

In the last few months, we have come together as a team to battle COVID-19. During this unprecedented time, we have all been confronted with many challenges and have been required to make several modifications to our operations and workflow. Working through this pandemic has not been an easy task and the staff of AMI has worked incredibly hard to maintain the health and safety of our team while continuing to deliver compassionate and necessary healthcare to our patients. This week the state of New Jersey has reopened many businesses and elective surgeries were resumed. As we move forward in our state and local recovery efforts from this pandemic, we will all continue to be challenged by new recommendations and requirements issued by the Department of Health and the CDC.

AMI will continue our prescreening process upon scheduling and arrival for patients that have been flagged as potentially contagious or at an increased risk for COVID. Once the patient has been flagged as requiring additional screening they are placed into a list of "FSR" (further screening required) patients. The next step involves the aggressive gathering of patient medical information by our nurse triage team. When adequate information about the patient has been collected the nurse triage team works through a detailed decision-making process to evaluate the potential risk involved to both conducting and delaying the requested exam. In addition, current CDC recommendations are utilized to ensure that patients are outside the established timeframe warranting home isolation.

This algorithm continues to evolve as many patients are now presenting having recovered from COVID-19. These patients, despite being recovered and no longer considered contagious by the CDC standards often face new secondary medical complications that require urgent medical exams and treatment. In addition to the anticipated effects of long-term hospitalization, studies are also finding patients to have issues with hypercoagulability placing them at increased risk for blood clots in both small and large vessels. Patients often have spent prolonged time dependent on a ventilator with abnormally elevated oxygen requirements and pressure settings. This combined with damage caused by the viral process is proving to leaving long lasting lung complications for many patients. In addition to pneumonia and pulmonary embolisms, pulmonary fibrosis is also being identified in patients. As of 5/31/2020 the state of New Jersey has reported 160,445 confirmed positive COVID-19 cases with 11,698 of these resulting in fatalities. As the number of recovered patients continues to rise, our practice will need to adapt and be prepared to manage recovered COVID-19 patients and their secondary conditions.

This does mean patients who have previously had COVID-19 will potentially be scheduled for outpatient exams once they are deemed to no longer be contagious to others. We have already begun to see patients being sent post COVID for chest x-rays, CT scans and ultrasounds of extremities. This does not mean that staff or other patients should feel they are being placed at any increased level of risk in providing care. Patients should only be scheduled after the patient has been cleared by the nurse triage team. Adherence to utilizing appropriate PPE combined with the aggressive risk mitigation process that the triage team is employing should continue to ensure our AMI employees remain safe and healthy.

You have all done a wonderful job the last few months working as a team and ensuring safe care was provided to our patients. The flexibility, strength and resiliency that everyone at AMI has shown throughout this pandemic speaks volumes for our ability as an organization to overcome adversity and confront challenges together. As we continue to move forward please take a moment to recognize how much we have all grown both together and individually throughout this crisis. As our banners proudly say "Thank you team AMI. We are in this together"

### Upcoming Changes:

- Returning to pre-COVID schedules under increased precautions.
  - Evaluating benefits and processes for conducting temperature screenings of employees and patients upon arrival to our facilities. As we finalize these discussions additional information may be forthcoming.
  - Use of electronic forms to reduce time in waiting room and exchange of documents.
  - Continuation of "No Walk-ins", with reevaluation monthly.
  - Continued training on PPE use and indications
  - Continuation of efforts related to environmental care, obtaining PPE supplies, implementation of protective equipment ie. Sneeze guards, automatic dispensers, single use pens, etc.

### Reminders:

- Continue adhering to social distancing and masking policies previously implemented.
- Continue utilizing appropriate PPE during patient care.
- The current COVID Triage nurses include **Patricia Romano, Lisa Tetto and Joelene Piccinino.**
- Vineland and Bridgeton screening will also be conducted by **Joann Jandras.**
- Emails regarding patient screenings can be sent to the group at "COVID Triage" [covidtriage@aminj.com](mailto:covidtriage@aminj.com)