Dear BIC Community-

I am writing to inform you about several changes to BIC operating procedures in response to Covid-19. Please read through this information carefully to help protect the health and safety of your research participants and yourselves.

After consultation with the office of the Vice President for Research, BIC facilities will continue to be open for human participant research, with some new constraints and policies to reduce risk. All policies are effective immediately.

1. **Prohibited scanning of high risk research participants.** Until further notice, please refrain from collecting data with research participants from groups at high risk for Covid-19 (as defined by the CDC):
   - Over 60 years of age
   - Underlying health conditions including heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes
   - Weakened immune system
   - Pregnant

2. **Perform health screening both prior to and at the time of a research visit.** We are also implementing additional health-related screening procedures for research participants. Screening forms will be available in all BIC facilities and at this link within 24 hours: [https://wikis.utexas.edu/display/IRC/Health+Screening](https://wikis.utexas.edu/display/IRC/Health+Screening)

   If during your initial pre-visit screening an individual responds “yes” to any of the screening questions, please do not schedule them for a visit.

   Participants should also complete a paper version of this screening on the day of their visit along with the MRI screening form. Again, if they answer “yes” to any question, please discontinue the study visit. The completed health screening form should remain with the MRI screening form. The BIC will retain these screening forms separate from research data.

3. **Changes to late cancellation and no-show policy.** Until further notice, we will not charge users for late cancellations or no shows. For instance, if a participant answers “yes” to any of the health screening questions during their visit, you will not be charged for cancelling that session.

4. **Please screen your own health before conducting research at BIC facilities.** If you are ill, please stay home. Researchers should also use the health screening form to assess their own health before conducting research at the BIC. If you are able to answer “yes” to any of the health screening sessions, please cancel your session. You will not be charged for late cancellations due to your own illness.
5. Please follow enhanced disinfection and cleaning procedures for all BIC facilities and equipment. Detailed disinfection and cleaning checklists will be available in BIC facilities and at this link within 24 hours: https://wikis.utexas.edu/display/IRC/Disinfection+Protocols

There will be checklists for all BIC facilities, including the scanners, the mock scanner, and all testing/patient procedure rooms. It is important that all shared equipment and hard surfaces in common areas be disinfected between usages. There will also be checklists for sanitization procedures to follow during your scanning session.

Checklists will be posted in all BIC areas with a note on where to find the necessary supplies for cleaning. At the end of your experimental session, you will have to complete a physical checklist to document your adherence to the disinfection and cleaning protocols.

BIC staff will also host Zoom conference sessions in the coming days to train researchers on our new disinfection and cleaning protocols. Please keep an eye out for emails about these sessions.

6. Please book 1 extra hour between scanning sessions. Moving forward, we ask that you book an extra hour of scan time after your session for two main reasons. First, this policy is meant to constrain the number of individuals in the scanning suites at one time, thus limiting group contact. We want to avoid overlap between research groups to reduce health risks. Second, booking 1 additional hour after your session will give you adequate time to insure you complete the disinfection and cleaning checklist. You will not be charged for this additional hour. You should schedule this 1-hour block separately from your main experimental session, noting that it is for cleaning/disinfection purposes.

7. Please do not reuse sheets or blankets. Sheets and blankets should be used only once and then placed in the laundry. We are in the process of ordering additional blankets to accommodate single use. Until we receive additional blankets, you may have to use multiple sheets in lieu of a blanket for patient comfort.

8. Please use gloves when placing individuals inside the scanners. Both your research participant and your research team should wash their hands immediately before entering the scanner room (or interacting with the mock scanner). Researchers should don gloves before interacting with the MRI scanner (or mock scanner) and when placing participants in the scanner. We have a large supply of latex gloves. You will need to screen your participants for latex sensitivity prior to the scanning session. If you or your participant has a latex sensitivity please email support@biomedimaging.utexas.edu for additional guidance.

9. Leave all lights on. To minimize contact with hard surfaces, we ask that you leave the lights on in all rooms within the BIC to avoid contact with the light switches.
10. Please use the larger conference rooms instead of the smaller testing rooms. For the time being, please use the larger conference room(s) for testing and other procedures while you are in the BIC areas. The conference rooms will allow for better social distancing. They can be scheduled using FBS.

If you have any questions regarding these policy changes, please email support@biomedimaging.utexas.edu, and we will do our best to respond promptly.

Given the evolving situation, these policies are subject to change, and we will communicate any changes as quickly as possible. Use of the facilities in the Health Discovery Building (HDB) will additionally be subject to Dell Medical School policies, which may differ from those set by the Vice President for Research for campus-based resources. I will alert you to any policies that impact BIC resources in HDB as soon as possible.

Thanks in advance for your cooperation,
Ali