

How to ensure PPE access in pandemic? AMA offers 10-step road map

JUL 15, 2020

Kevin B. O'Reilly

News Editor

With the nation hovering at or near its single-day peak for COVID-19 cases, there continues to be a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) that physicians and other health professionals need to keep themselves and their patients safe and limit the further spread of deadly respiratory illness caused by SARS-CoV-2.

The AMA is now laying out a 10-step road map that explains how to ensure sufficient access to PPE during the COVID-19 pandemic and prevent shortages for the next pandemic to hit U.S. shores. The detailed recommendations come in response to a request from the U.S. House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis.

The 10 AMA recommendations to Congress and other key stakeholders are:

- A national strategy for response coordination must be in place that clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of both federal and state governments.
- The needs of physicians and patients in all practice settings must be considered to ensure continuity of care for patients and continued viability of nonhospital practices.
- Logistical planning for public health emergency response must have a permanent home within the federal government.
- Interagency coordination should be improved by creation of permanent roles responsible for coordination between the major departments and agencies responding to public health emergencies.
- Ensure federal, state, and local governmental entities have readily available points of contact to assist in identifying available PPE and infection control products.
- Provide greater transparency around the supply chain and distribution of medically necessary supplies including test kits, PPE and ventilators.
- Improve system for acquisition and distribution of PPE and other infection control products and increase supply chain transparency to provide physicians, hospitals, and health

systems insights into currently available supplies and methods of distribution.

| Increase funding and modernize planning for the strategic national stockpile, create contingency plans and provide federal guidance on what supplies should be stockpiled and should be provided to states and local entities.

| The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health should provide clear guidance to health care providers, hospitals, and health systems on how to manage limited PPE, including guidance on how best to conserve PPE, guidelines for reuse, guidelines for sterilization or disinfecting, and alternatives when preferred PPE is not available.

| Strong measures must be in place to restrict price gouging during a public health emergency and limit counterfeit PPE and infection control products from coming to market in the U.S.

The letter to the Subcommittee Chair James E. Clyburn, D-S.C., and Ranking Member Steve Scalise, R-La., explores many other key points and lessons learned so far in the COVID-19 pandemic experience in terms of PPE access.

Among them, the AMA is calling for Congress to “establish permanent restrictions on hoarding and price gouging of necessary medical supplies during a public health emergency or disaster and provide for enforcement mechanisms against individuals or entities engaged in these activities.”

The AMA also wants “a system to validate vendors so that purchasing entities—whether they be state or local governments, physician practices, hospitals or health systems—can ensure that the products they are purchasing meet safety standards and are not counterfeit goods.”

Stay current on the AMA’s COVID-19 advocacy efforts and track the pandemic with the AMA’s COVID-19 resource center, which offers resources from JAMA Network™, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization.