

COVID-19 safety: Don't bar physicians from wearing their own PPE

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Sara Berg, MS

Senior News Writer

What's the news: Physicians and hospitals continue to report there are inadequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect against COVID-19. There is also an emerging issue of hospitals barring physicians and other health professionals from wearing their own PPE during this shortage. During this time, the AMA supports frontline physicians and other health care workers in using their own PPE while fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

"As physicians and other frontline health care workers across the U.S. continue to face dire shortages of personal protective equipment, the AMA fully supports them in using their own face masks and respirators when these critical resources are unavailable and not provided by their employer," said AMA President Patrice A. Harris, MD, MA.

Learn more about the plea to the nation from doctors fighting COVID-19: [#GetUsPPE](#).

Why it's important: It is important to protect those who are working on the front lines to heroically care for people afflicted with COVID-19. Reports across the country state that hospitals are prohibiting staff from bringing in their own PPE because it goes against policy, the safety is uncertain and wearing masks when caring for patients without COVID-19 will scare them.

"The people working round the clock to combat this virus should not be penalized or punished for taking precautions necessary to protect themselves, their patients, and their families from the spread of COVID-19," said Dr. Harris. "We are pleased that The Joint Commission updated its guidance (PDF), and provided an evidence-based analysis, to clarify that its policy does not prohibit health care workers from bringing their own PPE from home."

Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes that physicians and other health professionals should exercise caution when using homemade masks. These masks should also ideally be used in combination with a face shield that covers the entire front and sides of the face.

The AMA continues to “ensure those on the front lines have the PPE and other medical supplies they need to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. In a letter to the President, the AMA reiterated the Association’s concerns about shortages of PPE and urged “the federal government to lead a coordinated effort to make sure facilities capable of manufacturing PPE are doing so at the maximum possible capacity.”

Learn more: Stay up to speed on the AMA’s COVID-19 advocacy efforts and track the fast-moving pandemic with the AMA’s COVID-19 resource center, which offers a library of the most up-to-date resources from JAMA Network™, the CDC, and the World Health Organization.

The AMA also created a physician’s guide to COVID-19, which features resources on how to optimize the supply of PPE.

Meanwhile, *JAMA* has put out a call for ideas on how to conserve the supply of PPE that already has generated hundreds of responses. The *AMA Code of Medical Ethics* offers foundational guidance for health care professionals and institutions responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Learn more about how the AMA is supporting physicians on the front lines of COVID-19.