March 25, 2020

Dear FMDSA Community,

We are communicating to you in our role as longstanding volunteers for the FMDSA and members of its Medical Advisory Board and as clinicians who care for many patients with FMD. Our offices and teams have received questions from many of our patients about the COVID-19 health crisis and how it relates to FMD.

It has been reported that individuals of advanced age and with cardiovascular, pulmonary, or immunological conditions (among others) may be at risk of worsened outcomes with the COVID-19 virus. That being said, we are unaware of any direct connection between FMD and poor outcomes with the COVID-19 virus.

Patients have also inquired about high blood pressure as a risk factor for COVID-19 and whether certain high blood pressure medications should be started or stopped in light of the current health crisis. In a statement from the American Heart Association, American College of Cardiology, and Heart Failure Society of America released last week (see link below), it was recommended that ace-inhibitors, angiotensin receptor blockers, and other similar medications be continued for patients who are currently prescribed these medications. We agree with this statement, and we will continue to monitor guidance from our professional societies and the medical literature. Likewise, there is no convincing evidence that aspirin or other anti-inflammatory drugs (i.e. ibuprofen, Motrin, Advil, naproxen) should be avoided if they are recommended by your health care provider.

As this health crisis has continued to evolve, many health care systems and state governments have issued guidance on utilization of health care services and limiting exposure to the health care system if services are not essential. At our institutions, we are working to care for as many patients as possible with telephone or virtual health care visits and are limiting in person office visits to essential care. Many states and local governments have also issued shelter in place or similar orders to limit travel outside of the home.

We have received a number of calls from patients inquiring whether they should come to be seen for their annual FMD evaluation and imaging studies. For many of our patients who are stable and have no new symptoms, it is our opinion that such visits should be deferred until the burden of COVID-19 on the health care system lessens and to minimize unnecessary patient exposure. As we have discussed at our recent FMDSA meetings, the likelihood of FMD progression over time is low, and deferring scans for a period of 3-6 months seems prudent as such a delay is unlikely to result in serious problems. That being said, for any new or worsening symptoms, difficult to control blood pressure, difficulty with medications, and for any specific questions about the timing of your follow-up, we recommend you consult with your FMD specialist. In some cases, your physician may also be able to provide care to you by
virtual or telephonic means or your appointment may be rescheduled for a future time if not essential. It is also important to know that in some cases, FMD specialist physicians may be pulled away from their usual duties to cover other health services within their institutions during this evolving pandemic. For those of you who have experienced spontaneous coronary artery dissection (SCAD) with or without FMD, our message is the same as for patients with FMD without SCAD.

Be well and stay safe. Take care of yourself, as we know many of you also are taking care of your families. Eat well, try an exercise video or go for a walk, and get enough sleep. Watch a favorite movie or new TV show, listen to music, connect with old friends, read a book...relax and take a mental break from the COVID-19 news and social media. We know our resilient FMD community will get through this and carry on as we always do. Most importantly, follow the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention which can be found at the link below. It is important to recognize that these recommendations are constantly changing as more information becomes available.

Please know we are thinking of you as we all work through this together, and we thank FMDSA for its continued leadership in providing support to the FMD community worldwide.

Best wishes and stay safe,

Jeffrey W. Olin, DO  
Heather L. Gornik, MD

Links to resources and more information

Important information from the CDC:


AHA/ACC/HFSA statement on high blood pressure medications:


Sample guided meditations for stress relief and relaxation:

https://www.healthjourneys.com/partneraccess/index/display/token/-Zk-I9VOf8hdKT_A9hiNt3Ae1XJQnZNw72ws4MdKOC2uY9UHbQI7Bmee1oStmt_byY7SI3FWaE_haQ9nn1JpSjOxAVUi9-uYf1ZaOrFdaSqxliMvqMHOpwWqQNewUGli_OPNYtVsO8vluF7iosYFA