



Groups@work:
Connection • Education • Leadership

March 12, 2020

Dear AGPA Members and Connect Attendees:

We have learned after our successful AGPA Connect 2020 meeting in New York, that some participants have reported viral symptoms upon their return home. At least two international participants have tested positive for COVID-19 after returning home as has one American member. We are not aware of any other participants who have tested positive for the virus, although access to the test is a factor in that.

Although we encourage everyone to be guided by the public health directives in their community, it does mean that our meeting participants have been exposed to the virus. I (Molyn) am self-isolating at present as is my family who were in NY last week; thankfully we feel well presently.

This is very concerning and we wanted to communicate to our membership directly. This is a period of notable anxiety and public concern; viral contagion and psychological contagion are both essential to address. We regret the impact of COVID-19 on our members, their families, their clients and our communities.

Please let us know through our AGPA Connect listserv, of others who have been or may be ill, and if there are others who have been able to be tested definitively, with either positive or negative results. That will be helpful for us all to know.

At AGPA Connect, one Institute participant, who lives in NY, contacted us upon learning that she needed to self-quarantine due to potential exposure to the Westchester outbreak. At no time did she have viral symptoms. Marsha, Eleanor and Molyn spoke with her, conferred with the CDC and NY Public Health and were advised that she did not warrant testing. We advised her Institute group at that time of her status. She completed her quarantine on Sunday and returned to work this Monday and has been well throughout.

We have all seen how the situation around us has changed very quickly, even in the last 24 hours, with the declaration of a COVID-19 Pandemic and significant restrictions on travel and large gatherings.

In addition, a larger number of participants who are well and asymptomatic have been or will be advised to self-isolate pending clearer information from public health.

How can we best respond as a community of colleagues, friends and group therapists?

- We will lend our full support to our members.
- This includes offering training and ongoing support to those who are now moving to online delivery of care. E-learning is developing that now.
- I (Molyn) have a PowerPoint talk about supporting health care workers that

builds upon my hospital's SARS experience and I am glad to share that.

- We will also support directly our members who are self-isolating and want to engage online in a community of support.
- Many of our clients will also be impacted directly by COVID-19 and many more will be impacted by self isolation and quarantine.

It is therefore important for us to utilize our understanding of the importance of social connection to help manage the impact of self-isolation that this pandemic demands.

Some key points with regard to self-isolation include:

- Communicating clearly about the nature and purpose of the restriction of autonomy: to reduce and to slow the spread of the virus; to allow health care providers a longer period of time to provide care, and reduce a clinical peak that could overwhelm health care capacity
- Ensuring adequate material supplies of food and medication
- Promoting social engagement indirectly and virtually
- Encouraging participation in recommended self-isolation and social distancing as a public health expression of concern for our communities and part of public citizenship.

We wish everyone well both with regard to their physical health and their psychological well-being.

We welcome feedback and recommendations from our membership as we bring together our resources to provide care and support for our members, their clients and our communities.

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