

March 30, 2020

RBHS Biomedical Research Policy Update as Related to COVID-19 Pandemic Precautions

Dear Colleagues,

By now you should have received the directive from Dr. David Kimball, Senior Vice President, Research & Economic Development, dated [March 25, 2020](#). As a follow-up to Dr. Kimball's memo, the goal of this directive is to reinforce expectations and provide Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) researchers additional information that adheres to Rutgers University policy, Governor Murphy's [Executive Order 107](#) and the [CDC guidelines](#). In addition, research with animals continues to operate under Phase III restrictions, as defined in a prior March 20, 2020 communication from [Dr. Jeetendra Eswaraka](#). Note that the prior term "essential" has been replaced in this memo with "critical" to avoid confusion with legal and HR definitions. This policy is subject to change based on State or Federal directives, or other health safety needs.

Our primary goal is to provide a safe environment that prevents the spread of Covid-19, while allowing critical research operations and projects to continue. The **three major principles we will follow**, until further notification, are:

- All non-critical research and research-related activities must be performed remotely
- Strict adherence to social distancing must be adhered to
- No new projects/experiments which require in person presence at the University should be initiated, aside from COVID-related research.

Using the above principles as a framework, the specific policy parameters that we are instituting, effective Wednesday, April 1, 2020, are:

- 1) Non-critical research-related activities must be performed remotely and not onsite at Rutgers, with any exceptions requiring prior approval by the Vice Chancellor for Research.

- 2) Critical research activities are defined as those that if not carried out could lead to loss of important reagents or equipment. Examples include experiments that have already been initiated, maintenance of research equipment, and cryopreservation procedures and limited breeding of experimental genetic lines that are required to be maintained.
- 3) All non-critical laboratory personnel are expected to work remotely.
- 4) Laboratory research cores can maintain critical personnel to oversee key operations following the above strict criteria, in order to permit critical research activities to continue.
- 5) No more than one designated critical laboratory member can be in the laboratory at any one time. A rotation system among critical laboratory members is permitted.
- 6) Graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, but not undergraduate students, can be named critical personnel by mutual agreement.
- 7) Critical personnel must carry their Rutgers University identification at all times when on campus.
- 8) COVID-19 related bench or clinical research is not subject to the above policies but needs to be performed within safe and approved standard Biological Safety Level criteria and with all necessary precautions. For additional information related to clinical research see March 17, 2020 directive from [Dr. Kimball](#).

We wish to thank each and every one within our community; words cannot begin to articulate our appreciation for your patience and willingness to work together to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic. We are also grateful to the heroic efforts of our healthcare providers working on the frontlines. Together, we will create transformative knowledge and care that advances science and improves health. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the [RBHS Office of Research](#).

Your partners in research,

Kathleen Scotto, PhD
Vice Chancellor for Research, RBHS

Bishr Omary, MD, PhD
Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research, RBHS

David Kimball, PhD

Senior Vice President, Research & Economic Development, Rutgers University