Minimizing Risk – COVID-19

1. Introduction

1.1 COVID-19 is a virus that can cause upper respiratory infection and is spread through airborne and surface droplets produced by coughing or sneezing. Measures aimed at reducing the spread of the virus include: wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (ie. mask, face shield), coughing/sneezing into your sleeve or elbow, frequent hand washing, social distancing and remaining home if you are feeling sick or unwell.

2. Research Activities at the CFMM

2.1 The Government of Ontario has deemed research to be essential, however, the university, in-line with universities across Canada, have interpreted ‘essential’ as meaning ‘essential research’ — that is, research related to COVID-19 or studies requiring continuity of care and/or high investment longitudinal studies that would lose tremendous amounts of data if they were discontinued. The primary concern remains the safety of faculty, students, trainees, staff, research volunteers and the surrounding community.

2.2 Western has adopted a phased-in approach to research recovery. During the past several weeks, while in Phase 1, the CFMM has been working at both the faculty and institutional level to ensure that research operations may resume safely and efficiently in the upcoming weeks/months.

2.3 Research studies requiring MRI scanning are currently being reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the CFMM Core Director and approved by the ACC-CRT for animal studies and the office of the VPR for human studies to ensure criteria for essential research is met.

2.4 As Western transitions through the various phases, and research activities start to recover, the CFMM will resume MRI operations for Projects authorized to do so as per the guidelines laid out in the Western Research Recovery Plan and Research Recovery Plan: Animal-based Research. Continue to monitor the CFMM News at https://cfmm.uwo.ca for latest updates.

2.5 The CFMM will continue to exercise policies with regard to research activity, in line with the university operating guidelines to ensure safety with regards to COVID-19. These include measures such as donning appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), limiting the number of individuals permitted into the facility and ensuring appropriate disinfection of all high traffic surfaces prior to and following each research study, as described below.

3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

3.1 The Core MRI personnel must adhere to PPE guidelines in accordance with the currently mandated standards, as defined by the University, for dealing with human participants and animal models.
Further information regarding the current mandates and FAQs related to research operations at Western can be found at:

https://www.uwo.ca/coronavirus/research.html

## Scheduling, Screening and Limiting Exposure

### 4.1 An adjudication process (animal and human) has been implemented for approval of all research activities. This adjudication will occur at the Departmental/School and Decanal levels of each unit. Priority studies might include:

#### 4.1.1 New COVID research projects that need to ramp up as fast as possible.

#### 4.1.2 Projects with deadlines for publication, deadlines for student graduation, or extensive longitudinal studies where significant cost would be incurred.

#### 4.1.3 Grants or contracts that have specific time-sensitive milestones that need to be completed.

### 4.2 For human studies, mandatory pre-screening of research participants for COVID-19 related symptoms is required prior to scheduling.

### 4.3 A health screening questionnaire must be completed for all research personnel / coordinators prior to entering the Robarts:

#### 4.3.1 For Western personnel: https://myhr.uwo.ca/

#### 4.3.2 For external personnel: https://covid19checkup.ca

### 4.4 As research activities resume at the University, and within the CFMM, there will be restrictions pertaining to the scheduling of MRI time. Initially, while guidelines regarding research operations are being tested, the CFMM will enforce the following:

#### 4.4.1 Requests for scan time can only be made once ruling by operating unit has been approved.

#### 4.4.2 Scan time may only be booked up to 2 weeks in advance of the requested time;

#### 4.4.3 Exceptions to the 2 week rule will be made for longitudinal studies and exams which are time sensitive in nature; and

#### 4.4.4 The amount of available scan time, during this transition, will be limited and at the full discretion of the CFMM. All requests will be communicated through: cfmm-bookings@uwo.ca.

### 4.5 Social distancing measures will be followed at all times while at the CFMM as per the university mandated standards.

### 4.6 Research participants and research personnel require screening for COVID-19 related symptoms upon arrival for an MRI scan. Laser thermometry will be utilized to assess fever risk. Any participant or researcher exhibiting COVID-19 related symptoms (fever, shortness of breath, sore throat, cough, aches) are not permitted to be in MRI Zones III and IV.

### 4.7 The maximum number of individuals allowed within MRI Zone III during an MRI exam will be limited to: 1 research personnel, 1 study participant (for human studies) and 1 MRI
Technologist/Operator.

4.8 One additional person may accompany the subject for the study (caregiver, family member for human studies) but must wait in the reception area of the CFMM (Zone II) to allow for appropriate social distancing.

4.9 In special situations where a child or a participant is unable to provide informed consent, the family member or caregiver may be able to accompany the subject into Zone III, at the discretion of the CFMM Director or MRI Technologist.

4.10 No food is allowed in the control room at the scanners. Only water, in a sealed bottle, will be permitted within the MRI control room (Zone III).

5 Instructions to Study Coordinators / Research Staff for Arrival

5.1 Please ensure that you and your subject have done a safety assessment prior to arriving. For subjects external to the university community use the https://covid19checkup.ca online tool. If the tool indicates a potential infection, please follow instructions and contact cfmm-bookings@uwo.ca indicating you will not be attending the session.

5.2 You will be required to enter the main entrance to Robarts, from the Dental Circle. Press the intercom button on the left side of door and the security guard will let you in.

5.3 Security will be notified of your approximate arrival time and call the MRI scanner when you arrive. Someone from the CFMM will come up and get you.

5.4 It is preferable that both you and your subject (along with any accompanying family member/care giver) arrive wearing masks, and continue to do so while walking through the building. Masks will be provided if you don’t have one. If any accompaniment is required, it is encouraged to keep as minimal as possible (ie. one accompanying partner per research subject). This additional person will be required to remain masked, within the MRI waiting area, should they need to stay for the duration of the scan.

5.5 The subject does not need to wear the mask once in the MRI unless comfortable doing so.

5.6 The CFMM is trying to limit the number of people in the MRI area - so, if you don’t need to be present for the scan then you can leave and come back when finished. The MRI tech will contact you upon completion of the scan.

6 Decontamination

6.1 Scheduling of MRI scans will now include a 30 minute buffer prior to and immediately following each scan. This allows adequate time for disinfection of all equipment and surfaces prior to the start of any subsequent research scans – and to replace linens in the case of human studies.

6.2 The CFMM uses disinfectant cleaners, proven to be effective against the COVID-19 virus, as set out by Health Canada. The 30 minute buffer time will also allow research personnel from one group to leave, prior to the next group’s arrival, reducing the number of individuals in the facility at a given time.
## Revision Chronology

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<tr>
<th>Version Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>200.01</td>
<td>23 April 2020</td>
<td>First Version draft SC/MB</td>
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<tr>
<td>200.02</td>
<td>04 May 2020</td>
<td>Further changes TS and JG</td>
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<tr>
<td>200.03</td>
<td>20 May 2020</td>
<td>Addition of section 4.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>200.04</td>
<td>01 June 2020</td>
<td>New section 4.1 – 4.4 (JG)</td>
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<tr>
<td>200.05</td>
<td>04 June 2020</td>
<td>Update Sect 2 and Insert Sect 5</td>
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**CFMM Director Signature:**

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**Date:** 04 – June - 2020