

May 1, 2020: Advocacy spotlight on Next steps the nation must take on COVID-19 testing

A national strategy is needed to provide greater clarity and transparency about existing COVID-19 testing capacity and the supply chain for testing supplies, as well as to help ensure that states have the testing resources they need, the AMA said in a letter to Brett P. Giroir, MD, the Health and Human Services (HHS) assistant secretary for health and an admiral in the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service. Specifically, the letter told Dr. Giroir about the AMA's concerns regarding the current state of diagnostic testing, access to testing components, and ensuring that laboratories have adequate resources—this includes being prepared for a potential resurgence of COVID-19 this autumn. The AMA is appreciative of Dr. Giroir's willingness to collaborate on the issue of access to diagnostic testing services, but other concerns were also raised, including issues about the performance of serological tests currently on the market and their use by the public to inform physical distancing decisions. "As we anticipate the threat of COVID-19 may persist into the fall, the coming months represent a critical time for federal leadership to help ensure states are adequately resourced and prepared with critical strategies to manage what may be increased demand for testing services," AMA CEO and Executive Vice President James L. Madara, MD, wrote in the letter. To ensure diagnostic testing is available to all who need it and that laboratories can handle the persistent and intense demands placed on them by the pandemic, the AMA made the following recommendations:

- Pursue a national strategy for testing during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Consult with hospital, academic and community labs.
- Ensure laboratories have adequate resources to meet demand.
- Provide additional guidance and education to physicians and the public regarding serological testing, its performance limitations, and the risk for false positives.

Read the full story.

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