A look back: What we've learned with the COVID-19 update

Watch the AMA's daily COVID-19 update, with insights from AMA leaders and experts about the pandemic.

Featured topic

In today's COVID-19 update, the AMA's year-end update takes a look back at 190 episodes to reveal lessons learned and the way forward.

Learn more at the AMA COVID-19 resource center.

Transcript

**Unger:** Hello, this is the American Medical Association's COVID-19 update. I'm Todd Unger, AMA's chief experience officer in Chicago. As we approach the end of 2020, we thought it would be a good idea to take a look back at the past 10 months and see what we've learned from working with physicians about how to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

When our first update aired on March 25th, we had no idea that 190 episodes later, we'd have learned so much and yet still be facing what are expected to be the worst months of this pandemic.

**Unger:** I'm joined today by Dr. Tom Frieden, former director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Vice Admiral, Jerome Adams, Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. Peter Hotez, Dr. Danielle Allen, director of Harvard University's Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics.

**Dr. Frieden:** It's about how we can restart as soon and safely as possible. We're in it together. We need to get through it together.

**Dr. Bailey:** We have made incredible strides in just the last couple of months in many
areas of medicine. First of all, I think we've got the country's attention on how important a stable, healthy workforce is.

**Dr. Chung:** The genetic data are coming in and are going to give us a lot more answers very soon.

**Dr. Pastides:** Science is moving forward, but I'm very confident in another period of time and in a year from now, we'll understand it much, much better. It is just a brand-new disease.

**Dr. Hotez:** Dr. Hotez, which vaccine are you going to take? It's really what vaccine will be made available early on.

**Unger:** Although we'd hoped our journey through 2020 would play out differently, one thing we found to be truer than ever was the way that medicine and specifically the people within medicine came together in the face of this crisis.

**C. Feist:** Jennifer and I founded the Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes Foundation to address and reduce burnout of health care professionals and safe card their well-being.

**Dr. Aksel:** To date, we've delivered over 41,000 respirator masks within the last two weeks to over 400 frontline providers and over two-thirds of the hospitals in New York City in the five boroughs.

**Dr. Chu:** We collectively pulled together and had a unified effort around solving problems and issues on a daily basis to keep our patients and our employees safe.

**Dr. Lomis:** The disruption presented to medical education by the pandemic extends well beyond what any single institution can address on their own.

**Dr. Allen:** Ambitious, audacious plan is testing, tracing and supportive isolation at massive scale.

**Unger:** Throughout its history, the AMA has always backed science. And in the last 10 months, we've seen that core tenet tested in so many ways, we couldn't have imagined. Our COVID-19 updates have and will continue to be grounded in the latest research and evidence.

**Dr. Frieden:** Today, we released a new report with new recommendation.

**Dr. Plescia:** But I think this is where positions are going to be really important. We are the
scientists. We understand infectious diseases. We understand illness. We know what can happen.

**Unger:** Well, we had some big news this morning from the Supreme Court in regard to DACA.

**Dr. Harris:** The public craves clear, consistent, evidence-based information. They want that information from a trusted source, and they can handle the truth.

**Dr. Hotez:** What was an anti-vaccine movement, now under this fake banner of health freedom has become a full-blown empty science movement.

**Dr. Irons:** Misinformation has certainly cost lives.

**Dr. Bauchner:** Pfizer announced this morning that they're going to try to file for an emergency use authorization sometime in the next few days.

**Unger:** But it's not just about the numbers. We've also shown the human side of the pandemic from front-line heroes to health inequities.

**Dr. Madara:** COVID-19 didn't create the problems in our health system that we now see. It revealed them in a way that can't be ignored any longer.

**Dr. Shaik:** Spending every day on the floor is taking care of patients. It's impossible to not see the health disparities.

**Dr. Maybank:** The reality really and bottom line is that accessing a test is really difficult, especially in communities that have black and Latinx people.

**Dr. Chevez:** In our American society, there isn't a model for equity, not in health care, not in education.

**Dr. Maniya:** It's like the Titanic sinking and there's a leak in the hall and we're trying to plug it with our fingers, and you're just running around trying to keep people alive.

**Dr. Aksel:** But the story is really different on the front lines. I have colleagues, I have nurses that are reusing supplies in ways that would have been unconscionable just six months ago.

**Dr. Harris:** And I'm quite concerned about post-traumatic stress disorder in my colleagues, because you know what, it is not a matter of if, it is a matter of when, but I'm
certain that the AMA will be ready to partner with other organizations to address these issues both now and post-pandemic.

**J. Feist:** The amount of death that she saw was unlike I think what most people see in their entire career since she was seeing it in a matter of days.

**Dr. Chu:** During any crisis, people are really running at a hundred miles an hour. And then when they stop running, they realize, wow, emotionally, I'm not doing so well.

**Unger:** We're providing the information people want to know, and the stories they need to hear.

**Dr. Bailey:** And the physicians can't be physicians and protect themselves and their patients in the way that they feel is best, then we're all in trouble.

**Dr. Ellison:** Increasingly, we know that health care outcomes are so much more than what we do within the laws of medicine.

**Dr. Dreifuss:** COVID-19 is a household disease. You can be adhering to everything as the patient, but if you have one person, who's the weak link in the household, everyone stands to get sick.

**Unger:** Losing 200,000 lives in the United States to this pandemic was unthinkable when the virus first emerged earlier this year.

**Dr. Irons:** It took just two weeks to go from eight million to nine million cases, and going from 10 million to 11 million took just under seven days.

**Dr. Bailey:** Physicians need to be a part of the planning. They need to be allowed to take care of themselves.

**Dr. Guzik:** The most important thing for me about this global pandemic is we need to be in this together. That's how we will overcome this is by working on this together.

**Dr. Harris:** Since the beginning that we have been advocating for physicians to have the personal protective equipment that they need.

**Vandenberg:** So, we've spoken out on behalf of physicians and their patients to try and strike down a rule that has the impact of interfering with the physician patient relationship.
Askew: We've moved 10 years into the future on telehealth in just a handful of months.

Dr. Bailey: The AMA's resources and their advocacy to get telemedicine better paid for than it has been in the past, was an incredible help.

Dr. Irons: Trust and consistent messaging is really important, and I think that's our role. I think it's the AMA's role. I think it's physicians' role.

Dr. Bailey: We will see the end of this pandemic. We just have to stick together. And I'm very hopeful that out of this darkness, we can bring forth an American health care system that’s healthier than ever.

Unger: As we turn to 2021, we remain committed to being your voice, your source and your ally, whether you're navigating vaccine distribution and new science or reopenings, and hopefully return to normalcy, your COVID update team and the AMA will be here for you.

We'll be back with another COVID update on Monday, January 4th. Until then we wish you a happy and more importantly, healthy holiday and new year. Until then, please take care of yourselves and make your wellness a priority. We look forward to seeing you in 2021.

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