Coronavirus FAQ section on “Research”

Can I continue conducting research?
Research laboratory operations that are generally limited to small groups, will continue. Postdoctoral researchers, graduate students and scientific staff should consult with their advisors and lab supervisors about how to best pursue operations during this period. You must follow precautionary health and hygiene measures. Additional guidance for the safe conduct of research are below.

Can I prescreen research participants for exposure to COVID-19?
Research participants may be asked to complete a short screening for exposure COVID-19 before in-person interactions.
1. Have you travelled to China, Iran, Italy, Japan, or South Korea in the past 14 days?
2. Have you had any of the following symptoms in the past 14 days without confirmation as something other than COVID-19 (such as a positive flu test, chronic medical condition, etc.)?
   - Fever greater than 100.4 deg F?
   - Cough?
   - Difficulty breathing?
   - Sore throat?
3. In the last 14 days, have you lived with, visited, cared for, or been in a room for a prolonged period of time with someone who is under investigation or has been confirmed for COVID-19/coronavirus infection?
If participants say “yes” to any of the questions, it is recommended that you reschedule testing for a later date and direct them to https://www.vanderbilt.edu/coronavirus/

Can I conduct my study remotely or halt my study?
You may choose to conduct research remotely, via phone, email, video conferencing, or online survey/software. These changes must be approved in advance by the IRB as an amendment to your original protocol. Each situation will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

You may also choose to voluntarily halt participant enrollment in a study. Temporary enrollment holds can be reported to the IRB as an amendment to the protocol prior to the hold with a rationale for why the hold is in the best interest of the participant.

The IRB does not require prior reporting for any activity that is taken to avoid immediate hazard to a participant, however the IRB should be notified within a reasonable time-frame.

What other precautions should I take for human subjects research?
1. Be especially considerate of participants that are high risk for serious illness from COVID-19.
2. Consider revising the cleaning protocols, such as more frequently disinfecting equipment used by researchers and participants.
Can I study the virus on campus?
Any researcher who is planning to receive any biological specimens from COVID-19 patients (or any other materials associated with SARS-CoV-2) must file a biological materials registration or amendment with the VU Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC). The IBC must review and approve the risk assessment and biocontainment plan for the proposed activities before shipment/transfer of these materials is initiated. (Note: This is not a new requirement but a reminder of the existing requirements for using any potentially infectious materials that have not been previously documented with and approved by the IBC.)

Who can I contact if I have questions about research?
Please email rds@vanderbilt.edu or ovpr@vanderbilt.edu if you have any questions.