

# COVID-19: 4 physician lessons learned to guide next steps

OCT 22, 2020

**Sara Berg, MS**

Senior News Writer

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The COVID-19 pandemic continues to raise questions about the country's approach to public health as well as finance and delivery of health care. The disease also has exposed deep economic and related racial inequities in America. As the country continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, how can lessons learned help to inform the future of health policy?

In a webinar hosted by the AMA Organized Medical Staff Section, two AMA members offered answers to that key question. They were:

- Betty Chu, MD, senior vice president and associate chief clinical officer/chief quality officer at Henry Ford Health System—an AMA Health System Program Partner.
- M. Zuhdi Jasser, MD, president of Jasser Center for Comprehensive Care as well as clinical associate professor of internal medicine and chair of the bioethics committee at Banner Medical Center, in Phoenix.

Drawing from their experiences, Drs. Chu and Jasser shared four lessons learned so far.

## Think of key assets

“As we're planning in the system for the fall, we're looking at a lot of metrics,” said Dr. Chu, who is also a member of the AMA Council on Medical Service. “I'm leading a group that's doing second surge planning and we have a fair amount of key performance indicators that we're reviewing on a daily and weekly basis.”

“If we start to see any increased surges in hospitalizations, we'll have to do what we did in March, which is we'll have to redeploy resources from our ambulatory facilities and clinics into our acute care facilities,” she said. “When we start to deploy resources, I'm not just talking about beds and ventilators. I'm talking about gloves, gowns, wipes and people—those resources.”

Learn more about how the pandemic's painful spring will inform prep for the fall surge.

## Keep nursing homes top of mind

The health and safety of nursing home and long-term care residents is an issue that affects everyone, said Dr. Chu. The “quality of life for these dear people who are living in nursing homes is incredibly challenging.”

It's about finding “balance between prioritizing their safety by isolating them away from their families” and “the social isolation and long-term effects on their health and wellness,” she said.

The AMA's COVID-19 resource center offers a library of the most up-to-date resources from JAMA Network™, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization, including information on long-term care facilities.

## Establish vaccine distribution plan

“Logistics is going to be the biggest challenge when it comes to vaccine distribution,” said Dr. Chu, adding that some vaccines require different types of refrigeration in terms of temperatures as well as delivery, distribution and assembly.

“There's an opportunity for the AMA to take a leadership role and help them better determine or define clarity around vaccine distribution,” she said.

## Ease fears of in-person office care

“The theme for 2020 is, when you're fighting a war and in battle, the front lines are really where most of this either survives or dies,” said Dr. Jasser, adding that for private practices, there has been a slow recovery.

Small practices “never got back to 100% because patients still have that fear of the pandemic that's continuing, and there's been some illness trading happening over time,” he said, adding that patients are prioritizing some care and overlooking others, which will “cause other pandemics in 2021 related to undiagnosed” conditions.

“The fact that we saw that the spending has gone down does not mean that disease was down,” said Dr. Jasser.

Learn more about how to ensure patients with chronic disease receive care despite pandemic fears.