

Letter from the Chair

Dear Colleagues,

When I last wrote to you in our March newsletter, the major newspaper headlines were dominated by stories of Coronavirus anxiety, pending travel restrictions from Europe, discussion of possible bailouts and New York State had just identified its first COVID-19 case. To me, those times feel as if they were long ago, not just roughly 100 Days past.

We have learned a great deal in these intervening three months, and I am certain we all have our own stories about how this Global pandemic has touched us, our colleagues and/or loved ones. It is no different for us as an institution; which faced the surge of COVID-19 patients with our typical resiliency, expertise, and compassion.

In this edition of our newsletter, I would like to highlight, the exemplary work that is being done by our department in our response to this deadly disease. The on-going work by our clinicians, house staff and researchers has truly been amazing.

In our feature, "**They are really 'Stars'**", you will see the dynamic and varied involvement of our residents, fellows, postdocs and graduate students. These past three months required fully commitment from all at the Medical Center and this group shined in their work ethic, flexibility and ingenuity.

You will also read about the substantial involvement of our faculty in the **Family Connect program** that was initiated to provide accurate and timely communication between the medical care team, COVID patients, and their families. Pathologists from the NYU Department of Pathology led by Drs. Syed Hoda and Neil Theise, worked alongside Radiologists, Dermatologists, Neurologists, Orthopedic Surgeons, and others to account for every single inpatient admission and communicate with patients' families.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge the significant contributions of our Clinical Laboratories headed by **Dr. Maria Agüero**, which has processed over 40,000 PCR tests for SARS-CoV2. This effort will be magnified as our workforce returns to campus and is required to be tested. We are also taking great strides in our Serology testing for anti-SARS-CoV2 antibodies, which is the next phase of testing to determine individuals who have been infected. When coupled with the sample collection efforts of CBRD, led by Drs. Cotzia and Moreira, from over 7,000 patients, the serology testing will generate significant data to help our research endeavors.

Speaking of research, the last three months have provided many opportunities to several of our clinical and research faculty. Some of these I would like to highlight below:

- **Drs. Snuderl, Maurano, Heguy** led a multidisciplinary NYU Langone SARS-CoV2 sequencing team to track the genetic evolution of the coronavirus in New York City. The study indicates that the coronavirus has been spreading in the New York City community for a couple of months since before testing started, and the particular genetic codes in most local viral samples show that they originated in Europe. (You can see more our Pathology Website). As you know the work was picked up by the NY Times and became Governor Cuomo's favorite discussion point.
- **Dr. Rapkewitz** initiated a study of COVID19 autopsies, whose findings led to a clinical trial to treat abnormal blood clotting. (More information can be found on the institutional COVID19 website.)
- **Dr. Krosgaard** is spearheading a vaccine-related effort to identify epitopes of SARS-CoV2 that are recognized by T cells, which will help with the rational design of a novel SARS-CoV2 vaccine targeting cellular immunity and efficacy during immune checkpoint blockade.
- **Dr. Koralov** is using a novel multimodal single-cell RNA sequencing technology to look at immune responses to SARS-CoV-2 in an effort to understand what productive vs. overexuberant responses look like and to determine the drivers of COVID19 immune related pathologies.
- **Dr. Wang** studies focus on SARS-CoV2-immune interactions, in particular the characterization of the proteins on the surface of immune cells that SARS-CoV2 binds to with the goal to advance neutralizing antibody development for COVID-19 treatment.
- **Dr. Reizis** conducts research that is specifically focused on analyzing the role that plasmacytoid dendritic cells (pDCs) might have in the innate immune protection against coronaviruses.

As you can see, our department's impact is far reaching and critical to the long term success of the Langone Health system. Each individual's effort and dedication is admirable and I am proud and thank each and every one of you.

Finally, as I mentioned in my previous communication on May 30, 2020, where I expressed my outrage of the tragic death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and inspired to action by the sounds of protests outside my window, I reiterate that the only way to counteract social injustice, ignorance and bigotry is to listen, discuss and educate. I am proud to say that our Department is a glimpse into the future of America, a place where everybody is included, respected and represented. If you look around our work place, you will see a diverse group of individuals that respect one another and are giving their all to push research boundaries, educate trainees and provide excellent care to our patients. I am planning to spend time meeting with all of you, hear your voices and try to find ways to champion inclusivity and fairness in our Department.

I hope that you will enjoy this Newsletter!

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