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EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

November 18, 2020

HHS Continues to Clarify Reporting Requirements for Provider Relief Funds and How to Count Expenses
 Webinar

November 19, 2020

Prioritizing & Funding IT during a Pandemic
 Webinar

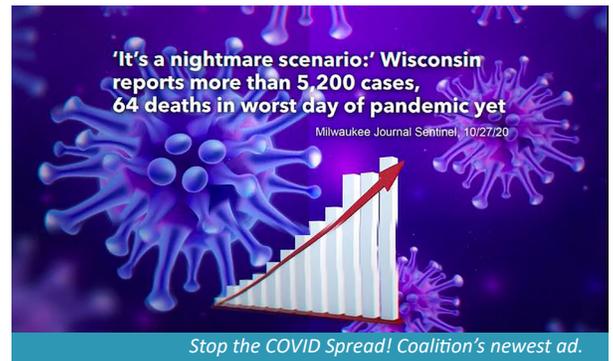
Starting December 7, 2020

Chargemaster Coding Updates and Implementation for 2021
 Self-study modules

Stop the COVID Spread! Coalition Releases New Ad Conveying Severity of Pandemic in Wisconsin

Statewide coalition effort to curb COVID crisis doubles down on urgency in fourth ad

This week, the "[Stop the COVID Spread!](#)" coalition released its fourth public education announcement on broadcast TV and digital platforms statewide, with a stern and serious new message urging Wisconsin residents to do their part to help reverse the public health crisis that is threatening to cause great harm to the state. The [new ad](#) comes as Wisconsin again hit new daily COVID-19 records, surpassing 7,000 new cases in a single day, and after a [White House task force report](#) again warned that Wisconsin's ongoing health emergency will continue to lead to increasing hospitalizations and deaths unless more serious action is taken.



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WHA's Borgerding Featured on Wisconsin Health News COVID Panel

Called on state leaders for unified public message to slow rapid spread

Eric Borgerding, WHA president and CEO, called on state leaders to come together on a unified public message that the pandemic needs to be taken very seriously during a Wisconsin Health News panel discussion November 11 on the current COVID-19 surge.

Borgerding said that WHA is engaging with policymakers to address both the capacity to treat patients as well as critical messaging for the public to take steps to reduce the rapid spread of COVID-19. He was also encouraged by new communications between Governor Tony Evers and Assembly Speaker Robin Vos to try to find common ground.

Unity around a common message "is not a bill that you pass, at least not in Wisconsin, it's not. It's not a piece of legislation," he said. "It's more tapping into the will and willingness of our leaders of all types to get behind that messaging."

Other panelists included Dr. Ryan Westergaard, chief medical officer for communicable disease, Department of Health Services; Tim Sheehy, president, Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce; and Kirsten Johnson, director, Washington Ozaukee Public Health Department.

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(WHA's Borgerding Featured on Wisconsin Health News COVID Panel . . . continued from page 1)

All sounded the alarm that Wisconsin is entering an increasingly dire situation.

Borgerding said that staffing is significantly strained in hospitals across Wisconsin.

"Not only are we seeing demand, COVID-related demand, just almost going up at a vertical pace, truly, but it's coming at a time when our capacity to treat that demand is becoming more and more diminished," he said. "Hospitals can expand the physical space to make additional beds available, but there is not enough staff to care for additional patients."

"We're very close to a tipping point," said Dr. Westergaard. "This could get much worse quickly and that tipping point is when we stop being able to save everyone who gets severely ill."



"Right now, our biggest concern is making sure that our hospitals and clinics have the capacity to save everyone, while we're doing the things in the public health world to try and stem the spread," Westergaard said.

Johnson said local public health is also overwhelmed. Her department receives more than 400 new cases a day, but can only handle about 200. Although her office has hired more than 60 additional staff, they are no longer able to provide contact tracing for all positive tests.

Borgerding said community testing has been left to hospitals in many areas of the state. Without the help of the Wisconsin National Guard, community testing capacity would be particularly challenged as hospitals now manage rapidly increasing COVID hospitalizations.

"Hospitals and health systems can't be the care system and the public health system at the same time," said Borgerding.

Sheehy shared the current economic impacts of the COVID-19 surge and expressed concern about the public's reaction to public health guidance.

"I'm just a bit perplexed at the kind of lack of a common guidance on an issue that is broad and statewide, but I'm equally perplexed about how people are reacting," Sheehy said. "If you don't know you should be wearing a mask, that you should social distance, that you should wash your hands and just stay out of some very challenging environments with this, you've got to be living under a rock. Yet here we are with escalating cases and a widespread pandemic and people still aren't acting as if that's the case."

Borgerding ended on an optimistic note, praising the dedication of the "health care heroes" throughout Wisconsin who are working extremely long hours in difficult circumstances to provide care to their communities.

This is Serious; Governor Evers Calls for Unity to Reverse COVID Surge

Speaker Vos reaches out to Governor

On November 10, Governor Tony Evers took the rare step of delivering a [prime-time address](#) to the people of Wisconsin to urge them to take COVID more seriously. According to the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau, such special addresses from Wisconsin governors are infrequent and, in recent memory, include only remarks from Scott Walker about a budget repair bill, Scott McCallum shortly after September 11, and Tommy Thompson celebrating Wisconsin's sesquicentennial.



Gov. Tony Evers

Recognizing divisions that have existed for months over how Wisconsin should respond to the virus, Gov. Evers called for unity, saying, "We must start fighting the virus together, and we must start tonight." Describing the state's exponential growth in COVID cases, the Governor noted that it had taken Wisconsin seven and a half months to get to 100,000 cases, but only 36 days to add another 100,000, and will likely take only 20 more days to add another 100,000 cases at the state's current pace. The Governor noted that in response to the dramatic increase in cases, Wisconsin's health care workers have stepped up by working overtime and putting themselves and their families at risk. Gov. Evers expressed his concern for them and the rest of the state if the state does not get the virus under control, saying, "We owe them our thanks, but they also deserve our action."

Responding to the urgent situation, the Governor issued [Executive Order 94](#), advising Wisconsinites to get back to the basics of fighting the virus by staying home when possible, avoiding gatherings large and small, washing hands often, and wearing a mask and maintaining social distancing when people must go out in public. Evers also called on businesses and the general public to work together, suggesting businesses expand work-from-home options if possible, and that people refrain from going to work or school if they become sick or symptomatic.

While the Governor encouraged Wisconsinites to continue supporting local businesses, restaurants, and workers by using curbside pickup and online ordering when possible, he urged them to avoid small private gatherings, including happy hours, dinner parties, sleepovers, and playdates at home. "If a friend or family member invites you over, offer to hang out virtually instead," he said, adding, "it's not safe to have others over — it's just not safe. And it might not be safe for a while yet."

Lastly, Gov. Evers said he would be releasing a COVID-19 legislative package soon. Assembly Speaker Robin Vos noted that his caucus would meet next week to discuss specific ideas to address issues related to COVID-19. He also said he had reached out to Evers to express his hope that the Legislature and the Governor could work together on COVID. WHA is closely following these developments and continues to echo the importance of Wisconsinites doing all they can to stop the uncontrolled spread of COVID-19.

Guest Column: "Wisconsin Captured National Eye in Election; Can It Do So Now with COVID Fight?"

By Tom Still, President, Wisconsin Technology Council, and co-founder, Wisconsin Healthcare Business Forum



Tom Still

As one of the vaunted "battleground states" in the 2020 presidential election, Wisconsin found itself a center of attention among people who before Nov. 3 may have been hard-pressed to place it on a U.S. map ... red state, blue state or shades of purple.

The Wisconsin economy would recover much faster if the state held the national eye a while longer by demonstrating it can stop the spread of COVID-19.

The renewed surge of positive cases that began around Labor Day hasn't slowed in Wisconsin, bringing with it more hospitalizations that stress facilities and medical staffs alike, as well as deaths that are breaking previous daily records.

Wisconsin's COVID-19 death rate is down to about 1 percent versus about 4 percent in the spring, largely because the medical profession has learned a lot about how to keep victims alive, but the sheer number of deaths has climbed because of the volume of new cases.

"Even though the death rate has steadily declined, you can't ignore the impact of the uncontrolled surge of Wisconsin cases," said Ann Zenk, senior vice president of the Wisconsin Hospital Association. "Wisconsin's death rate per 100,000 population is now about four times the national average."

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(Tom Still Guest Column . . . continued from page 3)

That's hardly a confidence builder for existing businesses, many of which continue to struggle to keep their doors open, or for business executives outside Wisconsin who may look elsewhere to locate or expand. If you view Wisconsin as a bizarre, non-compliant outlier in the fight against COVID, you might think twice about opening that new location.

Knowing the COVID-19 pandemic is hurting Wisconsin's business climate and consumer confidence, many business associations have banded together under the flag of the "Stop the Spread" coalition. It has produced public service announcements, enlisting the help of marquee sports teams and respected figures to urge people to take simple prevention steps.

It may be too early to know if the campaign is working, as the message was likely lost in the avalanche of political commercials that took place before Election Day. Now, perhaps, more people will pay attention and stop viewing face masks as a political statement.

So, who is dying from COVID-19 in Wisconsin?

Of the 2,156 deaths reported as of Nov. 4, the vast majority (1,944) were people 60 and older – and 1,083 were people 80 and older. That's been the pattern since the disease hit Wisconsin in March, but it has become more tragic as medical professionals struggle to keep it from sweeping through nursing homes and long-term care facilities.

The young and relatively young are not immune, however. There have been 202 deaths among people in the 20 to 59 age range.

More men than women have died by a 55% to 45% margin. Black people account for 12% of all Wisconsin deaths; Latinos are not far behind.

Deaths by geographic region in Wisconsin have soared in the northeast, with nearly a quarter of all deaths so far. In fact, the total number of deaths in the region broadly defined by Green Bay and the Fox Cities is almost as large as the state's southern, western and northern regions combined. Southeast Wisconsin accounts for nearly half of all deaths.

Some additional perspective on Wisconsin's COVID-19 deaths: The state has roughly as many people as Denmark, Finland or Norway, all countries with similar Northern Hemisphere climates, yet total deaths in those nations are 729, 259 and 282, respectively.

While restaurants, bars and schools received a lot of blame at the start of the pandemic, it's become clear that businesses that want to survive and schools that want to educate children in person are investing heavily in precautions. There's likely no way to prove it, but so-called "super-spreader" events – weddings, funerals, big outdoor parties, rallies and the like – may be emerging as a bigger culprit.

With the election in the rearview mirror, perhaps there is room for the "Stop the Spread" message to get through and for policymakers to work together where possible. That kind of cooperation would put Wisconsin on the map in another constructive way.

DHS Announces Incentive Payments for Nursing Homes that Admit Patients from Hospitals

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) announced November 11 that it will provide \$80 million in CARES Act funding to nursing homes. Importantly, \$30 million of the funds are allocated to a nursing home admission incentive program. This program will offer a \$2,900 payment for every admission a nursing home receives directly from a hospital, covering admissions from the last two weeks of October until funds are expended or through December 30, 2020, when the CARES Act funding expires. DHS intends for the funds to boost the number of staffed nursing home beds that can accept hospital discharges.

In addition, DHS is allocating \$50 million in one-time payments to nursing homes that applied for funding in its Direct Provider Payment program, which offered two application rounds last spring and summer. Nursing homes applied for more dollars than had been allocated through that grant program. DHS will now fully fund all eligible costs associated with those applications. Those funds will go out in one payment the week of Thanksgiving.

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WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding welcomed the news, noting that the dollars need to be used to expand nursing home capacity and reduce the backlog of patients in hospitals waiting to be discharged back to their nursing home. “We are pleased with DHS’ latest response to the surge in COVID-19 cases, and particularly tying these dollars to nursing homes accepting discharges from hospitals back to their facility. The inability of hospitals to return patients to nursing homes has exacerbated the severe capacity challenges facing hospitals across the state as COVID rages on. These resources are intended to help improve the discharge situation, alleviate that congestion and free up much needed capacity, and it will be important to ensure it does.”

WHA will share additional details about the program as soon as they are available. For further information, contact WHA’s [Laura Rose](#) or [Laura Leitch](#).

WHA, Wisconsin Counties Association File Brief Aimed at Preventing Influx of New Emergency Detentions

The Wisconsin Supreme Court received a joint [amicus brief](#) from WHA, the Wisconsin Counties Association and the Wisconsin Association of County Corporation Counsels on November 3 asking that the Court uphold the constitutionality of Wisconsin’s [mental health re-commitment statute](#).

Together, the three organizations raised concerns that Wisconsin would see a “revolving door” of new Chapter 51 emergency detentions if the Court invalidates the re-commitment statute in [Waupaca County v. K.E.K.](#) Previously, a Waupaca County district court and the [District IV Court of Appeals](#) upheld the constitutionality of the Chapter 51 re-commitment statute.

The appellant, K.E.K. is an individual who was re-committed to involuntary treatment by order of a Waupaca County court on a finding, supported by medical evidence, that K.E.K. posed a “substantial likelihood, based on [her] treatment record,” that she would pose a danger to herself or others if treatment were withdrawn. K.E.K. argues that the “substantial likelihood” standard for re-commitment is unconstitutional and that a county must present a “current overt act or omission establishing dangerousness” in order to continue an involuntary commitment.

“Our courts have acknowledged the ‘clear intent of the Legislature in amending sec. 51.20(1)(am)...was to avoid the ‘revolving door’ phenomena whereby there must be proof of a recent overt act to extend the commitment but because the patient was still under treatment, no overt acts occurred and the patient was released from treatment only to commit a dangerous act and be recommitted,’” states the joint amicus brief. For hospitals, the revolving door would result in “more resources spent to safely manage, evaluate and stabilize an unnecessary influx of involuntary patients in psychiatric crisis coming to general emergency departments.”

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul also filed an [amicus brief](#) in support of the constitutionality of the re-commitment statute. “[B]ecause individuals who have been effectively treated may not manifest the evidence of dangerousness seen in persons who haven’t been in treatment, the government needs a different avenue for proving current dangerousness,” wrote Kaul. “[The statute] provides that alternate route and is thus rationally related to the legitimate governmental purpose of providing treatment to the mentally ill.”

Oral arguments in the case are scheduled for November 17, 2020.

If you have questions about the case, contact WHA General Counsel [Matthew Stanford](#).

Grow Our Own Workforce

In January 2010, the Wisconsin Hospital Association Board of Directors created a workgroup and charged it with studying Wisconsin’s physician workforce in order to determine whether the projected number of physicians would meet the needs of Wisconsin’s patients in the future and to craft options to address any identified needs.

The Workgroup determined that by 2030, there would be a serious deficit in the number of physicians in the state. In brief, the Workgroup laid out in a white paper, “100 New Physicians a Year, An Imperative for Wisconsin,” issue areas that required attention to address the anticipated gap between physician supply and demand and potential options that could close the gap. At the time, WHA noted, “The release of the latest report met with massive press coverage and was greeted enthusiastically by stakeholders across the state.”

Perhaps the most cited finding from the report is that when graduates of a Wisconsin medical school also have their residencies in a Wisconsin program, there is a 70% chance they will practice in Wisconsin. This finding, which upon further study has shown an 86% chance of practicing in Wisconsin, is now known as the “Grow Our Own” equation.

The report’s “Grow Our Own” equation and recommendation for state funding to develop and sustain Wisconsin physician residency programs continues to be a cornerstone of WHA’s physician workforce advocacy. New state-funded grants to establish new and expand

existing graduate medical education (GME) programs became law in 2013 and were updated in 2019. Through 2019, nine new residencies have been created and an additional nine programs expanded in Wisconsin through the GME grant program. These expansions will create an estimated 151 new physicians in Wisconsin by 2024.

In the years leading up to and following the Workgroup’s report, WHA also advocated for funds used to help train additional doctors to serve rural areas and to increase substantially the maximum amount of loan repayment for doctors who decide to practice in rural areas. Further, WHA developed resources for use by hospitals seeking to implement residency programs, and WHA supported the establishment of two satellite medical schools to increase the number of physicians in underserved areas.

The Workgroup’s report additionally recognized the need for a coordinated effort to address anticipated changes in care delivery, including the team-based approach and the focus on care management. To address these issues, the report called for increasing the number of non-physician providers.

The 2013 WHA Health Care Workforce Report found that the physician shortage in Wisconsin was triggering a demand for advanced practice professionals (APPs), noting that hospital positions for advanced practice nurses and physician assistants had the highest vacancy rate of the occupations included in the WHA annual workforce survey. Increasing the number of APPs and “top-of-license” practice soon became a bigger focus of WHA’s advocacy efforts.

Watch [“Grow Our Own” Video](#).



The “Grow Our Own” Equation



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(Stop the COVID Spread! Coalition Releases New Ad . . . continued from page 1)

“COVID has a vice grip on Wisconsin that’s getting tighter every day and the consequences for our citizens, our businesses and our health care systems are becoming worse,” said WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding. “Last week, the White House Coronavirus Task Force warned that Wisconsin will face more COVID deaths without a more robust state response to this virus. We need everyone to understand, accept and act on these urgent warnings. We need a unified message and response.”



The “Stop the COVID Spread!” coalition was co-founded October 9 by the Wisconsin Hospital Association, Wisconsin Counties Association, Wisconsin Grocers Association, Wisconsin Restaurant Association and Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, and has grown dramatically to include more than 100 of Wisconsin’s leading health care, business, and advocacy organizations.

The more urgent message in the new ad builds on previous public education announcements featuring a front-line nurse from Appleton, members of the Green Bay Packers, and University of Wisconsin System President Tommy Thompson. It is the latest ad launched by the “Stop the COVID Spread!” coalition encouraging the use of crucial safety measures to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

“We have to move beyond arguing whether or not there is a pandemic with a virus that is killing people. We need to focus on solutions and stop ignoring reality,” said Brandon Scholz, president and CEO of the Wisconsin Grocers Association.

“Wisconsin is an incredible place to be and without everyone doing their part, we will have a hard time getting out of this pandemic and moving forward,” said Wisconsin Counties Association Executive Director Mark D. O’Connell. “It is time to face our current situation and do what we all need to do to open back up our state.”

All the coalition’s public education announcements, along with a full list of member organizations, can be seen at www.wha.org/stoptheCOVIDspread.

Optimize Your WHA Website Viewing

With the Internet Explorer (IE) browser no longer supported on Windows 7 operating systems, WHA’s websites work best with Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge browsers. Using IE may result in errors on some parts of the website.