Dear Colleagues,

Each fall, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) focuses on some aspect of biosafety for individuals engaged in research in the life sciences. This year’s theme is ***The Role of Biosafety and Biosecurity in Mitigating Risk.*** Since the beginning of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered our world. In both our professional and personal lives, we have all been asked to make significant changes to mitigate the risks associated with this pandemic. It has become increasingly clear that tackling the pandemic and mitigating its effects requires teamwork and cooperation. Biosafety and biosecurity professionals have played a critical role in helping mitigate the effects of the pandemic and have been called upon to work on new and challenging problems to protect our communities and the workplace. **Remember that a safety culture** begins with the Principal Investigator (PI).  By embracing and encouraging safe attitudes and behaviors, you show that safety is valued in your laboratory. As a PI, you have the responsibility to ensure that the lab operates safely and that personnel are informed of the potential risks, wear the appropriate PPE and are adequately trained.

* **Enforce the current UM social distancing polices and safety practices when working in the lab environment.** Be mindful of reducing population density, wearing masks at all time in shared environments, and washing your hands routinely. Practice proper decontamination and disposal procedures and donning (applying) and doffing (removing) personal protective equipment (PPE).
* **Report all laboratory incidents promptly** to Environmental Health and Safety (EHS). This is a requirement of both NIH and UM. It is UM’s policy that each incident that results in an injury, exposure, or severe illness to faculty, staff, or students be appropriately documented and reported.  Exposures must be addressed with an appropriate immediate response, the initiation of first aid, and followed by medical follow-up if needed. EHS must be notified immediately at 305-243-3267 and the IBC office notified at IBCsupport@miami.edu within 24 hours.
* Review your ***Biohazard Exposure Response SOPs*** **or Biological Review Assessment forms associated with IBC and IRB approvals** to ensure that all research personnel know the SOPs for the lab and what to do in the event of a biological accident/exposure in the work place.  For work-related injuries or illnesses, it is essential that appropriate safety procedures be followed. By reviewing these SOPs with each laboratory worker, and placing it in a prominent place in your lab, you can ensure that all individuals will respond quickly and effectively in the event of an exposure.
* **Check the safety signage in, around, and outside of your lab to ensure it is up to date and still relevant.** New signage can be downloaded from the [EHS Biosafety web page](https://ehs.miami.edu/) or can be obtained from the Biosafety Office directly.
* **Update your Biosafety, Bloodborne Pathogen, and Laboratory Safety trainings** for the entire lab. EHS will have several open sessions during the month of October. Contact EHS at 305-243-3400 for more information.
* **EHS has added a new Biosafety Officer, Shane Gillooly.** Shane joins Biosafety Specialists Melanie Peapell and Angel Rayo. You can email the Biosafety Team directly, or indirectly at biosafety@miami.edu. For assistance or guidance on anything in your lab, you can start by checking out the new Biosafety webpage located on the EHS website.

Let’s build a biosafety culture together,

Erin Kobetz, PhD, MPH

Institutional Official

Office of the Vice Provost for Research and Scholarship