March 19, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I appreciate your contributions to children’s health care issues in our area. On behalf of the department, I would like to offer the services of the pediatric subspecialists and faculty in the USA Department of Pediatrics and USA Children’s & Women’s Hospital to assist you in the care of your patients. I am fortunate to work with an outstanding staff who are dedicated, caring, and committed to bettering the lives of infants and children.

The health and safety of our patients and our healthcare team remains our highest priority. We are offering primary care and subspecialty services based on the level of contagion in our area. Our pediatric emergency department, hospitals and clinics are available to meet your patient’s needs.

When we receive referrals for subspecialty evaluation while coronavirus is upon us, we will seek to determine whether the reason for referral is a Time-Sensitive or Non-Time Sensitive Condition.

Time Sensitive Conditions are defined as those in which a delay could have potential negative effects on a patient’s health, while Non-Time Sensitive Conditions are defined as those for which postponement will not have a negative impact on the patient’s health.

Level 1 is present when there are no cases of COVID-19 in our hospital and there is minimal to no evidence of community transmission. For referrals received at this stage, our subspecialists will use shared decision making for appointments, discussing with parents/patients about the risks and benefits of proceeding or postponement of evaluation and management of non-time sensitive conditions. Subspecialty evaluation of chronic conditions may be delayed if the patient has acute symptoms that may be related to COVID-19 until the acute illness resolves. For our follow up patients, we have already begun to offer Telehealth visits and make that option available to our established patients who prefer not to travel to our clinic.

Level 2 is defined as confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our hospital and minimal to moderate community transmission. At this level, appointments and procedures for Non-Time Sensitive Conditions will be postponed and/or rescheduled, while shared decision making will be employed for Time-Sensitive Conditions discussing with parents/patients about the risks and benefits of proceeding or postponement of evaluation and management of time sensitive conditions.

Level 3 is defined as a substantial level of community transmission with burdens placed on Institutional resources taxed by COVID-19 disease load (personnel, supplies, hospital beds, ICU beds, blood availability). If this Level is reached in our area, priority will be placed on caring for the acutely ill patients. In this phase, evaluation and management of all time-sensitive and non-time sensitive conditions will be postponed, and only referrals for emergent and urgent conditions will be accepted.

I consider it a privilege to be given the opportunity to work with you in the care of children in our region. Thank you for your devotion to making children’s lives a little better. If there is any advice we can give to assist you in the care of your patients please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

David A. Gremse, MD, FAAP, FACP
Hollis J. Wiseman Distinguished Professor
Chair, Department of Pediatrics