November 4, 2014

To the MUSC Family:

Since my October 16th letter pertaining to the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, much has emerged in the news media regarding travel to and from that region. The Medical University leadership has been closely monitoring information and recommendations by state and federal government agencies, and by other universities and medical centers, to ensure necessary steps are taken to protect the health and safety of the MUSC community. To that end, the following travel policies will now apply across the MUSC enterprise (MUHA, University, and MUSC Physicians).

1) Travel is restricted for all MUSC related purposes to Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. These restrictions align with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s issuance of the Level 3 Travel Warning (the highest level of warning) urging all U.S. residents to avoid non-essential travel to these countries. Other countries may be added to this list if conditions change.

2) Exemptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will require the approval of the appropriate MUSC authority. Please contact Kathleen Ellis at ellisk@musc.edu in the MUSC Center for Global Health for more information on how to apply for an exemption.

3) Personal/volunteer travel to Ebola-affected countries to deliver health care or other services is discouraged but recognized as an individual choice. You must use PTO or leave, and you should provide advance notification of your plans to your direct supervisor and to the MUSC Center for Global Health. We urge anyone considering going to one of these three countries to carefully evaluate the substantial risks. Medical evacuation is extremely limited, as private carriers are not currently allowed to bring medical evacuees into the U.S from Ebola-affected countries. While the CDC and the U.S. Department of State are assisting with medical evacuations out of the affected areas, you should be aware that individuals who show any signs of fever, whether exposed to the disease or not, face significant challenges leaving these countries and risk being quarantined together with potential Ebola patients.

4) Those returning from travel - whether university-sponsored or personal travel- to any Ebola-affected country are required to contact their supervisor and Employee Health Services (792-2991) or Student Health (792-3664) to report their return. This should be done immediately upon returning home and prior to returning to campus in order for MUSC to
provide the necessary support and clinical guidance to monitor the individual’s health and to protect others. Returning travelers should also strictly adhere to any requirements imposed by the state of South Carolina.

5) Anyone considering hosting visitors who have been in affected countries in the previous 21 days must first consult with Employee Health Services who will help develop plans that will assure safety for the host and others.

Any MUSC individual - whether on university-approved or personal travel - who fails to adhere to these guidelines may be subject to disciplinary action.

Please be advised that travel to other parts of West Africa should be carefully evaluated due to local country restrictions on incoming and outgoing visitors, even if those areas are not presently at risk of Ebola virus disease. We will continue to provide updates about the evolving situation, countries under current CDC travel advisories, and links to resources.

Yours in service,

David J. Cole, MD, FACS
MUSC President