Camp Taylor Statement regarding the current Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

The health and safety of our cardiac campers and families are of paramount importance to us. We know that the news about the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) can be scary and overwhelming for all of us including our children. There is little information specifically related to how children with congenital heart disease will fare, but I hope the below will help you stay informed and ease some of your concerns.

What we know about COVID-19: We know that COVID-19 is spread by droplets, which means if someone within 6 feet of you has the infection and coughs or sneezes, you could breathe in infected droplets and become infected. COVID-19 can also live on surfaces for up to a day or two, which means that touching a contaminated surface and then touching your face could be another way of catching it, particularly if you then touch your eyes, face, mouth, or other mucous membranes. For these reasons, it is imperative that we all practice social distancing, which means trying to stay away from anyone who has been infected with COVID-19 or anyone who might have symptoms suggestive of an infection such as fever, cough, or breathing trouble. Avoid gatherings of more than 10 people including school, mass transit, restaurants, and shopping areas and keep 6 feet away from others if you can. If you develop fevers, cough, or breathing trouble it is important to self-quarantine by staying home and contact your primary care doctor.

There is testing for COVID-19 available but there is a limited supply so you should discuss this with your primary care doctor. Only people exhibiting signs of COVID-19 infection or those that have exposed to infected individuals are currently being tested, but that could change depending on availability. There is no vaccine available for COVID-19 as yet, but there are multiple sources working on this currently. There is no firm timeframe for availability but typical vaccine development takes 12-18 months. With the current pandemic emergency, we are all hoping that it will be a lot faster.

What we know about children with CHD and COVID-19: COVID-19 is spreading rapidly in the US and our CHD kids have just as much risk of catching it as anyone else. There is no data to suggest that they are more at risk than others. The data suggest that elderly patients and those with underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for serious complications and death. I’ve gotten a lot of questions about underlying medical conditions and it is important to note that there is no data specific to kids with CHD. However, given that we know that children with CHD have a tougher time fighting infections in general, depending upon the severity, the best course of action is to reduce the risk of getting it (see above). For those children with the most severe types of CHD and particularly those with major complications or additional non-cardiac abnormalities, keeping them home from school and away from any place where there might be others who are ill or potentially contagious, would be wise. If your child does develop fever, cough, or breathing trouble, it is important that you contact your primary care doctor right away to determine if your child should be tested or even need evaluation in the Emergency Room. If your child is positive for COVID-19, it will be important to have them evaluated and closely monitored, possibly even admitted to the hospital.

Please know that the above information was the latest as of 3/17/20 and information is being released and recommendations may change as we move forward. I hope this information is helpful in providing you information and helping ease some of your concerns. Stay safe!

Kavin Desai, M.D.
Medical Director,
Camp Taylor, Inc.