COVID-19: National Physician Town hall questions on public health preparedness

In April, a panel of AMA leaders took to YouTube for a live town hall to shed light on the most pressing issues facing physicians during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Below, get answers to the questions you asked on how the AMA is helping create infrastructure and policies needed to manage future public health emergencies.

What is the AMA doing to ensure that physicians have a seat at the table for national public health emergency preparedness planning in the future?

AMA advocacy works tirelessly to ensure that physician voices are included in all critical health care conversations and decision-making. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, the AMA has been working with policymakers at both the national and state levels to get front-line physicians and health care workers the support they need and to lay the groundwork for future emergency response.

Visit the COVID-19: Advocacy Progress Report to review recent AMA actions—including efforts to keep physician practices financially viable, advocating for better telehealth coverage, pushing back on harmful immigration policies and supporting legislation to erase medical student debt.

What can we do to prepare for the boomerang effect that some experts are predicting?

As the American health care system anticipates a resurgence of COVID-19 in the fall, epidemiologists, ethicists and other experts have begun to outline steps that the nation must take to avoid a repeat of this spring:

- Tom Frieden, MD, former director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and president and CEO of Resolve to Save Lives has proposed a tiered risk alert system that would enable the nation to weather future outbreaks.
Danielle Allen, MD, director of Harvard University's Edmond J Safra Center for Ethics, led a multidisciplinary team to develop the Roadmap to Pandemic Resilience, a coordinated public health response. Marc Lipsitch, MD, professor of epidemiology at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and director of the Center for Communicable Disease Dynamics, spoke on prospects for mitigating a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and faster development of a vaccine. Marcus Plescia, MD, chief medical officer of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), explores how health departments are preparing to scale up contact tracing efforts as states begin to reopen.

These experts agree that mitigation would require extensive, coordinated testing as well as contact tracing, isolation of positive cases and quarantining of contacts.

What is the AMA planning to do to help physicians, practices and health systems prepare for future public health emergencies?

The AMA is dedicated to supporting physicians, practices and health systems throughout the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. As states and communities begin relaxing stay-at-home restrictions, the AMA has developed key guidance on when and how physicians should begin returning to practice as normal and planning for the future:

- The COVID-19 resource center for physicians will continue to offer critical insights, updates and information in the days and weeks ahead.
- The AMA practice guide to reopening builds on CDC guidance to offer tips on getting started, mistakes to avoid and tools to facilitate practice reopening.
- AMA advocacy will continue to work diligently to ensure that physician voices play a key role in the formation of public health policy.