



Covid-19 Town Hall Meeting #1 – General Update Hosted by the Michigan Pharmacists Association

Speakers:

Jennifer Lixey Terrill is the Healthcare and Public Health Policy Specialist and Emergency Management Coordinator for the Bureau of EMS, Trauma, and Preparedness. She has been one of MPA's primary contacts with the State through a variety of roles as she has advanced her career in emergency preparedness activities. Jennifer has worked closely with pharmacy professionals during the COVID-19 epidemic and was also heavily involved in pharmacy related activities during the H1N1 pandemic.

Farah Jalloul is one of four pharmacists working at the Michigan Pharmacists Association and Pharmacy Services Inc. She has served as the State Pharmacy Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for nearly 2 years representing the profession's interests. During this public health emergency, Farah has been working in the state's Community Health Emergency Coordination Center and the State Emergency Operation Center as a pharmacy subject matter expert and liaison for the MPA since March 19, 2020.

Summary of Questions & Answers – As of May 4, 2020

1. **We've been hearing about a lot of medication shortages. Can you tell us the status of medication availability in Michigan and what is being done to ensure we have the supplies needed?**

Supplies have been obtained through the federal government (FEMA) and the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), as well as through wholesalers and private arrangements. We've used all resources to secure supplies for our state but we've been competing with other states. We believe we've been able to secure enough medications at this time to meet demands but there are still shortages primarily for paralytics and sedatives.

2. **Originally, it was reported that Hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine was the best drug to treat Covid-19. But I heard in the news that's not the case. Can you tell us the latest with this drug?**

The FDA cautions against the use of hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine for COVID-19 outside of the hospital setting or a clinical trial due to the risk of heart rhythm problems. Hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine have not been shown to be safe and effective for treating or preventing COVID-19. These drugs are being studied in clinical trials for COVID-19, and FDA authorized their temporary use during the COVID-19 pandemic for treatment of the virus in hospitalized patients when clinical trials are not available, or participation is not feasible, through an Emergency Use Authorization. These drugs can cause abnormal heart rhythms such as QT interval prolongation and ventricular tachycardia, often in combination with azithromycin and other QT prolonging medicines.



3. Everyone is talking about the “surge” do you think we’ve experienced it yet – when did it occur or when is it predicted?

Unfortunately, we can’t say whether we’ve seen the largest surge of patients in Michigan and what may happen when the Stay Home, Stay Safe Order is lifted. With social distancing and individuals wearing masks, we shouldn’t see as many illnesses.

4. Where are the hardest hit parts of the state?

The Detroit area has been the hardest hit area in Michigan to date.

5. What has MPA’s role been in emergency preparedness?

Jalloul has been serving as the State Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for nearly two years. MPA has had a contract with the state since 2002. The contract has been managed by MPA COO Dianne Malburg who currently serves as the primary back-up to Jalloul. Jalloul served in the Community Health Emergency Coordination Center prior to March 19 when she joined the State Emergency Operation Center as a pharmacy subject matter expert and liaison for the MPA. She has been working with Lixey-Terrill and other state officials to procure medication supplies throughout the state. Primarily obtaining medications for health-systems from FEMA and private wholesalers ensuring critical needs are being met.

6. Grocery stores and pharmacies must create at least two hours per week of dedicated shopping time for vulnerable populations, which for purposes of this order are people over 60, pregnant people, and those with chronic conditions including heart disease, diabetes and lung disease. Does the 2 hours per week of dedicated shopping time for vulnerable populations also apply to clinic-based pharmacies, as opposed to stand-alone retail pharmacies?

The Executive Order does not differentiate between the different types of business settings. The goal is to provide at-risk individuals dedicated access to the services being provided.

7. Does offering delivery pharmacy services for two hours meet the Executive Order requirement?

Our interpretation of the Executive Order is that delivery does not eliminate the need of providing the 2 hours of dedicated shopping time.

8. Are the curves (new cases and deaths) in Michigan flattening or are we on the back side of the curve?

At this time it remains unknown. There continues to be the risk of a second wave as various parts of the State are allowed to re-engage in less restricted ways.

9. What does the state project for COVID-19 trends as people downstate begin traveling to their northern Michigan summer homes?

This is one of the concerns moving forward. The fear is that either the virus will be spread into areas that have not been exposed and that there may not be adequate hospital beds in the north to handle a surge of new COVID patients.



10. **How are health-systems in northern Michigan preparing for a surge?**
The northern health systems have watched very closely to how health systems in SE Michigan handled their surge of patients. In addition to having the benefit of lessons learned in SE Michigan, they have had additional planning time to obtain additional PPE supplies and make additional preparations.
11. **Sick patients are coming into the pharmacy and it's been suggested that pharmacists test and vaccinate. Why isn't adequate PPE and reimbursement available to pharmacy professionals?** *The current supply of PPE has been reserved for the in-patient setting however, since 4/27/2020, the federal government has begun issuing supplies to each state for the state to handle distribution for those pharmacists able to begin testing. The reimbursement models and platforms have been the "hot topics" for the past 2 weeks. CMS and private payers are determining the best mechanism to handle this issue.*
12. **Why isn't the CLIA waiver process accelerated under the COVID-19 circumstances?** *If a pharmacy has a current CLIA waiver for immunizations or other POC testing then the only step that needs to be done is to apply, by E-mail, for an amendment to include the testing kits that will be used. (https://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-89334_63294_72971_78688---,00.html) IF the pharmacy does not have a CLIA waiver then one has to be obtained by applying online. At this time ALL CLIA waivers for COVID-19 testing are given a high priority and an accelerated review process.*
13. **Should pharmacist demand provider status and then take on this extremely dangerous and costly task of testing for this virus?** *Many national and state associations are addressing provider status during this pandemic. Just for clarification purposes, for the state of MI, there isn't a need to be classified as a "provider" since a pharmacist can collaborate with a physician through the CPA and create a reimbursement model from the collaboration. The issue in Michigan is that pharmacists are not being paid by the health plans and insurance companies. MPA remains a strong advocate for provider status at the Federal level and payment at the state level.*
14. **I saw something in the news that Pepcid can cure COVID-19. Can you comment on this?** *We are not aware of any clinical findings supporting this statement.*
15. **I was in the process of opening a new pharmacy when all of this hit. I have gotten very little response from LARA. Is there any sense if LARA is proceeding with inspections for new pharmacies?** *LARA has stated that they are still proceeding with licensure activities. They are completing new pharmacy inspections by using video/audio services (e.g. Zoom).*
16. **Could pharmacists and student pharmacists assist public health with case contact tracing?** *The state is now putting the tracing process together. MPA is encouraging the State to include pharmacists and student pharmacists in this process.*
17. **How can pharmacy professional volunteer to help during this crisis?**
Register at <https://www.mivolunteerregistry.org>
18. **Should a volunteer pharmacist confirm positive antibodies for Covid-19 before volunteering?** *This isn't necessary, as long as CDC precautions are followed.*



19. **What are the current medication shortages?** *The shortages vary from day to day. Most of the shortages have been related to paralytics and sedatives related to keeping patients on ventilators. One medication that has been in short supply in the community pharmacy setting is albuterol inhalers.*
20. **Which executive order addresses continuing education and that working during COVID-19 counts toward licensure CE requirements?** *Executive Order 2020-49 addresses continuing education. MPA will be releasing a form to members to be used for capturing work time allowable for CE hours.*
21. **I signed up for volunteering since the beginning of COVID but never received a call. Are volunteers still needed?** *Yes, volunteers are still needed. Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians need to make sure that your profile is at 100%. The system will not verify your credentials until it is at 100%. Once a vaccine is available, they will be seeking volunteers to assist with immunizing patients.*
22. **Is MPA advocating technicians be allowed to give vaccines?** *The MPA House of Delegates has forwarded a Resolution to the MPA Executive Board to update a model collaborative practice agreement that would include having a pharmacy technician administer the vaccination. According to the Resolution, the decision of whether an immunization should be given is the decision of the pharmacist. This Resolution is currently being reviewed by the Executive Board.*
23. **Is COVID testing covered by all insurances? Medicaid? Medicare Part D Plans?** *Not at this time, however, momentum is gaining and further clarifications regarding procedures and reimbursement is occurring through state and national associations. This is fluid item and in all likelihood information should be available within the next couple of weeks.*
24. **Is a special certification required to provide COVID-19 testing and if so, how do we get it?** *There is no certification required, however training is available on how to properly obtain specimens, how to handle the specimens and appropriate PPE use. This information is going to be covered in the next Town Hall meeting.*
25. **What do antibody screening test determine?** *These tests look at IgG and IgM-antibodies that are present if a person has had COVID or has had exposure to COVID. Studies are being conducted to assess the accuracy of these tests. World Health Organization (WHO) recommends against screening with antibody tests.*
26. **How are Walgreens, CVS and Rite Aid getting paid for COVID-19 testing?** *Federal partnerships were formed with HHS and The White House Task Force. It is unclear if there is a reimbursement mechanism.*
27. **When do you think elective surgeries will be allowed?** *Unfortunately, we don't know the answer to that question.*



28. **Difficult to demonstrate inhaler use and how to inject medications. Can you suggest online demo sites we can share with patients?**
MPA will be placing instructional links on our website to assist pharmacists in their patient counseling.
29. **We can't order hand sanitizer or surgical mask from our wholesalers for our own staff. Do you have any suggestions where we can get sanitizer or home recipe to share with folks?**
The FDA has provided guidance on a formula for hand sanitizer. <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/coronavirus-covid-19-drugs/hand-sanitizers-covid-19#guidances> The CDC has provided instructions on creating masks as PPE. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>)
30. **Is the state going to be able assist community pharmacies when shortages occur in the supply chain?**
The answer to this question is potentially – yes. However, any medications received from the state will not be able to be billed through third parties.
31. **What do you recommend to pharmacies as best practices during this crazy time?**
Both the CDC and MPA websites have guidance of best practices.