COVID-19 Update #19

Yesterday, I reported that senior leadership had approved a change in surgical/procedure mask usage. Several of you have reached out to me with concerns about the change in policy. The following note is intended to help clarify the changes.

Caring for COVID-19 and suspected COVID-19 patients:

- Healthcare workers should follow droplet/contact precautions (surgical/procedure mask, isolation gown, gloves and eye protection).
- When performing an aerosol-generating medical procedure, healthcare workers should use an N95 respirator.

Clarification of guidelines for usage of surgical/procedure masks:

- A surgical/procedure mask can be used over the course of many patient encounters, including in multiple clinical care areas. Please conserve your mask for as long as possible.
- Take care not to touch your facemask while wearing it. If you need to touch your mask, perform hand hygiene afterwards.
- We are asking you to wear your mask for multiple encounters unless it gets wet, damaged, soiled, or if it has been removed.
- If your mask gets wet, damaged, soiled, or if you remove it, the mask should be disposed of immediately.
- Take extra care when removing the mask as this is when self-contamination can occur.
- You should don a new mask for your next set of patient encounters, extending its use for as long as possible.
These guidelines will be rolled out in the next few days. Your leadership team will be discussing them with you and how they will be applied to your program/unit. We understand that in some circumstances, staff will require more than 2 masks per shift. Continue with your current practice until your leadership team has met with you to implement the changes. We will be reviewing these guidelines regularly and will be altering them based on advice from our Infection Prevention and Control team and an assessment of risk level in each program/unit.

I will be sending my regular update to all staff.