



SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19)

UTAH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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Public & Private Sector Responses

- Agreed with stay-home, stay-safe but there were consequences for health care
 - We thank the Governor, Governor's Office, the Legislature and the DOH for their quick response and action on the COVID outbreak
 - Concerns we had or have still:
 - Individuals not going in for needed care, such as to emergency rooms
 - During a pandemic, we need to make sure that there is access to emergency care
 - Need more cooperation between government and private sector health care, not just systems.
 - Need to message to continue to wear masks – protect themselves and others



Public & Private Sector Responses

- We appreciate the federal government reacting so quickly and moving to allow telehealth/telemedicine services and to pay for those services
- We appreciate some of the insurers in Utah moving to follow the federal government with regard to telehealth/telemedicine (BCBS, University Health Plans)
 - We need sustainable appropriate telehealth/telemedicine services – including monitoring of patients
- We are concerned that other insurers in Utah:
 - Did not respond as quickly
 - Still are not at the same level of reimbursement, and
 - Still limit care allowed
- We are concerned that some insurers are moving to shut down the telehealth/telemedicine and pull back on what is allowed



Physician Survey on COVID

- 63% had more than a 40% decrease in visits
- 27% had up to a 40% decrease in visits
 - So 91% had just under or over a 40% decrease with corresponding decrease in revenue
- Close to 80% physician practices started using telemedicine services
- 20% have not used telemedicine because not conducive to the care they provider (surgery, minor procedures, etc.)
- Almost 70% had to reduce staffing, positions or hours
- 44-54% applied or were planning to apply for the PPP loan
- 40-52% applied or were planning to apply for CARES Act Funding
- 13% applied for help with telehealth assistance and another 20% were likely to apply



Physician Survey on COVID

- 45% or more (because 15% were not sure) need access to personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - Respirators – 54% are almost out, or 38% were out completely
 - Masks – 35% are almost out or have no masks
 - Goggles – 42% are almost out or have no goggles (they are reusing)
 - Gloves – most are o.k. with gloves but 13% are almost out or are out
 - Gowns – 45% are almost out or have no gowns left
 - Hand Sanitizer – 34% are almost out or have none
 - Hand soap – they are o.k.
 - Cleaning/Disinfection Products (medical) – 20% are almost out or a few – 2% have none left
 - Most clinics have or are finding their own but **NEED TO HAVE ACCESS TO THE SUPPLIES THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS COLLECTED** – almost all are being held for systems



Physician Survey on COVID

- Stress, depression, anxiety has skyrocketed among physicians – particularly affect those on front lines
 - Fear for their patients and the unknown
 - Fear for their family members
 - Fear for their staff members
 - Fear for themselves
- Physicians concerned that they don't have enough information and are not getting enough timely information
- Survey participants – 12% employed by a hospital, 20% employed with a medical group, 60% practice owner/partner, 8% other (such as academic or leadership positions)



Public & Private Sector Responses – Use of Federal Funds – Impact on Healthcare

- **Federal Funding**
 - Medicare immediately approves use of telehealth/telemedicine and pays at in-office rates
 - Medicare expands what can be done via telehealth/telemedicine and what devices/IT can be used
 - Helps keep vulnerable individuals, particularly, more-safe (elderly, frail) while still receiving necessary care
 - Payroll Protection Program (PPP) – available to smaller offices but must compete with all small businesses for money
 - We want to thank Utah banks, credit unions and the SBA for their excellent work on this
 - CARES Act Funding for clinics and offices with more than 500 employees – Independent clinics competing hospitals/systems for funding – most funding has gone to the Hospitals
 - We thank HHS and our congressional offices for working with us on this



Public & Private Sector Responses – Use of Federal or State Funds – Impact on Healthcare

- GOED distributed \$12 M through Utah Leads Together Small Business Bridge loan but it is closed and not aware that any health care clinics received funds from this fund
- We understand that the state has funding left for businesses who have been negatively impacted by COVID and we would like some of this to be specifically available to small independent physician offices
- Small Business Impact Grant – we hope small physician practices will apply for these but because application opens today, not sure



Gaps or Barriers to Effective COVID-19 - Response by the Legislature

- Need to expand Telehealth/Telemedicine coverage and services – make permanent – along with payment – don't go backwards
- Access to all for coronavirus or future pandemic services, regardless if citizen or not, COVID (disease) does not stop to check
- Have Governor's Office, key stakeholders and legislature work together during a pandemic along with State DOH and County Health Departments – Established committee by statute
- Masks – strong incentives to wear masks
- Need stronger vaccine laws so that we have a less vulnerable populations
- When COVID vaccine comes out, consider some kind of incentive or mandate if dealing with public or going to public places at all
- Stronger liability protection for services that are not received because of a government order – such as not allowed to perform “elective” procedures



UMA Process for Moving Forward

- **UMA has a physician committee looking at health care in offices and other settings and putting together protocols to disseminate to others**
- **We continue to share “best” practices as they come out and to share information with physicians in Utah**
- **We are working with other industries to find supplies for physician practices**
- **We have meetings and will continue to have meetings that share information and promote discussion about the latest updates and what practices should and should not do**
- **We will continue to develop pandemic and emergency policies to share with physicians/clinics**
- **Will continue to work with other groups, the DOH and other agencies to help the state respond specifically to COVID and plan for the future**



State Agency Processes for Moving Forward

- **Can't speak for state agencies but suggest the following:**
 - **Health plan for health emergencies or pandemics that are all the same whether it be for a state, county, or local government agency**
 - **Include private sector healthcare in those planning sessions and implementations**
 - **Continue to refine and develop the state plan that is updated annually for public health crises/pandemics**
 - **Emphasize wearing masks and social distancing for all businesses and agencies**
 - **Make it easy for employees or anyone to report violations**
 - **Schools and all state entities should have input in, have access to and follow the plans put together**
 - **Need process for debunking internet myths/false information for general public**



Lessons learned during COVID-19

- Need full health care system to work more closely together – not just systems
- Need a better system of communication to all – Possibly
 - Through trade associations link to all leadership
 - Through industry groups already established as on call groups who are ready to respond if and when needed to help get information out to all
 - People more responsive when they understand what is happening and why
- Need to have emergency supplies of masks, gowns, gloves, cleaning supplies, disinfectants, testing supplies, etc. stockpiled and supply continuously monitored and upgraded or updated as needed
 - Need to not rely on other countries for our supplies but have supplies that are available in the U.S. and even in each state
- Masks make a difference, cleanliness makes difference – Access for all people to these supplies/services





Thank you. Questions?

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