May 26, 2020

Aloha mai kākou,

As more people come back to our campus, I look forward to seeing more of you in the MEB and BSB in the coming weeks. Having greater social interaction with co-workers will be an uplifting experience for many of our students, faculty and staff.

As noted previously, Hawaii will continue to deal with occasional cases of coronavirus for months (if not years) to come. We are regularly learning more about the disease every day. We know that the most important action we can each take is to stay home during an illness. We will also maintain social distancing and encourage face cover use when students and employees are indoors.

We are collectively beginning to learn more about the true risk of transmission via different methods. We now know that the greatest risk for transmission is when a symptomatic person coughs or sneezes in a confined space shared with a previously uninfected individual.

Although there is still ongoing assessment of risk in other situations, we have a much better understanding of transmission of the virus by surface contamination. We now know that the actual coronavirus transmission rate by this method is quite small.

First, asymptomatic individuals, especially those wearing a face covering express relatively few microbes into the air (in distinction to those who are coughing/sneezing). Second, early recommendations based upon "science" have been largely theoretical based upon how small particles are dispersed onto surfaces (in enclosed environments) and how long coronaviruses remain viable on different surfaces under ideal laboratory conditions.

Third, infectivity by surface contamination means that one must be touching (and then introducing sufficient virus particles onto mucous membrane lined surfaces - mainly the nose, mouth, and (theoretically) eyes). Washing one's hands and/or using a skin disinfectant frequently when touching commonly used surfaces limits the exposure (and the amount of virus) available to introduce an infection.

In summary, the current belief is that community spread of coronavirus is many times more likely via inhalation than by any surface contamination transmission. This does not mean that we should not frequently wash our hands and use disinfectants, but it does mean that we will continue to emphasize social distancing
outside of the home and staying home when ill, especially in the setting of a fever, cough, muscle aches or other symptoms consistent with coronavirus infection.

Also, although the risk of coronavirus transmission by surface contamination is low, our JABSOM facilities team will continue to disinfect common area surfaces in both the MEB and BSB, promoting a safer working environment for our JABSOM ohana. Additionally, there are hand sanitizer stations on each floor for your use.

I look forward to your return to campus and seeing your choice of face coverings.

Jerris

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