April 2016

Dear Faculty Member,

As we continue to work on bringing the current outbreak of norovirus infection under control, I write to ask for your help in reducing the spread of this highly contagious virus. It is essential that ill students stay away from other people while they are sick and for 48 hours after the vomiting and/or diarrhea stops. With the typical duration of illness being 24 to 48 hours, students with the norovirus infection may need to miss class for four days. Please make it clear to students in your classes that they are not required to attend class during this 3-4 day period. You will not only help limit the spread of illness among the students, you will also substantially decrease your own risk of becoming infected.

Likewise, during the norovirus outbreak, UHS may not be able to see and evaluate every student who becomes ill while vomiting and diarrhea are present. As a result, we won’t be able to provide objective verification of the student’s illness. In the vast majority of cases, we advise you to take the student’s word if they claim they have been ill. While we are keeping a list of students who have contacted us with acute onset vomiting and diarrhea, we know that many other students have had the same symptoms without contacting us. No one is any better off if we hand out statements attesting to a student’s illness after the student has recovered.

We appreciate your understanding and support of this approach under these extraordinary circumstances. As always, you are encouraged to urge students who are having more severe or longer lasting symptoms to make an appointment to be seen at UHS for evaluation. With the student’s permission, we can discuss the relevant issues with you so that you can make an informed decision about any particular case.

Please feel free to contact me by mail, email (rmanchester@uhs.rochester.edu) or phone if you have any questions or concerns. We also have useful information on the UHS website (www.rochester.edu/uhs), including more detailed information on norovirus infections.

Sincerely,

Ralph A Manchester, MD, FACP
Vice-Provost & Director, University Health Service
Professor of Medicine