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2020-05-15 A Message from Chancellor Roth

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HEALTH SCIENCES

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A Message from Chancellor Roth

Dear Colleagues:

The past couple months have presented our health system with unprecedented operational challenges. Today, I'd like to review some of the progress that has been made since the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic and what we expect in coming weeks.

First, some context. On March 13, when we first announced plans to move most of our non-clinical employees off campus, a total of 137,445 cases had been reported worldwide, with 5,088 deaths. There were just 33 deaths in the U.S., and none in New Mexico.

Today, 4.48 million cases have been confirmed worldwide. The U.S. has had 1.46 million cases, with 87,603 deaths, and in New Mexico we have had 5,503 confirmed cases and 242 deaths. Clearly, the scale and speed of this pandemic is unlike anything we've seen before.

In March, University of New Mexico Hospital was on track to end FY 20 with a \$35 million operating margin. Now, largely due to the cancelation or postponement of most surgeries and procedures, we'll end the year with no operating margin. This is according to information provided by UNMH CEO Kate Becker.

Anticipating that UNMH and Sandoval Regional Medical Center could see a surge of COVID-positive patients, and knowing that we needed to protect other patients, we converted some of our ICUs to COVID-only units. Other units in the hospital were repurposed, and some of our in-house ambulatory care clinics were moved offsite. In addition, many other operational and technical adjustments were made. We also had a dramatic downturn in our UNM Medical Group clinics as patient appointments were rescheduled.

Going forward, we will begin reversing the process, returning to full operations. Our outpatient clinics will adapt to the new COVID-defined norms, however, enforcing social distancing for registration and waiting rooms.

Likewise, as our surgical cases resume, we'll need to manage them with an eye to preserving our supply of personal protective equipment and ensuring that we have sufficient beds available in the event of a surge of new cases.

We'll also work to achieve net margins generated from operations, not stimulus funds. Meaning we will work to make our finances whole through clinical operations and not just from supplemental funding from the government.

I had the chance to round at both SRMC and UNMH recently. Getting to see all the hard work that has been happening in person was really remarkable. I am grateful for all the hard work each of you has put in over the last few months and the work you will continue to do as we return to full operations.

I'd like to thank CEOs Jamie Silva Steele and Kate Becker and their entire leadership teams for the superb job they have been doing of keeping the ship afloat, ensuring that New Mexicans will continue to have access to the many advanced health care services that we alone provide.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul B. Roth".

Paul B. Roth, MD, MS
Chancellor for Health Sciences
CEO, UNM Health System
Dean, UNM School of Medicine

Please visit the [New Mexico Department of Health website](#) for the latest COVID-19 updates.