A message from Dr. Peter Yellowlees, Chief Wellness Officer

Thinking forward

We are all beginning to think differently about COVID-19; a sense of hope is in the air. More people are taking walks outdoors and dusting off bicycles...although many are still wearing masks. Despite the continuing shelter-in-place order there is a different feeling in the community, maybe it’s more like cautious optimism. A need to move forward and slowly reopen our community, as we realign ourselves with whatever will be the “new normal.” It is evident that we are beginning to transition out of the first episode of our interaction with this virus, or to quote Winston Churchill during the Second World War, “it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”

Hopefully any future episodes will not cause such death and dislocation, but we cannot predict the future. What we do know is that we have to keep up precautions against another local or widespread outbreak, and that these precautions are going to be necessary for at least 18 months. We can feel proud as a community that collectively we have faced an unprecedented challenge, risen to the occasion, fought hard and done very well.

So firstly, I want to thank all of you for all that you have done. For the sacrifices in your home lives, your work within our amazing health system and for significantly contributing to the health and safety of the larger communities that we serve. And I want to congratulate you, and all of us at UC Davis, for your part in “flattening the curve,” which in Northern California seems to have been quite effective. Well done.

I imagine that many of you, like me, are turning your attention to moving forward. Asking what
happens next. How do we transition from having to dramatically live and work so differently to getting back to a more normal way of life? When can we start having friends or family over for dinner? This entails thinking rationally about the best way of keeping safe, while gradually returning to our usual lives and activities. Many of you, like me, are doubtless doing a lot of reading and thinking about this. One of the best and most useful reports that I have read was published a few days ago by a group at Harvard, led by Danielle Allen, called “Roadmap to Pandemic Resilience,” [SEE HERE](#).

This report calls for us all to shift our thinking towards a strategically planned move to opening the country using TTSI, or “Testing, Tracing and Supported Isolation,” and away from the current initial approach of “Stay Home, Be Safe, Use Social Distancing.” TTSI aims to control the disease with massive testing and tracing efforts, while isolating and supporting only those at risk, rather than the whole community. To me this approach makes a great deal of sense and deals with the reality that this virus is going to be a continuing threat to all of us for some time to come. I hope we have a good debate about TTSI and can take a national and statewide approach that mirrors much of what is implicit in this strategy.

In the meantime, at a local level, changing our thinking and confronting many of our fears in as practical way as possible as we reopen UC Davis Health is the core of the local program, RESTORE, that is currently being developed. May I suggest that before anyone starts to imagine the practical issues we all have to confront, that you consider your own thinking. Below is a very interesting diagram that has been spread widely around the country, and which is being adopted here, asking the question of “who do I want to be during COVID-19?” The figure describes the psychological changes that many of us have made as we have moved from the “fear zone,” through the “learning zone,” to the “growth zone.”

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I suggest you look in detail at the thought examples in each zone and apply them to yourself. I have certainly done this. Try and gauge where you are. Think how you can help yourself, your
family and your colleagues move forward through these zones. It will help you psychologically make the steps we all have to make to overcome quite natural anxieties over the next few weeks as we reopen our health system and our lives.

I am personally very focused on the growth zone. I am convinced that we will successfully, as a group community effort, move forward to a new normal where we will see a silver lining of positive unintended consequences from COVID-19. There are many of these, ranging from improved relationships at almost all levels, to an increased team focus, more video and technology enabled clinical interactions, and a greater appreciation of the need for flexible schedules and training methods. I would love to hear from anyone as to what they are noticing, and what will be helpful for us all in the “new normal.”

In the meantime, do continue to stay safe, and look after your families and friends, and thank you for all that you are doing.

D6 Cardiology
“They all knew that I’m a hard stick and my vein moves, so they really took their time.”

Ortho Clinic ACC
“All care providers I’ve seen at UC Davis Health have explained things concerning my health problems in detail and where I can understand. They all have been friendly and professional, and are very good providers.”

Nephrology ACC
“Thank God for the clerks, receptionists, and doctor in office that takes care of me. Thanks again and may God bless you all and keep you all safe.”

Emergency Pavilion
“I was so amazed because there was a kind nurse that was even willing to pay for someone’s seizure meds. Unbelievable. Thank you for your love and concern that I needed.”
UC Davis Medical Group Carmichael Clinic
“\textit{I wouldn’t go anywhere else for my care !! Thank you UC Davis.}”