OGMP Coronavirus update 05/06/2020

Hello!

We hope you are encouraged, as are we, about the continuing decline in the number of COVID-19 hospitalizations both at Yale New Haven Hospital and across the state of Connecticut. While we all understand ever more deeply the multitude of ways this has impacted us as individuals, families and our society as a whole, there is reason for hope.

We have a few things to share:

VIRTUAL TOWN HALL: A couple of weeks ago Dr. Fleischman and the Yale New Haven Hospital Obstetrics Department held a very well-attended and well-received virtual town hall (link here). We are excited to announce another virtual town hall meeting tomorrow, Thursday, May 7, at 7pm. This is a wonderful opportunity to hear from an expert panel of obstetricians, midwives, pediatricians and nurses as they share the latest information about COVID-19 and pregnancy and how Yale New Haven Hospital is ensuring the safety of you and your growing family. In addition, you can submit questions either in advance or live during the discussion. Please see the attached flyer for details on how you can join this exciting event on Zoom (password 709643), Facebook Live or by phone.

HOSPITAL UPDATES: There are no changes to the policies we have outlined previously. We do want to make sure that you are aware that the Perinatal Education Program continues to evolve in this distance-learning era and starting soon will be offering Maternity Tour Webinars in addition to an expanding list of eClasses on topics such as breastfeeding and childbirth education. To learn more, please visit their website.

OFFICE UPDATES:

ULTRASOUNDS AND FETAL MONITORING: For a variety of reasons, some of our patients need follow-up ultrasounds or antepartum testing (also referred to as non-stress tests, or “NST/MVP”). We are very excited to report that we have expanded our capability to do this in our offices. We are hopeful this will make follow-up much easier for you! If you are advised at your anatomy ultrasound that you will need a follow-up ultrasound, you can book this with our sonographer at our office to be done in coordination with a prenatal visit. Likewise, if we determine that you need antepartum testing we will coordinate with you to have this done during your prenatal appointments.

OFFICE HOURS: While not quite “business as usual” (keep reading to learn about important safety precautions we are taking), we have resumed normal office hours 8am – 5pm. We have also opened up all of our offices – we can once again see you in Shelton, New Haven, Guilford and Essex. You may notice that we are seeing an increasing number of gynecology patients to ensure that they can receive essential health care services, and as such we would like to reiterate the policies we have in place to ensure your safety.
**CORONAVIRUS SCREENING:** All patients are pre-screened by phone and undergo additional screening at check-in for recent travel, symptoms of COVID-19 and recent contacts with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. In addition, we have expanded our screening to include routine temperature checks for both our patients and our staff. Be assured that we are not allowing patients with symptoms or known infection to come into our offices. All patients continue to come alone to all appointments, and appointments are spaced to optimize our ability to directly move patients to the exam room and minimize time in the waiting room.

**INFECTION PREVENTION:** We continue to meticulously sanitize our exam rooms and all equipment used in the course of your care, as well as high-touch surfaces. We have set up clear physical barriers at check-in and check-out as an added layer of protection beyond the masks that you and we are already wearing.

**A NOTE ABOUT ANTIBODY TESTING:** Several clinical laboratories have developed tests that are designed to detect antibodies to the coronavirus in an effort to determine whether a person has previously been infected with the coronavirus. While there is hope that antibody tests will provide important information about who is and is not at risk of future coronavirus infection and may be something that is widely recommended in the near future, at this time we do not know enough about the accuracy or usefulness of antibody testing. There is widespread concern that these tests do not provide reliable results. In addition, little is currently known about whether people who have previously been infected by the coronavirus will develop immunity (in other words, whether antibodies to the virus protect you or others in any way). We will be sure to let you know if and when antibody testing is recommended for you.

Finally, we would like to address a couple of concerns that we are increasingly hearing about from our patients and in the news media:

**PERSONAL SAFETY:** We know that some of our patients are suffering in silence, and we want to encourage you to speak up. Whether you reach out to us over the phone, through MyChart, or during an office appointment, we want to remind you that you can safely and confidentially share with us any concerns you might have about intimate partner violence, food insecurity, or other devastating impacts the coronavirus has caused to your life. We want to help. Additionally, there is a statewide hotline that is open 24/7 at 888.774.2900 or online at www.CTSafeConnect.org.

**PREGNANCY CONCERNS:** Some of our patients have asked us about recent news reports highlighting case reports of preterm labor and tragic pregnancy outcomes potentially related to coronavirus, and it is important to us that you have the most up-to-date and accurate information. We are vigilantly monitoring the data, and while the full impact of this pandemic will not be known until we have the benefit of hindsight, current data indicates that pregnancy does not confer an increased risk to women who contract the coronavirus and similarly the coronavirus does not confer an increased risk to your unborn baby. When a family suffers the unexpected loss of an unborn baby or pregnancy complication there is a strong desire on the part of the family and the physicians to find an explanation, and oftentimes we do not have clear answers. When the unexpected happens and a pregnant mother is also infected with the
coronavirus, there is likewise a tendency to link the two even if there is no causative effect. We are watching the same news you are, and we are scouring medical publications to understand what the data reveals real-time during this pandemic. Please continue to seek our expertise as you read or hear news that may concern you. We are committed not only to staying as up to date as possible on how this pandemic may impact you and your baby but also to being honest with you.

While spring has sprung and there is cautious optimism in the air, we know this time has taken its toll on all of us. Please know that we continue to be here for you, carefully monitoring your pregnancy and supporting you through this exciting time in your life.

Warm Regards,

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