Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions for Community Clinics and Their Staff

This guidance document will continue to be updated as the COVID-19 situation evolves. Visit www.coronavirusnetwork.org for the latest information, updates and resources.

What are some things my clinic can do to prepare for coronavirus?
Start by asking your clinic leadership team what planning is being done for the COVID-19 response. You can send your leadership these FAQs and offer to aid in preparations.

A few practical steps for your clinic to consider:
● Establish a regular all staff meeting about preparing and strengthening clinic response and plans for coronavirus. Allow for all staff concerns to be heard.
● Create a plan for new safety measures at front entrance and at patient check-in
● Create a procedure for what your staff will do with a potential COVID-19 patient
● Check on supply of masks, gloves, soap, hand sanitizer and other protective items.
● Provide masks and gloves to front desk reception staff if available
● Circulate general population FAQs and coronavirus myth documents among staff

How should our clinic react when a sick patient who thinks they have coronavirus comes through the door?
Start by creating a question, answer and action flow document for staff to follow if a patient comes in worried about coronavirus exposure, or reports known symptoms of cough, fever and shortness of breath. The first questions should be if the individual has come into contact with anyone who has been diagnosed with coronavirus. If the answer is no, they should be asked about their travel history in the last month. Ask them to note all places visited.

If the individual had contact with a confirmed individual or traveled recently to known areas of high level community transmission, then immediately put on a mask and isolate them. Follow your clinics procedure for potential COVID-19 patients if it has them. Next immediately notify your local or state health department about the possible case of COVID-19.

What should I do if I think I’m getting sick?
Notify your clinic leadership immediately. If you withhold the fact you are not feeling well you put yourself as well as others at risk. Ensuring that your clinic staff are taking proper steps to stay in good health (proper sleep, drinking fluid, eating healthy, etc) as a proactive step.

How can my clinic staff be better protected against coronavirus?
It is understandable for all staff at your clinic to be concerned about their safety and health. The first thing to do is create clear communications with staff. Make sure staff concerns are heard and that someone at the clinic will be assigned to send out staff guidance and updates on a regular basis. Check on your clinics stocks of all personal protective equipment as well as hand
soaps and hand sanitizer. Consider new safety measures for front desk and all health providers on staff. Have a procedure ready for suspected cases of COVID-19.

Mental health is also important to protect your staff from anxiety, burnout and depression. Acknowledge the stress of the situation and that your clinic staff must rely on each other for support. Leadership of the clinic should set-up consistent and regular messaging about what is being done to keep staff safe.

**How can I help educate my community?**
Review the general FAQs and the 19 coronavirus myths so that you can anticipate certain questions. Post the FAQs and myths documents on your clinics social media channels. Print them out and put them in your clinic. Send them to any community partners and ask that they share them. If you are comfortable, paste the FAQs and myths on your personal social media accounts. As a health professional your community will look to you for leadership, guidance and calm.

**What should I do if someone shares a myth about coronavirus?**
It is important to calmly debunk all myths and misinformation about coronavirus. This is especially true for myths that believe certain races or ethnicities like Chinese or Middle Eastern individuals are more likely to spread coronavirus. Review the general FAQs and 19 Myths about COVID-19 documents to be prepared to debunk myths. Remember that individuals may really feel their sources of information are real even if they are not, and creating a confrontation will not help in the situation.

**How can I stay calm?**
Three sources of information on coronavirus — mainstream media, politicians, and social media are giving mixed messages about coronavirus. There are some people that seem hysterical and others that are dismissing coronavirus as nothing at all. To manage your anxiety the most important thing to remember is that most healthy people that get coronavirus experience only mild symptoms that are comparable to a cold or flu.

If you feel anxious, there are things you can do to keep yourself healthy and prepared:
- Avoid travel and large crowds when possible
- Frequently wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds.
- Use appropriate hand sanitizers as a substitute for washing your hands when that is not available
- Frequently disinfect surfaces, like your desk, phone, tablet, smartphone, and countertops.
- Have contingency plans for school closures
- Be able to prepare meals at home without having to shop for several days.

**What can I say to people who are worried and anxious?**
It is important to use empathy. People are right to be worried, so do not dismiss their anxiety, even if they seem emotional. Ask them what they are most concerned about. Remind them that most people only experience mild symptoms. Provide them with the above suggestions as well as the general FAQs and myths document. If they fall into a high-risk category, supply them with the special high risk FAQs. Project calm to the individual and remind them that with the proper precaution and preparation, they will be able to navigate through the coronavirus situation.

**What if someone asks me where I can get tested?**
While the availability of tests for coronavirus is improving, at the moment getting tested is not widely available and you must meet a certain criteria. Most people can get better at home and by going to a hospital or clinic to try and get tested you may put yourself or others at risk. If you are experiencing severe symptoms seek medical care.

**What should I tell my family about the risk of working at a clinic?**
Tell your family that working at a health clinic means risk to diseases on a daily basis. Those who work at a clinic know the risks and are able to take the proper precautions. Share that your clinic is taking special steps to keep staff safe and respond to the coronavirus outbreak.

**Should I keep distance from my family members?**
If you are taking proper safety precautions and have not come into direct contact with a coronavirus case, then your risk of infecting family members is low. If there are particular high-risk individuals living at your home, then it would be best to keep distance and minimize contact with them or have them seek alternative living arrangements if possible.

**Information for this document came from:**
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The World Health Organization (WHO): https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus
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