December 21, 2020

The MMS will continue to monitor developments related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the response by state and federal agencies. For current information, including updates from NEJM, visit the dedicated page on the MMS website: massmed.org/covid-19.

Government Guidelines

Congress to pass COVID-19 relief, assistance for providers, and ban on surprise billing

House and Senate leaders late Sunday struck an agreement on a $900 billion COVID-19 relief package. The package includes several provisions advocated for by the Massachusetts Medical Society, including funding for states’ testing, tracing, and COVID-19 mitigation programs, a three-year extension on several critical public health programs, and legislation to address out-of-network billing.

“The Massachusetts Medical Society applauds federal policymakers . . . for advancing legislation that will deliver critical COVID-19 relief to our members and their patients,” said MMS President David Rosman, MD, MBA, in a statement released today. “This bill provides a temporary fix—while the funding levels fall short of a comprehensive COVID-19 response, we appreciate that policymakers recognized their constituents couldn’t wait any longer for some needed relief.”
Interim Board policy establishes Emergency Temporary License

The Board of Registration in Medicine (BORIM) issued an Interim Policy that establishes an Emergency Temporary License (ETL) for applicants awaiting adjudication on their Full License Application. This ETL is a full, unlimited, and unrestricted medical license. In order to qualify for an ETL, physicians must fulfill each of the criteria listed in the Interim Policy linked below. Requests for an ETL must be made by a health care facility to the Executive Director of BORIM or the Director of Licensing. The ETL will be valid until the applicant’s full license application is adjudicated or until the Interim Policy expires. The Interim Policy is currently set to expire on February 29, 2021.

Public Health

MMS and health care partners encourage public to stay home in new video

The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS), in partnership with the Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association (MHA), the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers (League), the American Nurses Association – Massachusetts (ANAMASS), and the Organization of Nurse Leaders (ONL), released a video on Monday with a critical message to the public: Please stay home during the upcoming holiday season.

The video project was conceived to prevent a repeat of the alarming increase in hospitalizations after Thanksgiving, which occurred despite warnings against group gatherings from health care leaders and public health experts.
Contributors to the short video include Dr. David Rosman, president, MMS; Steve Walsh, president and CEO, MHA; Michael Curry, incoming president and CEO, League; Julie Cronin, president, ANAMASS; and Amanda Oberlies, CEO, ONL.

Watch and share

FDA issues emergency use authorization for a second vaccine

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued an emergency use authorization for the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to be distributed in the U.S. for use in individuals 18 years of age and older.

Read more

FDA authorizes first over-the-counter home antigen test for COVID-19

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued an emergency use authorization for the first over-the-counter fully at-home diagnostic test for COVID-19. The Ellume COVID-19 home test is a rapid, lateral flow antigen test—a type of test that runs a liquid sample along a surface with reactive molecules. The test detects fragments of proteins of the SARS-CoV-2 virus from a nasal swab sample from any individual 2 years of age or older, including those not showing symptoms. The Ellume test will cost around $30.

Read more

Help patients with questions and expectations about vaccination

Because COVID-19 is a new disease with new vaccines, patients may have questions about what happens before, during, and after their appointment to get vaccinated. The tips below can help your patients know what to expect when getting vaccinated.
CDC information for pediatric health care providers

This guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is intended to provide pediatric health care providers with up-to-date information about children with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and about caring for children during the pandemic. Children are defined as age 1 month to 18 years in this guidance.

FDA commissioner addresses vaccine safety oversight

COVID-19 vaccines must adhere to specific U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidelines for safety and efficacy, and the FDA also sets up ongoing surveillance programs that continue after clinical trials. Learn more about COVID-19 vaccine safety monitoring from Dr. Stephen Hahn, commissioner of the FDA.

"COVID-19 Vaccine in Massachusetts" forum: Video, slides, and summary

On December 14, the Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) hosted a 90-minute informational forum on the COVID-19 vaccines in Massachusetts. The program featured Dr. Eric Rubin, editor-in-chief of the New England Journal of Medicine and NEJM Group, and Dr. Paul Biddinger, medical director for emergency preparedness at Massachusetts General Brigham and chair of Governor Baker's COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Group.
Additional faculty included: **Dr. Larry Madoff**, medical director of the Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health; **Dr. Simone Wildes**, infectious disease specialist at South Shore Health and chair of the MMS Committee on Diversity in Medicine; and **Dr. Asif Merchant**, geriatric medicine and palliative care specialist and chair of the MMS Committee on Geriatric Medicine. **Dr. David Rosman**, MMS President, served as moderator.

Presentations covered the science behind the COVID-19 vaccines and reviewed the Commonwealth's phased plan for vaccine distribution. The expert panelists also responded to questions about vaccine availability, safety, tracking, adverse reaction reporting, and concerns for specific at-risk populations.

[See recordings, slides, summary](#)

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**Wellness and Well-Being**

**Physician wellness resources curated by the MMS**

Physician wellness continues to be a top concern for practices in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In a recent survey conducted by the Massachusetts Medical Society, results showed that 76 percent of respondents reported facing issues surrounding physician wellness as a top operational issue in their practices. Listed below are three wellness webinars hosted by the American Medical Association (AMA) that cover various physician wellness topics. For more information about physician wellness resources, please visit the Massachusetts Medical Society's dedicated [wellness webpage](#).

- [Caring for health care workers during a crisis](#)
- [Physician stress during times of COVID](#)
- [How to implement a peer support program during a crisis](#)
DOI and CHIA meeting for providers: telehealth, prior authorization

The Division of Insurance (DOI) and the Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) hosts regular meetings to offer providers an opportunity to raise questions and concerns related to COVID-19 commercial insurance provisions. The next meeting will focus on telehealth, prior authorization, and other topics and will be recorded for later viewing. The DOI and CHIA, along with the Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) and the Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association (MHA), sponsor these calls.

- Date: Thursday, January 7
- Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. ET
- Meeting ID: 290 289 5643
- Passcode: 501

Join the meeting

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