



“Providing an opportunity for multiple myeloma patients and their loved ones to come together to exchange information for mutual support, comfort, and friendship”

Meeting: Tuesday March 17, 2020 3:30pm – 5:30pm  
451 Junction Road  
Madison, WI  
UW West Clinic Room 1287

Enter the clinic... turn left and walk down a short hall...turn left again and conference room 1287 is the last one on the left.

Group Information:

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Information Sources :

International Myeloma Foundation (IMF)  
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Website: [www.myeloma.org](http://www.myeloma.org)

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Website: [www.multiplemyeloma.org](http://www.multiplemyeloma.org)

**Upcoming Meeting Speakers...** Mark your calendars now!

**Working on getting a speaker from SHIP** (State Health Insurance and Assistance Program) for the August meeting.

**Kelly Sidorowicz, IMF Regional Director Support Groups** will be our featured speaker in September.

**Dr Natalie Callander, UW Carbone Cancer Center** will join us at our October meeting.

Dr Aric Hall from the UW Carbone Cancer Center is our featured speaker for the March meeting. He will do a Q & A session starting at 4:30pm. Mark you calendar now!

**Coronavirus and Myeloma Patient Safety - Information from Dr Durie, IMF.**

In the U.S., the first possible case of what is called “community spread” has occurred in a California patient who has been diagnosed with coronavirus of an “unknown origin.” California is monitoring 8,400 people for the virus. Allegations arose that the U.S. government sent workers without proper training for infection control or appropriate protective gear to greet evacuees from Wuhan, China.

As new cases of the coronavirus multiply, what are myeloma patients to do? First, some basic facts:

- COVID-19 is a dangerous virus that emerged in December 2019 from a previously identified SARS virus in 2003. The likely source is the live animal market in Wuhan, China.

- According to the WHO, *the most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but do not develop any symptoms or feel unwell.*
- At least 2% of patients develop critical or life-threatening disease. Since this number does not include people with infection who do not have symptoms, the real percentage may be lower. Nonetheless, the COVID-19 is clearly more dangerous than seasonal influenza, which has a risk of critical disease of only 0.2% or less (that is 10 to 20 times less).
- As of February 27, 2020, COVID-19 has been reported in more than 40 countries and local transmission (community spread) is ongoing in Singapore, Japan, Korea, and Thailand.
- A nationwide analysis in China published in The Lancet has shown that patients with cancer and/or suppressed immune systems are at the highest risk for critical infections. Other risk factors were increasing age, smoking history, and other underlying illnesses, such as diabetes.

### **Practical recommendations as of February 28, 2020**

It is a top priority for myeloma patients to avoid exposure to COVID-19. According to the World Health Organization, this is what we currently know about how the virus is spread: *People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. This is why it is important to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick.*

Here are ways myeloma patients can minimize exposure and stay healthy:

- **Keep abreast to the latest recommendations:** the World Health Organization is posting up-to-date news on COVID-19. Also check your local public health department website for community alerts. The *New England Journal of Medicine* is publishing a free resource page featuring a collection of the latest COVID-19 clinical reports, management guidelines, and articles.
- **Avoid foreign travel:** Dr Durie suggests NO foreign travel for the time being, especially to Asia. Patients undergoing active therapy with immune suppressive treatments such as daratumumab, should not travel at all, as they are particularly susceptible to infection. For others, travel within the U.S., including Hawaii, continues to be fine for now, but stay alert for all details in daily news reports, which could include details of possible illness clusters.

#### **If you must travel:**

- **Keep your personal space extra clean:** Hand washing is very important. Wipe down your areas on a plane, train or automobile, bus, van or related transport.
- **Stay hydrated and remember to exercise periodically:** Exercise can help you to avoid blood clots.
- **Do not focus on masks:** They limit you from giving infection to somebody else but do not offer much protection for yourself. I suggest a personal air purifier, which really helps you from picking up infection from surrounding air. (The N95 respirator face masks are essential gear for

providers dealing with COVID-19.)

- **Avoid people who are clearly sick:** anyone coughing, for example.
- **Always travel with a supply of antibiotics:** Your doctor can provide the type that will best cover any infection they think you might be most susceptible to. Antibiotics such as cipro, clarithromycin, or amoxicillin are usually good.
- **Wash hands thoroughly and frequently:** Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.
- **Preparation with the annual flu shot is always a good idea.**
- **Stock up on medications, food and water:** Be prepared in case any concern develops about infection emerging among friends, family, or in the neighborhood, especially if local movement becomes restricted.

### **Lessons from Singapore**

How Singapore handled the outbreak of coronavirus can serve as an example of both preparedness needed and the potential impact on day-to-day activities. Very careful containment efforts proved successful. These included the avoidance of any mass gatherings, confined meeting, work, or living spaces, along with rapid monitoring and assessment of any potential new patients or contacts.

The Singapore story also carries a bit of good news. There were two types of clusters – one linked to Chinese tourists, the other of unknown origin. The latter had limited spread and no other cases observed. This seems to be due to a lower viral load in these instances of “community spread.”

### **Bottom line:**

Stay alert to the news. COVID-19 is undoubtedly something to be avoided, and we hope the risk of exposure will remain low in the U.S. Unfortunately, a vaccine will take time to develop, so it is encouraging that Gilead Sciences is accelerating trials with a new anti-viral agent called remdesivir.

The next two to four weeks will be key to understanding if new cases are emerging. The good news is that new cases are starting to decrease in China. In addition, the virus activity can be expected to drop off as we move into warmer weather. For example, the flu is a problem in the winter months and substantially decreases in late spring and summer. If this novel virus follows the traditional pattern, by April or May there should be a natural drop-off in infections.

**IMF Info Line** – If you or someone you care for has Myeloma, you have questions. Probably, lots of them. You can search the Internet all you want, but other than asking your doctor, there is no better way to get your questions answered than to call the IMF Info Line. Missy, Judy and Paul know their stuff and they want to share what they know with you. Just ask anyone who has called the IMF Info Line. Patients or caregivers are welcome to contact the Info Line staffed by trained specialists at 800-452-CURE (800-452-2873). The Info Line is staffed between 9am and 4pm Pacific Time, 11am to 6pm Central time or [infoline@myeloma.org](mailto:infoline@myeloma.org).

The Trillium Fund was established by our founding support group members to facilitate Multiple Myeloma research here in Madison at the Wisconsin Institute of Medical Research. If you or your family wish to donate or send a memorial to this program, checks can be made payable to the “UW Foundation – Trillium Fund” and sent to UW Carbone Cancer Center, University of Wisconsin Foundation, 1848 University Ave, Madison, WI 53726. Donations may also be made online at [www.supportuw.org/give](http://www.supportuw.org/give) (Trillium Fund in Multiple Myeloma Research – 112903576). For any questions, please call Daniel Rosen at (608) 264-5437 or email [curecancer@supportuw.org](mailto:curecancer@supportuw.org).