January 26, 2022

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.

Public Health

State-supported COVID-19 therapeutic capacity update from Mass. DPH

Monoclonal antibody (mAb) therapy and antiviral medications used for the treatment of eligible patients with mild-moderate COVID-19 infection are available at the state-supported Gothams locations. The locations are in Athol, Everett, Holyoke, Fall River, Lowell, Pittsfield, and Plymouth from 8:00 AM -7:00 PM Monday through Sunday. The team is working to schedule all eligible patients. In many locations Gothams can provide same day care.

Providers are asked to review the most recent COVID-19 treatment guidance from DPH dated 1/12/22. In addition to mAb treatment, Gothams is supporting DPH efforts by dispensing oral antivirals, Paxlovid and molnupiravir, to patients with a prescription. Please note Gothams is not prescribing at the locations.
Please use this link for the provider referral form for oral antivirals (Paxlovid and molnupiravir) and monoclonal antibody treatment. Patients referred for treatment can expect an outreach call and/or text to schedule their appointment within 12 business hours of referral/prescription receipt. The average time between appointment scheduling and patient treatment is less than 24 hours at all locations at this time. Patients will not be charged for services or medications.

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**DPH updates comprehensive Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) guidance**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has updated its comprehensive Personal Protective Equipment guidance.

This guidance updates the PPE standards for health care personnel (HCP), including permitting health care providers to implement policies requiring HCP to use employer-issued PPE, and to preclude staff from using their own PPE absent appropriate safety and quality controls which may include, but are not limited to fit-testing.

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**FDA expands indications for Veklury (remdesivir)**

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has expanded the use of the antiviral drug Veklury (remdesivir) for certain non-hospitalized adults and pediatric patients for the treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19 disease. This provides another treatment option to reduce the risk of hospitalization in high-risk patients. Previously, the use of Veklury was limited to patients requiring hospitalization. Remdesivir is administered in a series of three daily intravenous infusions (200 mg, 100 mg, 100 mg) and is expected to retain activity against the Omicron variant.

Read the FDA news release on the expanded approved indications for Veklury.

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**Practice Management**
COVID-19 therapeutics: Resources for clinical guidance

On Wednesday, January 19, the Massachusetts Medical Society and the Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association presented the well-received webinar "New Antiviral Medications for COVID-19: What Massachusetts Clinicians Need-to-Know about Prescribing and Access."

- The webinar recording can be found [here](#).
- Find [program slides here](#).

Additional information on therapeutics from the state Department of Public Health (DPH) can be found on the [state website](#), including:

- How to [contact seven state-contracted sites](#) for monoclonal antibody therapy and oral antiviral therapies for high-risk patients who have been exposed to or have COVID-19.
- The state [monoclonal antibody therapy locator](#).

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Provider Relief Fund disbursement

The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Tuesday [announced](#) that it will be disbursing an additional $2 billion in Provider Relief Fund Phase 4 payments this week. Like the payments allocated in December, these payments will be based on lost revenues and increased expenses due to COVID-19 and will be made to physicians who previously applied for relief funds. HHS will reimburse a larger share of losses and increased expenses for smaller providers and a portion of the payments will be based on the amount and type of services provided to Medicare, Medicaid, or CHIP patients.

To mitigate disparities due to varying Medicaid reimbursement rates, HHS is using Medicare reimbursement rates in calculating these payments. Physician practices that receive more than $10,000 in payments will be required to report on their use of the funds. More information is available [here](#).
From the AMA: Supporting clinician wellbeing during COVID-19 and beyond

The coronavirus’ Omicron variant has caused a surge in COVID-19 cases, putting additional stressors on an already overwhelmed health care system. The American Medical Association (AMA) STEPS Forward™ webinar “Reconsidering Priorities and Practical Strategies for Addressing Clinician Well-Being in Omicron’s Wake” aims to help CEOs, CMOs, and CWOs address the urgent, nearly universal concern about workforce protection and retention during this Omicron wave. Panelists will share their recent experiences and discuss the unique stressors and psychological consequences resulting from the variant. Attendees will learn how the variant has influenced well-being priorities and goals, new Omicron stressors during the crisis, best practices in leadership, and the impact of mistreatment in the context of COVID and beyond.

Thursday, January 27 at 12:00 PM EST. 
Click here to register.

Podcast: Four Key Questions Leaders Can Ask to Support Clinicians During the COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery Phase

In the latest American Medical Association (AMA) STEPS Forward™ podcast, Dr. Kerri Palamara, Director of the Center for Physician Well-Being at Massachusetts General Hospital, discusses with Dr. Jill Jin the important takeaways from her recent article, “Four Key Questions Leaders Can Ask to Support Clinicians During the COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery Phase,” co-authored with Dr. Christine Sinsky.

Click here to access the podcast.

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