

In unified voice, industry tells feds what's needed for COVID-19

MAR 19, 2020

Andis Robeznieks

Senior News Writer

What's the news: Coordinated steps must be taken by the federal government to ensure a stable and continuous inventory of medical supplies, to strengthen provider capacity by making appropriate alternative sites of care available, and to ensure access to critical medicines without disruption.

The AMA and 17 other health care and medical industry organizations included those recommendations in a letter to Vice President Mike Pence and congressional leaders.

“The private sector will deploy every necessary resource to match this moment,” the letter states. “It is absolutely essential for a coordinated government response to leverage the full force of the President’s national emergency declaration.”

Why it's important: The organizations that signed the letter represent the nation’s doctors, hospitals, nurses and other health professionals, specialty and post-acute facilities, clinical laboratories, health insurance providers, biopharmaceutical manufacturers, pharmacy benefit managers, and distributors—speaking in a unified voice to federal decision-makers.

“We test, treat, cover, and serve patients,” the letter states. “We develop, deliver, and manage medications. And we provide essential medicines, machines, treatments, and supplies to providers across the country. Today, we stand united.”

Regarding the need for a continuous inventory of medical supplies, the letter states:

- Critical supplies such as testing equipment, personal protection equipment for those delivering front-line care, and respiratory support for patients are in unprecedented demand.
- With the invoking of the Defense Product Act, the federal government is urged “to expeditiously move” to spur increased production, distribution and access to gowns, masks, gloves, testing kits, testing swabs and respiratory machines.

Regarding strengthening provider capacity, the letter recommends the following:

- | Modifying existing facilities in and around hospitals, including the construction of temporary units where needed, making use of surplus government property and adding beds to prioritize critical patient needs.
- | Maximizing the use of telehealth and making it easier to deliver care across state lines.
- | Removing restrictions on in-home care and improving patient flow and information sharing between facilities to reduce the burden on acute-care settings.

Regarding access to critical medications, the organizations recommended:

- | Assuring that drug manufacturers can provide a free flow of medications and related goods by avoiding mandates that can disrupt the supply chain.
- | Allowing and facilitating “safe and expedient” patient access through home delivery and early refills.
- | Guarding against unnecessary stockpiling.

“These solutions represent opportunities to immediately increase medical capacity and testing, enhance our national supply of critical medical equipment required to meet unprecedented demand, protect our front-line care providers and lab technicians, and improve treatment for patients,” the organizations state in the letter.

Learn more: The AMA is teaming with the essential partners in health care to reach the highest levels of government to fight for physicians and patients. Visit the COVID-19 resource center for a comprehensive place to find the latest resources and updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization.

The AMA is channeling and speaking for physicians on the front line and removing the obstacles physicians and health systems face in combatting this pandemic.