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Spring 4-15-2020

2020-04-15 A Message from Chancellor Roth

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Recommended Citation

Roth, Paul B.. "2020-04-15 A Message from Chancellor Roth." (2020). https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/hsc_chancellor/25

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A Message from Chancellor Roth

Dear Colleagues:

There has been much discussion recently amid the tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic about how it has disrupted daily life and when we might begin returning to normal. I'd like share some thoughts on the subject.

While I understand the incredible economic and personal sacrifices being made by New Mexicans to keep each other safe, I want to ensure we all understand the science underlying these decisions. Just as there is an imperative for preparedness and the development of plans in anticipation for when terrible things happen, there must also be plans for the recovery from these terrible events.

Lately, some have been asking, "Is the treatment becoming worse than the disease?" The devastating toll on families from shutting down businesses – especially small businesses – and the cumulative effect on our state's entire economy is unquestionable, and in many instances heartbreaking.

From my vantage point there are early signs that the spread of this plague is beginning to slow down. That is the good news.

The bad news is that every time in the past 100 years when societies in similar situations have begun relaxing basic public health measures, such as staying at home and dramatically reducing contact with others, there have been sudden resurgences of the disease. That's what we are seeing in China and Singapore today resulting in many unnecessary deaths.

Following the H1N1 outbreak from 11 years ago, it took at least 17 months before the World

Health Organization declared an end to the pandemic, and in the wake of the relatively mild SARS epidemic in 2002, it took more than seven months for the Chinese economy to recover. I honestly believe that for the health of all of us, we must continue stringent public health measures. I know that this touches many of you deeply, you have business, livelihoods, everything at stake. My thoughts are with you, and because I care that's why I felt the need to share with you why I think these tough decisions are still the right ones.

Let's stay the course until we have clear indications of lower risks to our communities and then judiciously and selectively open up our shops and neighborhoods.

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.