue for several Shared Resources-related positions.
  - o Interviews can continue, so long as they are conducted virtually.

## 2. Strategic Planning Retreat preparations (Tanzer)

- Focus groups had been getting assembled to report on metrics and other details.
- There was discussion of whether it would be helpful to still have the Strategic Planning Retreat as a virtual meeting or to instead postpone the event to Fall 2020.
  - o It was agreed that it was best for this Strategic Planning Retreat to be postponed to Fall 2020, and that planning for it should start ASAP.
- There was discussion of how to proceed with the External Advisory Board (EAB) meeting, scheduled for July 1, 2020.
- It was agreed that, due to how the CINJ leaders will need to devote significant time and effort to navigating the impact of COVID-19, it might be necessary to delay the EAB meeting to Fall 2020.
- An alternative suggestion was made to hold a shorter meeting to review the Research Programs and speak on what was being done to address the COVID-19 impact. In doing so, CINJ could fulfill its requirement for an annual EAB meeting.
- There was agreement that it was necessary to reassess the best type of EAB meeting to hold this year.
  - o Potential topics to cover at the EAB meeting included CINJ's efforts to mitigate the COVID-19 crisis as well as what the EAB members' institutions are doing to address this crisis.
  - o It was agreed that hearing from other cancer centers about dealing with the COVID-19 crisis could be very helpful.
- It was noted that the NCI is already aware that the pandemic will have a profound impact on clinical trial accruals and other research areas.
- Therapeutic clinical trials are to still be accruing for now. No accrual should be happening for non-therapeutic clinical trials.

- The question was raised about whether non-therapeutic clinical trials that could be conducted remotely (e.g. those in population science) could continue.
- Steven Libutti will need to be consulted for approval, as the Chancellor instructed the halting of all non-therapeutic (i.e. non-essential) clinical trials. However, it is possible that this guidance was not related to population science clinical trials.
- Howard Hochster will consult with Steven Libutti, and then get back to Anita Kinney.
- The Research Leadership Council was advised to think about the most useful course of action for the EAB meeting, and to send along the feedback to Linda Tanzer.
  - The feedback will then be presented to Steven Libutti for consideration on how to proceed with the upcoming EAB meeting.