

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Outbreak: Recommended Best Practices

Dear Colleagues:

In order to provide updates on the evolving response and best practices in regards to the COVID-19 pandemic, AHP will be delivering brief, critical updates on an ongoing basis addressing important highlights and frequently asked questions. We are working closely with the team at the Monroe County Health Department and the UR COVID Response Team as well as following updates from the CDC, national COVID Response Task Force and the New York State Department of Health. These sources of expertise should continue to be the most up-to-date sources of clinical information, and the websites for these organizations are included at the bottom of this message for ease of use.

There are three important points we want to highlight today:

1) **TESTING:** **There continues to be no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our area, however testing is just ramping up** so it is assumed there are infected individuals in the community. Currently, the health department is offering testing which is now being sent to Erie County for processing. We have also become aware of commercial testing available through LabCorp and Quest for COVID identification. We will pass along more about the availability of these tests as it becomes known. We anticipate the University of Rochester Medical Center will have testing capability within the next 1-2 weeks.

It is important to note that **if you determine testing is indicated, you should contact the Monroe County Health Department at 585-753-2989 and that any patient tested will be considered a Person Under Investigation and subject to immediate, mandatory quarantine.** Only send patients to the ED who require ED level care and not for testing purposes.

2) **TELEMEDICINE:** We realize the importance of being able to maintain visit volumes, but also the level of concern about patient and staff exposure during this pandemic. Through recent discussions, our two largest local payers, Excellus and MVP, have agreed to support use of telemedicine during this pandemic – both as an opportunity to provide evaluation of patients without the risk of bringing them into the office to determine if they need screening, and also to provide continuity care to other patients who perhaps *should not be exposed or prefer not to come into the office during this time.* Notably, these **video visits are reimbursed at 100% of the in-office visit rate** (with a lower reimbursement for phone call only).

AHP is looking into avenues to support telemedicine use in our community practices **and if your practice does not have access to telemedicine capabilities but is interested in pursuing this, we have sent a survey to all community, private practice administrators inquiring the level of interest and need. Please have your practice respond back ASAP.** We will be happy to provide documentation about appropriate codes for telemedicine billing, and additionally we are waiting to hear back from both of these payers about the potential

to waive any patient co-pay or deductible responsibility during this pandemic so as not to discourage patient participation.

3) **PROTECTIVE SUPPLIES:** We realize personal protective equipment (PPE) is in short supply across the country right now, and many practices are inquiring as to whether AHP can help. We have been in contact with the Monroe County Health Department and several vendors about potential availability to help fill this void. Of note, the CDC has lowered the recommendation around use of N-95 masks today to state that while they are preferred if available, standard surgical masks are acceptable for patient interaction. As it is a droplet-spread contagion, there persists a recommendation for gloves, gown and face shielding or goggles.

If your community, private practice is in need of PPE, please be sure to respond to the survey referenced above so we know what PPE supplies you have and what you may need. We can then try to work through our various contacts to identify sources that can provide at least an emergency supply, understanding that supplies are very limited at this time.

We continue to partner with Dr. Mendoza and County Health Department officials on preparedness and response protocols and will convey information as it becomes available.

Thank you for your continued collaboration in this important public health endeavor. All the best,

J. Chad Teeters, MD
Executive Medical Director, AHP



Resource Links

Monroe County Health Department
<https://www2.monroecounty.gov/health-coronavirus>

CDC Coronavirus Site
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

New York Department of Health Coronavirus site:
<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>

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