On Saturday afternoon, University Health Service Director Dr. Ralph Manchester alerted undergraduate students that a number of River Campus students had experienced an illness marked by the sudden onset of nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. As of today, the total number of students who have reported these symptoms is 37. We have not identified any common source of exposure. The most likely cause is the Norovirus, but this has not been proven yet.

University Facilities staff have been working to sanitize all River Campus and Eastman School common areas and bathrooms, and these aggressive efforts will continue and be supplemented with an outside service called ServPro. ServPro will be on River Campus and at the Eastman School beginning Tuesday morning with hygienists and sanitization crews to thoroughly clean common areas and surfaces.

This onset of illness is not exclusive to the undergraduate population, but it does appear to be most concentrated among undergraduate residential students. Again, all undergraduate residence hall common areas and bathrooms are being disinfected, but individual living spaces should also be thoroughly cleaned by students. Clorox wipes are effective in ridding surfaces of the Norovirus.

For undergraduate residential students who live in apartments where they clean their own bathrooms, special antiseptic wipes designed to kill the Norovirus will be provided. These special wipes and instructions will be delivered directly to these groups of students on River Campus and at Eastman. Graduate students and off-campus undergraduate students who also wish to obtain these wipes can get them directly from the UHS River Campus Office or UHS Eastman School Office, starting Tuesday morning.

As of 10 am this morning, every restroom on River Campus, with the exception of private office bathrooms, has been sanitized. In response to the current health event, Facilities has implemented a comprehensive surface sanitizing protocol, which will continue until further notice. University shuttles are included in this protocol. Riverview and Brooks Crossing facilities teams—not part of the University—have been advised to adopt similar sanitizing protocols.

Additionally, students may soon receive a communication from the Monroe County Health Department requesting participation in a survey about this illness. Students providing information through the survey can help health officials target key areas that the illness is being transmitted.

Below, please review Dr. Manchester’s first notice (sent Saturday to undergraduate students) about this illness and how to address it. We cannot overemphasize the importance of frequent handwashing with soap and water. For CDC handwashing guidelines, see: http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html.

For CDC information on Norovirus, see: http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/preventing-infection.html.

Subject: Message from UHS Director Dr. Ralph Manchester
Saturday, April 9
In the last 48 hours, the University Health Service (UHS) has become aware of approximately 20 River Campus students who have had sudden onset of nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Some have gone to the Strong Memorial or Highland Hospital Emergency Departments, some have been seen at UHS and some have had only phone contact with us. We have been working with Environmental Health and Safety and the Monroe County Health Department to determine the cause of this outbreak. So far, it does not appear to be food borne, but the investigation is ongoing. The most likely explanation is a Norovirus infection, similar to outbreaks that happen on cruise ships. However, this has not been confirmed either.

UHS advises all students and others who spend time on the River Campus to pay extra attention to hand hygiene. While alcohol-based hand sanitizers may offer some protection, washing your hands with soap and water is the most important way to avoid acquiring this type of infection. A link to the CDC website’s Norovirus prevention information is listed below.

Students who develop nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea should follow standard self-care guidelines: do not put anything in your stomach for 2 hours after vomiting, then start drinking clear liquids such as ginger ale or a sports drink. If you’re feeling lightheaded, have a high fever, see blood in the vomit or diarrhea, have abdominal pain or still having symptoms after 48 hours, call UHS at 585-275-2662. This number is answered at all times; a physician is on call when the office is not open.

http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/preventing-infection.html

Ralph A. Manchester

Vice Provost and Director

University Health Service