Coronavirus Concerns

A guest post from NMAC Communications Director Chip Lewis.

March 11, 2020 By Paul Kawata

The change of CROI and AIDSWatch to all virtual events has raised concerns in the HIV community about the Coronavirus and what it could mean to their health and what will happen to additional conferences and meetings over the course of the year.

While we fully support CROI and AIDS United's decisions to change their events, we know that these changes are surprising and concerning to many of our constituents.

At NMAC, we are keeping a close eye on developments. While USCHA is not until October, a point at which this outbreak will hopefully be well over, we are aware that there could be concerns as we get closer. Rest assured, we will notify you if we make any changes to this year's conference.

Our greatest concern at the moment is making sure that people living with HIV take the necessary precautions to protect themselves.

We would direct you to this article from POZ magazine, "What People With HIV Need to Know About the New Coronavirus." It provides the must up to date medical information and what to do to prevent exposure and what to do if you are sick, including:

- "Avoid close contact—meaning within about six feet—with people who have a cough or other respiratory symptoms.
- Wash your hands with soap and water thoroughly and often for at least 20 seconds.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are unavailable.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Healthy people do not need to routinely wear face masks to prevent infection, but use a mask if you are caring for someone who is ill.
- Get the flu vaccine. Older people should also consider getting vaccinated against pneumonia.

If you are ill:

- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your bent elbow, and immediately dispose of tissues in the trash.
- Avoid close contact with others.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- If you think you may have been exposed to the coronavirus, contact a health care provider promptly if you develop a fever, cough or difficulty breathing.
- Before you go to a clinic or hospital, call ahead so the staff can take appropriate precautions.
- Wearing a face mask can stop the spread of droplets that can transmit the virus to others."

There is no need to panic about this outbreak, but it is prudent to take the necessary precautions to prevent infection, particularly if you are 60 or older or have a compromised immune system.

As always, we are here to serve our community. We will get through this together.

Yours in the struggle,
Chip Lewis

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