

Wisconsin Hospital Emergency Preparedness

Can your hospital ask staff to care for patients when your inventory of personal protective equipment (PPE) is depleted?

Do staff have a “duty to care” for patients even if there is no PPE?

Can the lack of PPE shut down hospital operations?

Hospitals have standards from their accrediting agency to have sufficient inventory of PPE for staff to manage a surge of patients in a sustained incident such as pandemic influenza.

What Has Been Accomplished:

All hospitals were offered the opportunity to have increased in-house inventories of N95 respirators, gloves, surgical masks, gowns to the maximum requested with funding through the federal preparedness program. Hospitals also have access to the State Hospital PPE Stockpile, which has 1,000 PPE kits (one kit has PPE for 25 patients for one day).

Challenges for Hospitals:

1. Hospitals have an ethical responsibility to have a sufficient inventory of PPE for staff to manage a surge of patients in a sustained incident.
2. Vendors have little to no inventory of PPE; vendors have limited capacity to increase production of PPE when needed.
3. Hospitals are likely to be reluctant to share PPE in a sustained incident, knowing that the hospital itself may need the PPE.
4. Hospitals should have procedures in place to conserve PPE and then to ration PPE as supplies diminish and vendors cannot fill orders.
5. OSHA has not given any guidance for hospitals (except acknowledge that supplies will be depleted) on what the hospital should do under the General Duty clause to provide staff with the appropriate PPE.

Best Practices:

Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare has exhausted their storage capacity at St. Francis, St. Joseph, Elmbrook Memorial, Franklin and The Wisconsin Heart Hospital for increased par levels of personal protective equipment (PPE) during the first two grant funding opportunities. A system warehouse was utilized to build a redundant level of preparedness during the most recent grant opportunity, and enhances the system resources.

Aurora Health Care was able to increase their par levels of PPE from 21 days to 35 days due to a reorganization of their warehouse. This warehouse serves eight Aurora hospitals and multiple clinics in Southeastern Wisconsin.

Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire purchased 500 washable isolation gowns to increase the stockpile of biological PPE. The decision was made in part due to their in-house laundry capacity. The gowns will be laundered and rotated to ensure that they do not deteriorate.

For Further Information:

Contact your Emergency Management Committee