

Bulletin

Editor: Dr. Ellen Sayet

May – June 2020 • Volume 44 Issue 3



LEE COUNTY
**MEDICAL
SOCIETY** INC.

Physicians Caring for our Community





Bulletin

MAILING ADDRESS:
5781 Lee Blvd., Ste 208-104
Lehigh Acres, FL 33971

The Lee County Medical Society Bulletin is published bi-monthly.

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MANAGING EDITOR

Julie Ramirez, 239 -936-1645
E-Mail: jramirez@lcmsfl.org

BULLETIN STAFF

Valerie Yackulich, Executive Assistant

Membership Coordinator

Diana Samcam

GRAPHICS

Cloudscape-graphix % Fraller Enterprises

PRINTER

The Print Shop

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Lee County Medical Society Mission Statement

The mission of Lee County Medical Society is to advocate for physicians and their relationships with patients; promote public health and uphold the professionalism of the practice of medicine.

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Photo info:

As an ophthalmologist, I am always fascinated by eyes and their incredible variety in nature. The red-eyed treefrog *Agalychnis callidryas*, lives in the rainforests in Central America, and has the most stunning bright red eyes you can find. These eyes have many uses beyond the obvious sight. When threatened, the frog opens the eyes abruptly startling the predator. Also, the disproportionately large eyes help them swallow their prey when the frog closes its eyes retracting them into their bodies and pushing the meal down the throat.

The photo was taken by Dr. Juan P Fernandez de Castro from a captive bred specimen in Deerfield, Florida, during a macro photography workshop.



We welcome member pictures to be considered as a cover to the Bulletin. Email them to valerie@lcmsfl.org

ALL EVENTS

ARE

CURRENTLY

POSTPONED

LCMS CLASSIFIEDS

Wanted: Part Time Physician to certify patients for Medical Marijuana Offices in Fort Myers and Cape Coral. Flexible hours and compensation. Contact: Dr Robert J. Brueck, MD at admin@emeraldmedicalcenter.com .

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Address Change

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Lehigh Acres, FL 33971
Phone & Fax remain the same

Retired

George Ball, MD Jun/2019
Bruce Berget, MD Jan/2020
Joseph Hobson, DO Jan/2020
William Evans, MD Feb/2020

Richard Murray, M.D.

Premier Women's Care
9021 Park Royal Dr.
Ft Myers FL 33908
239-432-5858
www.pwcsvfl.com

NEW APPLICANTS

Dr. Troy L. Shell-Masouras received her medical degree from Eastern Virginia Medical School, Norfolk, VA in 2008. Dr. Shell-Masouras completed her internship in the department of surgery at University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA in 2009 and Residency in 2014 at Eastern Virginia Medical School, Norfolk, VA. She then completed her fellowship in Breast Surgical Oncology at Emory University Hospital, Atlanta, GA in 2015. Troy L. Shell-Masouras, MD. Dr. Shell-Masouras is in practice with Paradise Coast Breast Specialist, 1890 SW Health Pkwy, Ste 100, Naples, FL 34109. Tel: 239-734-3533 Fax: 949-543-2925.

Dr. Sebastian Klisiewicz received his Osteopathic Medicine degree from Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine, Chicago, IL in June 2009. Dr. Klisiewicz completed an internship at Midwestern University, Chicago, IL from July 2008 - June 2009 and a residency in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the Medical College of Wisconsin from July 2009 - June 2012. Board Certified: Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Dr. Klisiewicz is in practice with Integrative Rehab Medicine, 9250 Corkscrew Rd., Estero, FL 33928. Tel: 239-687-3199 Fax: 855-398-9437. Board Certified: Pain Management and Rehab.

Dr. Stephan Levitt received his medical degree from SUNY Buffalo School of Medicine and Dentistry, Buffalo, NY in 1976. Dr. Levitt completed his internship and residency in Pathology in Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, NY from 1976-1978. Completed his residency in Dermatology from 1978-1981 at Metro Health Center, Cleveland, Ohio. Dr. Levitt is in practice with The Woodruff Institute, 14440 Metropolis Ave., Ste 102, Fort Myers, FL 33912. Tel: 239-590-8895 Fax: 239-590-8895. Board Certified: Dermatology.

Dr. Constantine Plakas received his medical degree from New York Medical College, New York, NY in 2008. Dr. Plakas later completed his residency in Neurosurgery and Fellowship in Neuro-endovascular at Albany Medical Center, New York, NY from 2008-2015. Dr. Plakas is in practice with LPG Neurosurgery, 2780 Cleveland Ave., Ste 819, Fort Myers, FL 33901. Tel: 239-343-3800 Fax: 239-343-3993. Board Certified: Neurological Surgery and Neuro-endovascular Surgery.

www.lcmsfl.org

As of 3/27/2020, the Physician Wellness Program will enable up to 3 telehealth visits for any Lee County physician, regardless of Lee County Medical Society membership. This benefit is available until August 31, 2020. All Lee County Medical Society members are eligible for 8 free sessions each calendar year as part of their membership benefits. Complete confidentiality; LCMS staff will have no access to records or names of clients. Convenient locations in Fort Myers and Naples.



**Telehealth
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Currently Available**

Please visit our website at:

www.lcmsfl.org

and click on Wellness

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY ELIZABETH COSMAI M.D. *(Written March 12, 2020)*

What a time to be living in! And what a time for me to be writing the President's message for our LCMS bulletin knowing that this discussion may be wildly different (in one way or another) by the time this is published.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented disruption of our global public and economic health. How can we even compare this pandemic to others? Well, we really cannot. It's stunning to see how a global closure of business, travel, and overall social interaction over a period of nearly 2 months could have an effect that reaches across age, race, and socioeconomic status.

We have been inundated with statistics and trends regarding the demand of hospital services (including availability of ICU beds and ventilators), cumulative infection and death rates, and of course, the daunting unemployment numbers and business closures within the United States of America.

But what about the impact of this pandemic among our colleagues: physicians? Many citizens would blindly believe that since we are an 'essential' worker, then our medical practices and our profession would be in need and not in jeopardy. Perhaps having more business than usual? Unfortunately, that has not been the case. The devastating economic effects of the global closure and our limited PPE supplies have hit our medical colleagues hard. In fact, many of our local medical practices have had to close for the last 6 weeks. I have anecdotal knowledge of practices who have lost 50% or more of their revenue and who have had to furlough employees in an effort to remain solvent.

According to federal labor statistics, the unemployment rate for the month of April 2020 rose 10.3 percentage points to 14.7 percent. Job losses in the healthcare sector have been second to those in the restaurant industry. In fact, recent statistics published by the US Department of Labor show that in the month of April, healthcare employment declined by 1.4 million, with job losses predominantly in the offices of dentists, physicians and other healthcare practitioners.

Many physicians are also seeing a significant decline in salary or have actually been furloughed. The Mayo Clinic, for example, recently published their plans to reduce physician salaries by 10-15%. A recent article in Becker's Hospital CFO Report indicated that over 230 hospitals across the country are furloughing workers (including employed physicians) due to the suspension of nonemergent procedures and a considerable decline in revenue.

So how can physicians, including our local colleagues, sustain themselves and their medical practices? The

Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), a provision of the CARES act passed by Congress in April 2020 to assist small to

medium size business among the COVID-19 crisis, has directly assisted many medical practices, especially

within Lee County. I have firsthand knowledge of how this unique loan, which can be up to 100% forgivable, has allowed medical practices to cover their payroll (including employee healthcare benefits, rent, utilities, etc). In addition, many physician practices in Lee County service a high volume of Medicare patients and therefore, Medicare-enrolled providers were also able to receive a direct deposit disbursement from the US Dept of Health and Human Services as part of the CARES Act to provide financial assistance to physician practices, hospitals and other providers negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. A second wave of disbursement is planned.

At our local level, this is a great time to be a member of LCMS. As a board, we voted to write a letter to Governor Desantis in support of the Florida Medical Association's position requesting Governor DeSantis to lift Executive order 20-72 which had halted all nonessential surgeries and medical procedures. That order was, in fact,

lifted and elective surgeries and medical procedures were reopened on May 4, 2020.

This is a lifeline for many of our local physicians and medical practices who have been struggling to stay afloat financially.

More recently, the Lee County Medical Society Foundation was able to garner a generous \$50,000 grant from the Lee County Industrial Development Authority to purchase and provide PPE supplies (for free) to Lee County physician offices who are in need of supplies ranging from masks and gowns to hand sanitizer. This is one of many ways our society is working on behalf of our members and our medical community.

The COVID pandemic has placed all of us in a unique position where we have and will continue to face many unforeseen challenges, both from a business and public health perspective. As a member of our local medical community, I am optimistic that we will continue to move ahead and overcome these financial obstacles and learn from this crisis so that we can be better prepared for our future.



The COVID pandemic has placed all of us in a unique position where we have and will continue to face many unforeseen challenges, both from a business and public health perspective.

RAMIREZ REPORT

By JULIE RAMIREZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Terrific PPE NEWS!!!

The Society has been working hard this past month to find grants in order to provide PPE free of charge for you. With those efforts, the Foundation was recently awarded 2 grants and heard that the Lee County Government will be giving away PPE.

On May 19th, the Lee County Medical Society Foundation was awarded \$50,000 from the Lee County Industrial Development Authority for PPE that is Lee County made. 2 PPE items fit that criteria: hand sanitizer and reusable masks (adult and children's). We will be purchasing gallons of hospital grade hand sanitizer from Wicked Dolphin Rum Distillery. For masks, we have teamed up with local fashion designer, Judy Cutler, to have 6,000 reusable medical fabric 3 ply masks made. 1,000 of these masks will be for children.



With all this craziness of homeschooling 2 kids, staying safe while grocery shopping, attempting to work and looking out for family members, I have found comic relief from watching Jimmy Fallon's Late-Night Show at Home. I can relate to him, as his kids crawl all over him while he's

working, or they run in during a Zoom meeting. One of the cool things he does when interviewing celebrities, was to ask them what non-profit they were supporting. One night he interviewed Ashton Kutcher and Mila Kunis and their Quarantine Wine. The profits from the wine they sell goes to 4 different no-profits – one of which is Direct Relief. Direct Relief is providing PPE free of charge to non-profits and medical entities. Watching this made a lightbulb go off in my head and I sat down to apply on the behalf of our county's physicians with the Society Foundation. It was a long shot but to my shock and amazement, they called Friday night, May 15th, to say that the Foundation was approved for a shipment of PPE supplies. In the next week or so, Direct Relief will be sending 10,000 surgical masks, 3,000 KN95 masks, 2 cases of Vaseline, 110 boxes of gloves, 60 no touch thermometers and 4 cases of ethanol-based hand sanitizer.



And to add to the excitement the Lee County Commissioners approved \$2 million on May 19th, for the purchase of PPE that will be provided to Lee County small businesses. If your practice has 25 or less employees, apply for a free PPE package at www.leeflcares.com.

Keep an eye out on your emails and/or text messages as we will continue to update you as the distribution of these supplies, once we get them.

If you are not one of the 110 practices that took part in our survey of PPE need this past month and would like to be added to the distribution list, please email me at jramirez@lcmsfl.org by June 10th, 2020.





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Our Mailing Address as of March 1, 2020 is:

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Fax: 239-936-0533
www.lcmsfl.org

Lee County Medical



Fariha Abbasi-Feinberg and Dr. Eric Feinberg



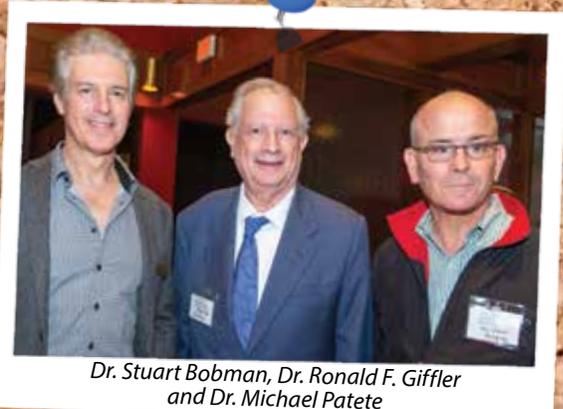
Sherri Kubesh, Dr. Jason Shumadine, Dr. Gamini Soori and Dr. Fadi Abu Shahin



Juli Bobman and Leticia Lundquist



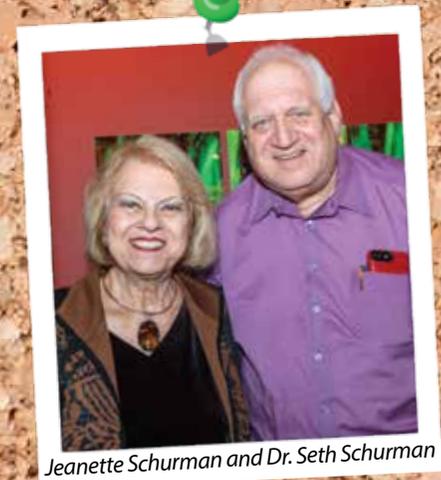
Dr. Daniel de la Torre and Dr. Elizabeth Cosmai (outgoing pres and incoming pres)



Dr. Stuart Bobman, Dr. Ronald F. Giffler and Dr. Michael Patete



Dr. Scott Caesar and Gloria Caesar



Jeanette Schurman and Dr. Seth Schurman



Betty Rubenstein, Sonia Patel and Dr. Harminder Gill

Society Annual Installation

January 31, 2020



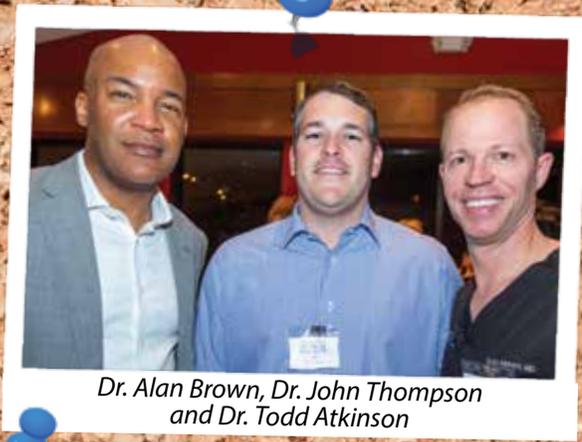
Tami Traiger and Dr. Dean Traiger



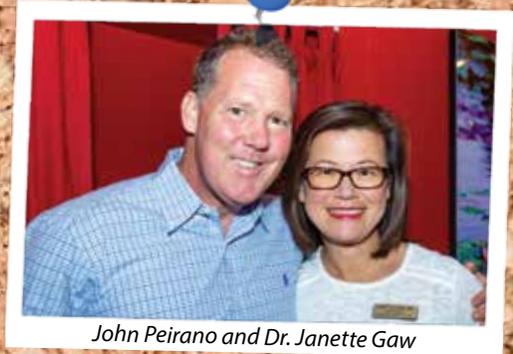
Dr. Juan Fernandez de Castro, Alexandra Fernandez de Castro and Dr. Trevor Elmquist



Tom Mouracade and Dr. Peggy Mouracade



Dr. Alan Brown, Dr. John Thompson and Dr. Todd Atkinson



John Peirano and Dr. Janette Gaw



Dr. Natalia Partain, Tom Lytton and Dr. Tracy Vo



Diana Samcam and Dr. Ivan Samcam



Dr. Annette St. Pierre-McKoul, Dr. Gamini Soori and Dr. Rebekah Bernard



Dr. Shari Skinner and Dr. James Rubenstein

MEMBER ARTICLE

BY DR. FADI ABU SHAHIN

Being a physician I get thanked a lot, every day, by patients, by their families and friends, in the office, in the hospital, before surgery, after surgery, before discharge from the hospital, in the street, at the grocery store, and I even receive thanks and sometimes gifts from family members after their loved ones pass away under my care.

Over the years, I witnessed different types of "thank you's, and here is my attempt to classify them:

1. A **sincere** thank you for saving my life; I had one today. A 50 years old admitted to the ICU in sepsis due to a ruptured pelvic abscess, I did a very difficult surgery, she was in the hospital for weeks, I saw her today for her post op visit, she is doing great. She meant it when she said thank you.

2. A **sarcastic** thank you: we're all gathered in this 70+ year old lady's hospital room. The medical team and her family. She has metastatic cancer. My attending (I was a fellow in training) is giving her a grim death talk; poor prognosis, hospice, weeks left to live at best, and everyone is crying. My

attending finishes and asks the patient: any questions? The patient answers in a sarcastic tone: No, thank you doctor. Everyone in the room burst into laughs.

3. A **deep and thoughtful** thank you:

This one I get once every few years and it manages to bring tears to my eyes at times. "Thank you doctor of all the years of training and studying". Very few know or appreciate the lifetime of dedication, focus, and self-discipline it takes to be a doctor. Even the simplest procedures, opinions, decisions, and discussions that we perform on a daily basis are the result of years of hard work, continuous education and learning, training, and refinement. Nothing comes easy even if it looks easy.



4. A **sinister** thank you: I

call her with good news, the biopsy I did last week on a suspicious lesion is negative. She receives the news in a calm manner and says thank you. Two weeks later I receive a letter from her attorney asking for medical records. She wants to sue me for a surgical complication that occurred 4 months ago, that was a known risk of the surgery, was identified during surgery, repaired appropriately, and she had a normal recovery and returned to work as expected.

5. A **Corona (COVID-19)** thank you: It is the thank you for putting others before ones' self and for doing the right thing, even when it is difficult to do. Aside from serving in warzones, healthcare workers were never more deserving than now to receive such a thank you. As a gynecologic oncologist I am probably the last to earn the Corona thank you since my organs of interest are anatomically very distant from the nose, mouth and lungs putting me at a significantly lower risk. The real heroes who deserve the Corona thank you are: the physicians, nurses, midlevels, respiratory therapists, and all medical and support staff who are on the frontline taking care of COVID patients; the nurses and CRNAs from Lee County who went to help in New York despite the risk; the physicians who took pay cuts to keep from furloughing their staff or significantly cutting their hours; and the Lee Health leadership that made the difficult decisions prioritizing the safety of their employees and the best interest of Lee County residents.

Most can tackle easy tasks at easy times but very few can handle unexpected challenges in tough times. In Lee County, Florida, many stepped up to the plate and did the right thing, and for that they deserve a special thank you.

Dr. Fadi Abu Shahin, Gynecologist Oncologist, has been a LCMS Member since 2012.

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Self-Care is Not Selfish: It's Imperative to Save the Practice of Medicine

JESSIE MAHONEY, MD | PHYSICIAN | WWW.KEVINMD.COM

The necessity of putting on our own oxygen mask first has never been more clear.

Bringing wellness into the mainstream culture of medicine and empowering and healing the healers so they can heal others has been the focus of my leadership work my entire career in medicine.

It took a pandemic to bring widespread national focus to this issue. The cultural shift is finally beginning. For the sustainability of the practice of medicine and for the health of all of us, it is time. We must continue to keep the spotlight on the importance of optimally caring for our healers even after this pandemic has passed.

If doctors are not well, they cannot heal others to the best of their abilities. They must care for themselves so they can best care for others. The culture of self-sacrifice in medicine is outdated. Professional athletes optimize their own health and wellness so they can perform optimally. Physicians are asked to perform at an equally high, if not higher level, for longer careers. Human lives are at stake in medicine.

We must start to create a culture within medicine where physician self-care is nurtured and valued. Self-care is not selfish. It is needed and important. Through modeling self-care and allowing and encouraging others to do the same, we will save the most lives and the practice of medicine as a sustainable career.

I hope you will all start by starting. Make a commitment to prioritize your sleep, to eat healthy food, to get exercise and fresh air, and to make time for connections with others as well as for recovery. If it seems hard, it is likely because judgmental thoughts about scarcity and value are getting in the way.

Breathing is another simple and accessible tool for self-care. Many physicians hold their breath throughout the day. Your breath is always available. Deep breaths are healing and change the reactivity of your nervous system. Paying attention to the breath and using it to nourish yourself and create space can make a huge difference.

Mindfulness is also an evidence-based self-care tool that impacts health and performance that can easily fit into the life of a physician. You can do it anywhere anytime. Just pause and be present. Notice and allow. Don't make it complicated. It is a practice and is not about perfection. Use mindfulness to create space and compassion for yourself and others. Use mindfulness as a form of preventive care or PPE for your emotional health.

Intentionally choosing your thoughts is a form of directed

mindfulness. Not letting our minds go unmanaged and causing unnecessary struggle is powerful self-care. This is why coaching has become a lifeline for so many physicians. Medicine and life itself are already challenging enough without adding in unintentional thoughts that make it harder.

Mindful coaching teaches you to notice and be aware of your naturally occurring thoughts. You can't change what you do not see. Start by noticing negative thoughts. As physicians, we are trained to spot problems and plan for the worst. Negativity bias causes us to feel more anxiety, fear, and scarcity. Allow compassion for your highly-trained brain. Opting out of self-judgment is part of self-care.

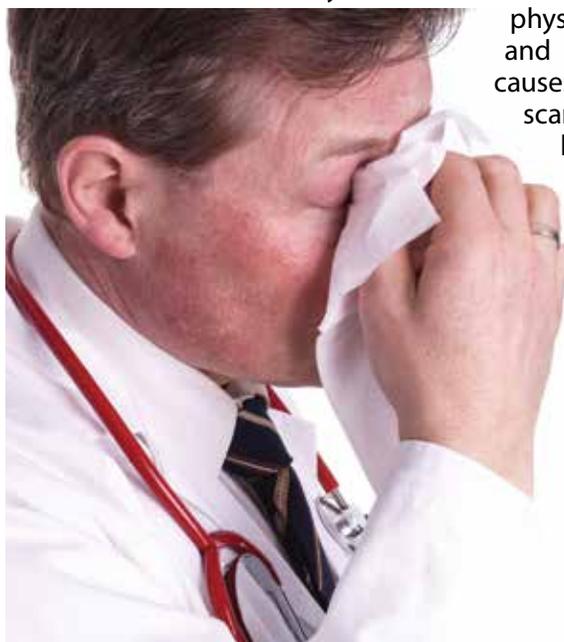
Once you notice and accept the cornucopia of negative thoughts in your head, you can intentionally shift your focus to more helpful, equally true thoughts. This is not to minimize the challenges, stresses, or tragedy at hand. It is to allow you to change your experience of it. When you focus your mind on more positive thoughts, you struggle less and experience less stress, emotional exhaustion, and vicarious trauma. Choosing thoughts that highlight what is abundant rather than scarce

and what is in your control rather than what is happening "to you" is like turning on the oxygen flowing through your mask.

Self-care is a gift for ourselves and for those to whom we provide care. With our physician oxygen masks firmly on, medicine will be a more healing and healthy space for all.

May you all be well. May we all be well.

Jessie Mahoney is a pediatrician and can be reached at Pause & Presence Coaching



*If doctors are not well,
they cannot heal others to
the best of their abilities.*

Top 10 Tips for Reopening Your Medical Office During COVID-19

KERIN TORPEY BASHAW, MPH, RN, SR. V.P., PATIENT SAFETY & RISK MGMT. & DEBBIE K. HILL, MBA, RN, SR. PATIENT SAFETY RISK MGR.

As state and local governments determine that criteria have been met to implement Phase One of the federal Opening Up America Again Guidelines, medical offices will begin reopening — and will need to make modifications to keep patients and office staff safe. Though the dynamics surrounding COVID-19 will continue to change in the weeks and months ahead, what must not change is physicians and medical office staff remaining vigilant.

We've heard from physicians that they are concerned about the risks involved in reopening their practices. In response to these concerns, we offer the following 10 recommendations:

1. Provide refresher training for all staff on triage, infection control, use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and patient communication.
2. Determine staff needs for PPE based on levels of infection in the community, types of patients seen, and types of patient care procedures performed. See guidance from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).
3. Contact your insurance agent or medical professional liability carrier to confirm that coverage has been reinstated at the desired level if you have requested adjustments in your professional liability coverage during the crisis.
4. Schedule in-person visits according to medical priority. Consider continued telehealth visits for patients at high risk for COVID-19 who don't need to be seen in person.
5. Follow guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for patient COVID-19 screening upon appointment scheduling and on day of appointment.
6. Avoid patient-to-patient contact by considering separate entrance and exit doors, limiting capacity, asking patients to wait in the car, and allowing only one-patient visits. If patient must be accompanied, screen chaperone for COVID-19. See the CDC's Outpatient and Ambulatory Care Settings: Responding to Community Transmission of COVID-19 in the United States.
7. Assess whether public, work, and treatment areas are equipped to reduce the spread of COVID-19. For example, use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved cleaning chemicals with label claims against the coronavirus. For more information, see OSHA's Ten Steps All Workplaces Can Take to Reduce Risk of Exposure to Coronavirus. For a list of disinfection products effective against coronavirus (COVID-19, also known as SARS-CoV-2), see the Environment Protection Agency list.
8. Screen healthcare personnel daily for symptoms/travel/contacts relevant to COVID-19. Any unprotected occupational exposure by staff members should be



assessed and monitored. See Interim U.S. Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure in a Healthcare Setting to Patients with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

9. Follow return-to-work guidelines for healthcare workers with confirmed or suspected COVID-19.
10. Maintain an open line of communication with all vendors and supply chains for infection control purposes and access to available resources.

Concerns will persist regarding the possibility of COVID-19's resurgence as state and local governments implement the phases of the Opening Up America Again Guidelines. We urge you to:

Reference the CDC, your state medical board, professional societies, and federal, state, and local authorities daily for public health guidance and new legislation. The CDC provides public health agency contact information at National Voluntary Accreditation for Public Health Departments.

Be mindful of expiration dates of executive orders related to licensing, telemedicine, prescribing rules, and regulatory compliance. See COVID-19: Executive Orders by State on Dental, Medical, and Surgical Procedures for a list of state executive orders from the American College of Surgeons.

We've provided these tips because we are driven by our mission to advance the practice of good medicine. As always, use your best clinical judgment. Continue to be diligent and proceed with caution as you manage patients within your facility. Stay abreast of community incidence of disease and restructure your approach when needed.

The guidelines suggested here are not rules, do not constitute legal advice, and do not ensure a successful outcome. The ultimate decision regarding the appropriateness of any treatment must be made by each healthcare provider considering the circumstances of the individual situation and in accordance with the laws of the jurisdiction in which the care is rendered.



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From left: Nina Burt, O.D.; Kate Wagner, O.D.; E. Trevor Elmquist, D.O.; Sarah Eccles-Brown, M.D.



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