Dell Medical School Guidance for
Human Subjects-Related Research Visits at University of Texas at Austin during the COVID-19 Outbreak
Effective March 13th, 2020

Background

In the context of recent municipal and institutional statements on COVID-19 and the rapidly evolving outbreak, the Dell Medical School Office of Research has established this guidance related to human subjects-related research visits. This is being implemented to protect research participants, researchers, and the larger UT community from risk of infection with COVID-19 as well as to ensure ongoing access to research which may provide essential support and care to participants. This policy will be revised weekly or when appropriate based on new information and circulated to the Dell Med research community. It will also be available on a Dell Med Office of Research intranet page, and accessible to anyone without intranet access at: https://intranet.dellmed.utexas.edu/public/covid-19-research-guidelines.

Please send questions and comments on this policy to:
DellMed.Office.Of.Research@austin.utexas.edu

Remote Visits

Research visits should be performed remotely (e.g., by phone, Zoom, Webex) whenever possible.

Non-Essential Research Visits

Research visits that cannot be performed remotely and are not essential to a participant's health and/or well-being should be postponed until further notice. Currently, the determination of whether or not a research visit is "essential to the health and/or well-being" of a participant is determined by the principal investigator of the research study, the participant, and the participant's care provider, and should be informed by current public health guidance regarding the COVID-19 outbreak.

Essential Research Visits

Research visits that cannot be performed remotely and are essential to a participant's health and/or well-being may be performed in person, with the following additional guidance:

a. Participants should be provided with information regarding the current COVID-19 epidemic and how best to reduce their risk of infection. If possible, this information should be shared before the research visit. See the following CDC COVID-19 link for reference and materials:
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/

b. All research participants should be screened for fever, cough and flu-like symptoms by research staff prior to the research visit if possible, with repeat screening by research staff at the time of an in-person visit. See UTHA Screening Form or BIC Screening Form.

For on-site screen-positive assistance, please stay where you are and call UT Health Austin:

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c. When using BIC Equipment and/or facilities please follow the enhanced disinfection and cleaning procedures posted at https://wikis.utexas.edu/display/IRC/Disinfection+Protocols

Enrollment of new research participants

Enrollment of new participants on a clinical trial or other human subject-related research should be allowed only if: 1) participation in the trial is essential to a participant’s health and/or well-being, as determined as above; or 2) the enrollment and longitudinal participant management can be conducted remotely for the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Study Sponsors

Principal investigators or their designees are asked to contact study sponsors to notify them of this guidance and make appropriate arrangements. All sponsor visits for clinical trials or other human subject-related research, whether for site qualification, site initiation, or monitoring visits, should be postponed whenever feasible. Consideration for remote monitoring should be based on study need and resource availability.

Additional guidance is available at:

UT Austin office of the Vice President https://research.utexas.edu/covid-19-research-faq/