

## **The Ultimate Shopper**

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The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has accelerated stresses on many aspects of healthcare systems and the communities we serve. Preventing spread of infection to and from our health care workers and patients relies on access to personal protective equipment (PPE)—gloves, face masks, goggles, face shields, respirators, and gowns which have become a scarce and precious commodity. This is why we decided to check in with George Sanchez, T.H.E.'s procurement specialist charged with keeping essential PPE supplies coming.

“Getting supplies during the pandemic has been a challenge,” George admits, “not just for our clinic but obviously for the nation. There are scams out there when it comes to PPE, which is why it is better to just stick to known vendors. Also, there are factories here mass-producing items themselves that are not FDA approved.”

Add price-gouging as an added element to the current environment, and you can see why George has his work cut out for him to keep clinics well-supplied on time and on budget.

“We are limited to only a certain amount of PPE gear weekly or monthly from our established vendors based on past ordering, so I've been forced to be creative. While I know many medical vendors, the reality is that if you don't already have an established account, they're not taking new orders or new customers.”

He admits that it feels like a “lifetime ago”, but it was only in June of 2019 that George came to work at T.H.E. after working 20 years with Healthcare Partners.

George built on his evolving experience in purchasing and negotiation contracts to identify two purchasing organizations that T.H.E. was a part of to leverage additional savings in acquiring pharmaceuticals, vaccines, and a wide range of equipment and supplies.

“When you work with these organizations, you have to make sure you are getting the proper price from preferred vendors.”

Another thing George keeps in mind when procuring supplies is the timing of receiving them to ensure he will be present to receive them and to find space to store them.

“I try to coordinate orders in a timely manner so we don't overcrowd our deliveries in one day. That means, organizing orders according to which ones are more urgent, what are the ones requiring next-day delivery and which are not really urgent and can be delivered on later days.”

Today, George lives in Lynnwood next door to his recently-widowed mother, so running errands and shopping to keep her safe during the COVID-19 pandemic is an important part of his time away from work.

“I love working here,” George says. “The staff is wonderful. I appreciate the kindness here. T.H.E. is a very positive experience.”