

**Frank D'Ovidio, MD, PhD**  
Thoracic Surgeon  
*Surgical Program Director*  
**Joshua Sonett, MD**  
Thoracic Surgeon  
**Bryan P. Stanifer, MD, MPH**  
Thoracic Surgeon  
**Genevieve Reilly, DNP, FNPC**  
Chief Transplant Coordinator  
**Maggie Carroll, PA-C, MS**  
Transplant Coordinator  
**Jamie Hum, DNP, FNP-BC**  
Transplant Coordinator  
**Margaret Nolan, DNP**  
Transplant Coordinator  
**Hanyoung P. Kim, RN, MSN**  
Senior Transplant Coordinator  
**Carlo Balthazar, RN, MSN**  
Transplant Coordinator  
**Blair Wiggins, RPA-C**  
Transplant Coordinator

**Selim Arcasoy, MD, MPH**  
Pulmonologist  
*Medical Program Director*  
**Lori Shah, MD**  
Pulmonologist  
**Hilary Robbins, MD**  
Pulmonologist  
**Meghan Aversa, MD**  
Pulmonologist  
**Luke Benvenuto, MD**  
Pulmonologist  
**Tamar Garner, RN, BSN**  
Transplant Coordinator  
**Altigracia Taveras, RN, BSN**  
Transplant Coordinator  
**Jennifer Moses, RN, BSN**  
Transplant Coordinator

**David Fedoronko, MD**  
Psychiatrist  
**Nicole Pieszcata, PT**  
Physical Therapist  
**Brenda Klein, RD**  
Transplant Nutritionist  
**Aimee Layton, PhD**  
Rehabilitation Medicine  
**Sasha Storaasli, LCSW**  
Social Worker  
**Melinda Greene, LCSW**  
Social Worker  
**Stemmiejoi Haynes**  
Financial Coordinator  
**Tracey K. Diaz, BA**  
Compliance Analyst

 **NewYork-Presbyterian**  
The University Hospital of Columbia and Cornell

Lung Transplantation Program  
New York-Presbyterian Hospital  
Columbia University Irving Medical Center  
622 West 168th Street-PH14  
Room 104  
New York, NY 10032

TEL 212 305 7771  
FAX 212 342 5382

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Dear patients and your support team,

It has been a difficult week for many Americans, especially those of us in the tri-state area. You and your loved ones must be extra concerned hearing about how COVID-19 can be especially dangerous for people with lung disease. Please rest assured that our entire team is here for you to help and support you regardless of what stage you are in the transplant process.

We realize that you may have questions and concerns regarding your evaluation and waitlist status at our program. We would like to update you on some of the important changes we made in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

- In order to minimize potential exposure and spread of infection, we are converting most of our office visits to video visits. This will help reduce the need for you and your loved ones to travel. However, we will see you in person if an in-person exam and updated testing are absolutely necessary to make the right care decision for you.
- We made arrangements for most of our coordinators and staff members to work remotely. This is to help reduce the spread of infection, which is now widespread in the community. Whether we are physically in the office or working remotely, everyone, including our schedulers, coordinators, and physicians are working together to ensure that all your needs are met without delay. We ask that you leave a detailed voice message if you are unable to reach someone directly when you first call. Our administrative staff frequently checks for voice messages so that we can take care of your needs promptly. We also ask that you sign up for MyConnect (aka MyChart), our new patient portal system. Instruction on how to do this can be found on <https://columbiasurgery.org/video-visits>. Please contact your primary scheduler or your coordinator if you need more information and assistance.
- Your waitlist status at our program will not be affected by COVID-19. We will continue to follow you to ensure that your status remains active and updated, particularly if you become sicker. Please continue to keep us informed about your health as well as any change in your phone number, travel time, insurance, and support system.

- We are meeting regularly to carefully determine the best course of action as your transplant team as well as a healthcare institution in this unprecedented time. Healthcare providers are forced to make difficult decisions based on the rapidly evolving world-wide crisis and severe limitations in resources. When we receive donor offers, the following points are being carefully considered in order to weigh risks and benefits of transplant for each patient.
  - COVID-19 is now wide-spread in the community, and donors and recipients without any symptoms can potentially spread the infection. We plan, as is possible, to test all donors and recipients at the time of offer for transplant.
  - Having negative test results in the past does not ensure that one is free of infection now.
  - Post-transplant antirejection therapy may increase the risk of COVID-19 infection and its complications should infection occur.
  - Hospital units have been converted and dedicated to the treatment of COVID-19 infected patients.
  - In the present crisis situation, transplants are being performed after carefully weighing and deciding when the potential risk of death from advanced lung disease outweighs the potential risks associated with COVID-19 infection. We are actively screening donor lung offers and considering transplantation based on quality of donor lungs, potential recipient's severity of illness and resources available at a given time.

In the event that you develop symptoms of COVID-19 infection, such as fever, increased cough and shortness of breath, body aches, sore throat and diarrhea, please call your primary doctor and inform your transplant coordinator for instructions on further assessment.

Once again, we want to emphasize that we are and will always be here for you. As scary and uncertain as the situation is, nothing changes our commitment to provide the best care possible for you. Please do not hesitate to reach out and share your concerns with us.

Best regards,

The Lung Transplant Team at Columbia University Irving Medical Center  
NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital