August 14, 2020

To all our families:

It is with deep sadness that I inform you that the ERRC resident who had been transferred to Ellis Hospital on Thursday has passed away after testing positive for COVID-19.

We have notified the family to discuss their loved one’s passing, and continue to offer our sincere condolences as we share in their grief. A death of someone close to us is undoubtedly the most stark reminder of the severe impacts of this disease. Once this crisis passes, and when it is safe to do so, we plan to honor and celebrate the lives that have been lost during this pandemic.

Until then, we continue to do all we can to protect your loved ones and are collaborating closely with the state Department of Health in our ongoing response.

Some of our residents, as well as family members, have rightly asked how this spread into our facility could have happened, especially in light of our strong track record since the pandemic began, and the fact that staff has been tested regularly and is wearing all recommended PPE.

Ellis Medicine’s Risk Management and Quality Services Department is currently investigating our employee cases and exposures. The Department of Health is providing additional oversight. While we have been strict in our adherence to all recommended guidelines and regulations, the positive cases we’ve witnessed over the past week remind us that all of our safeguards reduce risk; they are not 100 percent guaranteed protection from this swift, silent and highly transmissible virus. If I can offer any comfort, I’d like you to know that, when taking all of our precautions together, we do indeed lower risk of infection (see the list ongoing measures below my signature).

Presently, we are still awaiting the results of four tests of our residents and have no other staff or resident positives to report. Next week, we will again test all residents and continue with our staff testing protocol. Lastly, as I outlined in my communication yesterday, we are hosting two video conferences for families next week: at 10 a.m. on Monday, Aug. 17, and 3 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 18. Look for specific details in a follow up email later today.

We are all devastated by the new cases we saw this week. What’s more, this is a day when we lost a resident, a friend and a family member, and our hearts go out to those directly affected by this death. It is abundantly clear that we must continue to be relentless in our efforts to keep the virus from spreading. Please know that we take very seriously the trust you put in us, and never lose sight of the massive
responsibility we humbly assume when it comes to the care of your loved ones. I thank you for your support and know that we can get through these difficult times together.

With heartfelt sympathy,

Aimee Rathka, MSHSA, LNHA
Administrator
Ellis Residential and Rehabilitation Center

New and ongoing measures taken to protect the residents and staff from COVID-19

- We have ceased accepting new admissions until further notice.
- All staff members pass through two checkpoints daily for symptom assessment and temperature checks.
- All staff must wear masks when in the nursing facility unless in a non-resident area (e.g. office space) and alone. Masks are changed as per the CDC recommendations.
- Tracking of staff and residents is implemented as appropriate, so that we can readily identify exposure links.
- Telehealth options are being utilized to reduce the need for residents to leave the facility, thus decreasing potential exposures.
- There are no non-essential staff allowed on the units.
- Recreation programs are being conducted either on a one-to-one basis, by using "hallway programming" and ZOOM recreation programming on the Chromebooks.
- Infection control policies and procedures are reviewed frequently to ensure compliance with state and federal requirements, as well as to ensure they remain inclusive of best practices.
- Testing of staff occurs weekly. Results are reported to the CDC, Department of Health, and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services on a required schedule.
- Whenever staff have contact with residents, they are equipped with all recommended PPE and follow all Department of Health and CDC guidelines.
- All residents continue to have three-times-daily temperature checks and symptom assessments.
Contact Us

To be sure that you have an opportunity to have your questions on this case answered, the Nurse Managers on your units are available to take your calls:

**Stockade/3S:** 518-347-5400

**Mohawk/3W:** 518-347-5808

**Edison/2S:** 518-382-2166

**Supervisor phone (after hours):** 518-912-4861

You may also send questions to ERRCQandA@ellismedicine.org.