

Amid PPE shortage, AMA collaboration offers supplier for doctors

APR 13, 2021

Kevin B. O'Reilly

News Editor

Even with millions of Americans vaccinated against COVID-19 and hopes high for a swift end to the pandemic, many of the nation's physicians continue to report problems accessing the personal protective equipment (PPE) that is essential to limiting further spread of SARS-CoV-2.

More than one-third of the 3,500 doctors responding to a 2020 AMA survey said that acquiring PPE was "very" or "extremely" difficult. Smaller physician practices reported even greater troubles, with 41% of physicians in practices of five doctors or fewer saying that getting PPE was "very" or "extremely" difficult.

Cost remains an issue, with physician practices spending on PPE rising by an average of 57% in 2020. Meanwhile, millions of fake N95s have circulated, spurring the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (CDC NIOSH) to advise physicians and others on how to properly identify bogus PPE.

Now the AMA is stepping in to help keep physicians and their patients safe, collaborating again with the nonprofit Project N95 to reserve quality-certified PPE exclusively for AMA members to purchase with no minimum. Available equipment includes:

- Ameritech N95 surgical respirator masks (duck-bill style): size regular, FDA 510(k) cleared and CDC NIOSH approved. Made in the U.S.
- DemeTECH N95 respirator masks (fold style): sizes small or medium/large, CDC NIOSH approved. Made in the U.S.
- DemeTECH N95 respirator mask (cup style): size medium/large, CDC NIOSH approved. Made in the U.S.
- ASTM Level 3 surgical masks: One size fits most.
- Patient exam gloves: sizes medium, large, extra large; 3 mils thick, 9 inches long.

Project N95 is the national clearinghouse for critical PPE and essential medical supplies. As the leading rapid-response nonprofit organization created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Project N95 helps health care and front-line workers source PPE from vetted suppliers while driving transparency in the market through procurement best practices.

If you'd like to place an order, go here to begin the process. You will have to sign in to your AMA account or create one to take advantage of this members-only opportunity. The offer is live until April 23, 3 p.m. CDT.

In addition to helping physician practices secure PPE, Project N95 is donating 180,000 masks to Chicago-area nonprofits, with a focus on providing masks within communities that have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

“Nobody is immune” to PPE troubles

Among the small physician practices having trouble obtaining PPE is the three-doctor Fort Worth, Texas, allergy and immunology practice that Susan R. Bailey, MD, is part of. Their search for PPE has proven extraordinarily frustrating, adding yet one more administrative burden amid a time of great stress for Dr. Bailey and her practice colleagues.

“Nobody is immune to this. It doesn't matter who you are. If the president of the AMA is having a hard time finding PPE, that is a clear expression of how incredibly difficult it is for the entire physician population.”

From the start of the pandemic, the AMA's leaders have fervently advocated to the White House, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other key players the need for a Manhattan Project-style effort to ensure that the necessary quantities of PPE are produced and distributed where they are most in demand.

Learn how the AMA is advocating to end recurring PPE shortages.

New practice role for PPE

In the early going, the word went out to everyone in Dr. Bailey’s practice to bring whatever PPE they could, wherever they could find it. That led to wasting precious time due to misadventures with online retailers offering overpriced items of dubious quality.

“In a small, independent practice, we are the IT person, we are the HR staff—and now we’re the PPE procurement officers as well,” Dr. Bailey said.

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.