

08.12.2020

Dear Students and staff members

Re: COVID 19 spread within faculties of the UOR

It is disheartening to note the detection of COVID 19 affected students within two Faculties of the UOR. On Saturday 05.12.2020 two students from the FOE were detected to have COVID 19 on random testing. The affected students are from Gampaha and Kalutara districts. All the students of the FOE except a group of final year students went home by force by bringing in buses on their own with the onset of the second wave of COVID 19 in the country against the advice of the Vice Chancellor and university authorities. **Best option with an outbreak is to stay at same place despite hardships and not get exposed to the virus by travelling while adhering to health guidelines.** They returned to FOE on 27.11.2020 with PHI reports, negative PCR reports from few students from lock down areas to recommence practical work and examinations after the quarantine period within the hostel. During the random PCR testing two of them became positive. All the other students had been tested with PCR now and none are positive. However, all the measures to contain COVID 19 within FOE had been taken now with strict quarantine of close contacts and other second line contacts.

Similarly, two cases were reported from the FOM on 02.12.2020 on random testing of 160 samples. Then another 302 PCR tests were done on 03.12.2020 and all were negative. Another four cases were detected after PCR tests of all the FOM students in hostels on Saturday 05.12.2020. None of them, despite being attached to clinical training groups have contracted the disease from the TH Karapitiya. All the affected students have violated travel guidelines/restrictions issued at the beginning of the second outbreak. They had travelled to their residences from hostels without informing the wardens, student counsellors and without writing their names on registers for departures from the hostels. They also have not divulged this information voluntarily until the investigations were done following the detection of COVID 19. If not for this irresponsible behavior these could not have occurred inside the UOR premises. Clinical training and academic activities are now suspended until further notice in the Faculty of Medicine except online teaching.

The entire scenario is now being handled by the Medical Officer of Health and the health system responsible for COVID 19 response on the guidelines given by the epidemiology unit and the Regional Epidemiologist. Further investigations are underway to find out potential exposures among staff and students.

In this situation it is our responsibility to help health staff to contain the COVID 19 within the Faculties affected and not allow the disease to spread to the community and the other faculties. It could be done only by adhering to health guidelines. This is a social responsibility and please ensure this.

Very unfortunately other students suffer due to quarantine regulations and postponement of examinations and undue prolongation of the course. I request all the students of all faculties to adhere to health guidelines of restricting travel, social distancing, hand washing and wearing face masks. This is being done for their own benefit to graduate them on time during a pandemic where the end is not predictable.

UOR has taken enormous amount of trouble to keep the environment safe for students and staff. This is to ensure early graduation without prolonging the stay within the University. This approach will benefit in the long run to all undergraduates and the country at the end.

I have noted that some forces spreading malicious unscientific propaganda under these circumstances. Please do not fall prey into these forces and support the University authorities to maintain a safe bio secure environment for all undergraduates and staff of all levels.

Thank you

Yours sincerely

Prof. Sujeewa Amarasena

Vice Chancellor