

# COVID-19 front line: Mount Sinai keeps physician well-being in focus

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**Sara Berg, MS**

Senior News Writer

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The well-being of physicians, nurses and other health professionals is critical to help health systems and hospitals meet the growing needs of COVID-19 care. Keeping well-being in mind, a New York health system enhanced existing and created new resources to provide ongoing support for those on the front lines of care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

From basic needs like childcare and food to mental health and supportive counseling, Mount Sinai Health System in New York City maintains an up-to-date list of resources for all health professionals and employees, keeping their well-being at the center of focus.

The AMA provides practical strategies for health system leadership to consider in support of their physicians and care teams during COVID-19.

“Just a few weeks ago, New York City had its first case of COVID-19 and very quickly we realized that we would have to put our ordinary work on pause to develop means of supporting well-being during this unfolding crisis,” said Jonathan Ripp, MD, professor of medicine, medical education, and geriatrics and palliative medicine at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City. Dr. Ripp is also chief wellness officer at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

“Through informal queries of our faculty and the observed stressors we realized that our well-being focus needed a new approach to address the enormous strain to our workforce,” he said. “We developed a new model based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. From people on the ground we learned that their primary concerns were meeting basic daily needs, personal and family safety, and anxiety about redeployment to new settings where they might not have the skills.”

With these concerns in mind, Mount Sinai developed resources focused on three areas to improve well-being and reduce added stress on physicians.

## Basic needs

“It is imperative that during this crisis the basic needs of our heroic workers are being met,” reads the resources page for basic needs. The page provides information about the ongoing efforts of Mount Sinai to address basic needs of physicians and other health professionals as they fight the COVID-19 pandemic together.

“Our first phase approach is to meet those basic needs for safety, childcare (especially in families with two health care workers), transportation (realizing the increased costs of taking a taxi rather than taking the subway) and food,” said Dr. Ripp.

Some of the resources include low cost or free meal options, child and eldercare, transportation and accommodations. The page also provides further guidance on personal protective equipment.

Learn more about six ways to address physician stress during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Psychosocial needs

“We’ve also learned that communication is an essential element in supporting our staff,” said Dr. Ripp, adding that “It is important to provide steady information about the state of the epidemic in our home institutions and what is being done.”

With a lot of the focus on addressing the uncertainty of the situation, the team has also provided “psychosocial support, collecting existing resources and finding ways to share those and scale them where need be,” he said. “A lot of our focus has been addressing the uncertainty of the situation.”

Psychosocial needs provided include supportive counseling, support groups, self-care activities and confidential support.

## Mental health evaluation

“Now we are at a phase where hospitals are at or near capacity, and expecting a rise in the next two weeks, with possible equipment shortages,” said Dr. Ripp. “Health care workers are going to face circumstances that they weren’t anticipating or necessarily prepared for.”

As needed, psychiatrists, psychologists, nurse practitioners and social workers from the departments of psychiatry, social work, employee assistance and the Office of Well-Being and Resilience are partnering to provide Mount Sinai health professionals and employees with psychosocial support and/or confidential psychiatric evaluation and treatment.

“One of the most inspirational things about this is how the entire workforce has mobilized,” said Dr. Ripp, adding that “it is amazing to watch this in action which has served as a beacon of hope in extraordinarily difficult times.”

The AMA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are closely monitoring the COVID-19 global pandemic. Learn more at the [AMA COVID-19 resource center](#) and consult the [AMA’s physician guide to COVID-19](#).