

May 04, 2020 | By Jackie Carr

UC San Diego Health Offers Virtual Appointments to Patients with COVID-19

Video visits help patients recover at home under guidance of infectious disease experts

While almost 30 percent of patients who contract COVID-19 require hospitalization, most are able to recover at home. UC San Diego Health now offers a specialized telemedicine clinic to help patients with COVID-19 return to good health in their homes under close observation of an infectious disease team.

“Our goal is to help the patient recover comfortably and with confidence,” said Michele Ritter, MD, clinic director, UC San Diego Health. “Treating COVID-19 can be vexing because symptoms can fluctuate throughout the day. Our team helps patients manage their care with over-the-counter measures and prescription medications when necessary.”

Patients are referred to the COVID-19 telemedicine clinic from within UC San Diego Health and the community. Patients undergo consultation with an infectious disease physician with access to other caregivers. Interactions may include daily phone calls from a triage nurse. Patients may also have the opportunity to participate in clinical trials and research studies related to COVID-19.

“The primary symptoms we hear from patients tend to be extreme fatigue, cough and headaches, as well as anosmia (loss of smell) and ageusia (loss of taste),” said Ritter. “Other symptoms, recently recognized by the CDC, include muscle pain, headache and sore throat.”

Ritter says that managing one’s mental health during a bout of COVID-19 can be almost as challenging as the physical symptoms. Because patients are required to isolate at home,



Michele Ritter, MD, infectious disease expert at UC San Diego Health.

separate from family members, extra support is needed.

“As expected, anxiety is very prevalent with these patients. Our team provides appropriate support and reassurance to help accelerate healing,” said Ritter. “Sometimes the best medicine is kindness and communication.”

To increase access to medical care during the pandemic, UC San Diego Health has expanded use of video visits by more than 50 fold. Telehealth visits are now more than 50 percent of all outpatient visits. Employing the [MyUCSDHealth app](#), patients can safely and securely conduct video visits, plus access their medical record and other services.

Ritter is a board-certified infectious disease specialist and the UC San Diego Health infectious disease clinic medical director. She cares for patients with COVID-19 and other severe infections, including those caused by multi-drug resistant organisms.

Prior to a telemedicine visit, patients will be required to provide a copy of a positive COVID-19 test (PCR nasopharyngeal or oropharyngeal swab) from the previous seven days. The insurance provider will be consulted to determine coverage and referral requirements.

Members of the community who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and seek telemedicine care from an infectious disease expert may call 619-543-8263.

MEDIA CONTACT

Jackie Carr, 858-249-0456, jcarr@ucsd.edu

UC San Diego’s [Studio Ten 300](#) offers radio and television connections for media interviews with our faculty, which can be coordinated via studio@ucsd.edu. To connect with a UC San Diego faculty expert on relevant issues and trending news stories, visit <https://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/media-resources/faculty-experts>.