Submission of Proposals for COVID-19-Related Research

Effective Friday, March 20, 2020, all proposals to conduct essential COVID-19-related research project(s) require review by Senior University Administration and Department Chairs. In addition, the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) will review all COVID-19-related research using biological materials.

To address timely review of research the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) is meeting weekly. Investigators wishing to perform essential COVID-19-related research should submit for each project:

1. A brief proposal (no more than one page; submit to biosafety@columbia.edu) that identifies the scope of research, any aerosol generating procedures such as centrifugation or FACS, and very specifically the type of SARS-CoV-2 viral material employed.

   Examples include:
   - Viral culture from a repository
   - Virus isolation from specimens
   - Respiratory specimens from COVID-19 patients (swab, BAL, endotracheal wash)
   - Clinical specimens from COVID-19 patients (blood, urine, fecal)
   - Cadaverous tissue
   - Material subjected to viral inactivation in the University’s Biobank
   - Material subjected to viral inactivation in a Columbia University research laboratory
   - Material not inactivated, processed for shipping
   - Material subjected to viral inactivation before receiving at Columbia University (non-infectious)
   - Full length viral RNA
   - Pseudotyped viral vector (lentiviral, VSV)
   - Viral genes in plasmids


In order to follow CDC guidance for any work with SARS CoV-2 specimens, specific protocols must be developed, reviewed, approved and then trained on, and strictly followed in order to eliminate the primary mode of SARS-CoV-2 transmission: through direct or indirect contact of mucous membranes with infectious aerosols/droplets and possibly fomites. In the research laboratory many routine procedures can potentially generate aerosols and droplets that are often undetectable. The following laboratory procedures have been associated with the generation of infectious aerosols and droplets: centrifugation, pipetting, vortexing, mixing, shaking, sonicating, removing caps, decanting liquids, preparing smears, flaming slides, aliquoting and loading specimens, loading syringes, manipulating needles, syringes or sharps, aspirating and transferring blood and body fluids, sub-culturing blood culture bottles, spilling specimens, and cleaning up spills.

Please ensure that all proposal and Appendix submissions explicitly address these and other aerosol-generating procedures, including engineering controls, administrative controls and personal protective equipment that will be used to meet applicable guidance. Also, investigators are strongly encouraged to avoid the submission of Appendix A documents describing work at multiple levels of risk. For example, the use of non-inactivated samples should be separated from work with pseudotyped virus, or segmented RNA.

Note – Requirements related to the use of in vivo models for COVID-19 research will be forthcoming and will include submission of IACUC protocols in addition to the above.