FutureCare

November 6, 2020

Dear FutureCare Colleagues,

This year has been extraordinarily difficult for all of us due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has impacted our lives in so many ways. And it is not over yet!

The COVID-19 cases in Maryland are on the rise and we are in the midst of a serious resurgence of COVID-19 nationwide. As a result, we are seeing an increased number of our staff testing positive due to community exposure. This is a crucial time and we cannot let our guard down. It is prudent that we take **<u>extra precautions</u>** to keep ourselves, our families and the residents we care for safe from this deadly virus.

You have done so much already. But I urge you to keep up your guard over the holiday season by observing infection control practices to prevent COVID-19 from spreading in our communities and facilities. These include:

1. Good **handwashing** is essential to prevent spread of COVID as well as other viruses (like the Flu) and bacteria. You can use alcohol-based sanitizer if handwashing is not possible.
2. **Wear masks and shields** in every patient care interaction in the facilities, for your safety and for safety of the residents who you care for.
3. **Wear masks while in the community** for activities outside of your home, like grocery shopping.
4. **Wear masks correctly**. Masks should cover your nose and mouth completely. Don't remove your mask to speak, or cough or sneeze. COVID-19 particles travel at a high speed in a cough or a sneeze, so it is even more important to keep your mask on during those times.
   When masks are worn properly, they can protect against the spread of the Flu as well.
5. **Observe social distancing** of at least 6 feet whenever possible in addition to wearing a mask. Social distancing or wearing masks alone, may not provide adequate protection as compared to using both together.
6. **Avoid participation in large gatherings**, especially indoor gatherings during the upcoming Holidays. Large indoor gatherings are high-risk events for exposure to COVID-19.
7. If you are exposed to COVID-19, **observe strict precautions and isolate from others for *14 days***. 14 days is the general incubation period for the virus. It is extremely important to quarantine as directed. People who do not observe strict quarantine put themselves and others around them at risk of exposure to COVID-19.
8. If you are exposed to COVID-19, **let your facility leadership know immediately** so they can advise you on proper procedures. A negative COVID-19 test soon after exposure can be falsely reassuring as it can take up to 2-7 days after exposure for a test to be become positive. You will want to separate immediately from others after exposure and seek direction from your facility leadership.

I thank you for your efforts to continue to observe infection control practices, not just in the facilities, but also in your communities. We need to fight this virus together so that we can keep our loved ones safe. We will get through this together and we certainly will- but we cannot get relaxed about masking, hand hygiene, social distancing, and other precautions listed above. I am grateful for your support and patience!

Sincerely,

Fatima Sheikh, MD, MPH, CMD
Chief Medical Officer