



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY
HEALTH

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Healthcare News At A Glance



National

The World Health Organization (WHO) declares the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic and the US declares a national emergency– With over hundreds of thousands of confirmed cases and thousands of deaths worldwide, the WHO officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic. In the last week, the following are some measures the US took to address the outbreak:

- Declaration of a national emergency by the federal government to enable funding mechanisms to mobilize resources for local and state agencies
- Passage of the Families First Coronavirus Act by Congress to include emergency paid sick leave and child care leave, unemployment insurance benefits, increased Medicaid funding, and additional nutritional assistance
- Launch of human trials for a vaccine for COVID-19 in Seattle
- Closure of restaurants, bars, movie theaters, casinos, gyms, breweries, schools, and other public spaces around the nation
- Issuance of “shelter-in-place” orders for over 7 million Californians with additional states expected to follow
- Imposition of travel restrictions to certain high-risk nations and shutdown of the US-Canada Border

Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) makes several recommendations to ensure safety of medical personnel–

The AAMC has called for a pause on all student clinical rotations until the end of the month, a request to halt “elective” surgeries, and a recommendation to conduct all medical school interviews by phone or video conferencing. In other news, healthcare organizations are running low on medical equipment such as masks, gowns, gloves, and cotton swabs. The Pentagon committed 5 million respirator masks and 2,000 ventilators to Health and Human Services (HHS). In other HHS news, the agency was breached by hackers in the midst of the outbreak. The HHS secretary assured the public that the matter was being investigated.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to cap out-of-pocket insulin costs at \$35 per month for Medicare Part D beneficiaries– With over 3 million Medicare beneficiaries taking insulin for diabetes, the federal government is expected to save more than \$250 million over five years. Enrollees are expected to save an average of \$446 annually.

Highlighted Healthcare Studies

1. Study in *Pediatrics* finds in the sample of 2,143 cases of Chinese children below the age of 18 who were reported to have the COVID-19 infection, 4.4 percent were asymptomatic, 51 percent had a mild case, and 39 percent had a moderate case. One case was fatal.
2. Study in *Hospital Pediatrics* finds that the average length of stay for hospitalized kids for the most commonly diagnosed conditions dropped from 3 days to 1.5 days with no significant differences in 30-day readmission rates after discharge criteria were established.
3. Study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Surgery* finds that adults over the age of 65 who suffer from dementia, depression, difficulty with daily activities or organizational activities, and difficulty with walking have a higher risk of death within 12 months following one of three major surgeries.
4. Study in *Lancet Psychiatry* finds that 8 percent of US children between the ages of 9 and 10 reported suicidal ideation while 2 percent reported suicidal attempts sometime in their lives.
5. Study in *PLoS Medicine* finds that conscientious vaccination exemptions, or exemptions for vaccines based on philosophical objection, increased in 89 percent of Texas counties that were in the 10 largest metropolitan areas. Suburban and higher-income areas were more likely to have high rates of vaccine exemptions compared to rural areas.

California

Christian group offering alternative health plans ordered by California officials to stop– Trinity HealthShare and Alieria were offering cost-sharing programs that allow members to pool funds to cover medical expenses. The plans provide limited coverage, do not meet the same standards set for traditional insurance plans, and are not approved by the state. Up to 11,000 members were possibly partaking in these programs. California's insurance commissioner stated that the plans were misleading consumers into thinking they were comprehensive health insurance. Alieria has also been under investigation in Texas and New York.

Other States

States are temporarily providing emergency licenses for nurses and medical professionals that are from out-of-state– The following states are issuing temporary licenses to address the shortage of healthcare staffing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic: Georgia, South Carolina, Texas, Tennessee, and Idaho.

Multiple states expected to face shortage of beds in community hospitals according to the Kaiser Family Foundation– The following ten states are expected to face a shortage of beds in community hospitals during the COVID-19 outbreak: Oregon (1.6 beds per 1,000 people), Washington (1.7 beds per 1,000 people), New Mexico (1.8 beds per 1,000 people), Utah (1.8 beds per 1,000 people), California (1.8 beds per 1,000 people), Colorado (1.9 beds per 1,000 people), Maryland (1.9 beds per 1,000 people), Arizona (1.9 beds per 1,000 people), Idaho (1.9 beds per 1,000 people), and Hawaii (1.9 beds per 1,000 people).

Florida becomes first state to receive approval from CMS to waive prior authorizations for Medicaid– The state now has the ability to waive Medicaid prior approvals for essential health services. Among other things, the state can also provide full reimbursements for unlicensed settings in the case of evacuations, extend appeals deadlines, and temporarily hold off on screening requirements for nursing homes. These approvals were made possible after COVID-19 was declared a national emergency.

Veterans Affairs (VA) Portland Health Care System sees first VA death related to COVID-19– An older patient recently died as a result of the virus. Hundreds of VA nursing homes are closing to visitors to help reduce the possibility of spreading the virus. The VA administered 140 tests and 30 cases were confirmed. In similar news, the *Advisory Board* determined that the VA may not have the capacity to handle an overflow of patients in case of a national emergency. Newspapers have since reported that the VA's website no longer contains its fourth mission to allow nonveteran and civilian patients in case hospitals overflow in an emergency situation.

Distilleries in Pennsylvania, Vermont, and North Carolina creating hand sanitizers to provide to charitable groups and hospitals– Hand sanitizers have been in short supply in the last two weeks as people were asked to practice good hand hygiene to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Distilleries are converting their high-proof alcohol along with other ingredients into hand sanitizers to help address the shortage. The WHO recently published a recipe to create at-home hand sanitizers. Companies have also been working with federal regulatory agencies to ensure that the sanitizers can end up in marketplaces swiftly.

Philadelphia's city workers can now utilize sick leave under the new public health emergency– Workers who are covered under the city's sick leave will receive pay through their sick leave in the event of a quarantine, business closure, or school closure requiring workers to stay at home with their children. The state of Pennsylvania is shutting down "non-essential" businesses.

Georgia hospital systems asking people not to come in for COVID-19 testing if they are displaying mild or moderate symptoms– Leaders of the healthcare system issued a statement that mild and moderate cases can be safely treated by staying at home, isolating oneself, and treating symptoms. Given the shortage of hospital supplies and tests, the leaders say the tests should only be utilized for those displaying severe symptoms that require hospitalization.



COVID-19-Related Surveys

25%

Percentage of Americans who reported that patients who are experiencing any of the symptoms of COVID-19 should immediately go to an urgent care facility or emergency room according to a poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

60%

Percentage of Americans who reported that the pandemic will only get worse according to an NBC-Wall Street Journal Poll. Nearly 50 percent of respondents reported that they will stop attending large public gatherings.

75%

Percentage of Americans who reported that they trust the information coming from the CDC according to a poll conducted by SurveyMonkey. Around 68 percent said they trusted the National Institutes of Health.

Newsbytes Relevant to Our Strategic Priorities



To bring focus to our work, the Institute for Health Policy and Leadership has identified three strategic priorities: oral health, mental health and hunger as a health issue. This segment highlights news articles relevant to these priorities.

Oral Health

American Dental Association pens letter to the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee to include oral health care providers in legislation related to the novel coronavirus outbreak– The association reminds congressional authorities that dentists will need access to personal protective equipment. The association has created an internal task force to address the outbreak within the oral health field and to draft recommendations and guidance that can be used for legislation.

Hunger as a Health Issue

As schools close during the emergency, children who rely on reduced-price or free school meals need alternatives– Multiple governors have commented on the possibility of school closures being extended to the rest of the school year. Some school districts around the country such as the San Bernardino City Unified School District are offering childcare services and special meals despite the closures, regardless of whether or not the children attend that specific school.

Mental/ Behavioral Health

COVID-19 outbreak and its repercussions leading to worsening mental and emotional health outcomes– The job and school closures, economic downturn, and the need to self-isolate are taking a toll on people's wellbeing. According to a national poll conducted by Axios/Ipsos, 22 percent of individuals reported worsening of their mental health while 29 percent reported worsening of their emotional health due to the virus. The CDC and NIH have released multiple resources to help manage the stress, fear, and anxiety that may result from the current climate.

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