

Health Information Compliance Alert

Toolkit: Use Health IT to Combat Novel Coronavirus Woes

Tip: Technology to thwart the spread.

As worries about the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) escalate, your practice may be in crisis mode. You may want to consider utilizing tools to address concerns while still taking care of patients.

Details: The **Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) and its subsidiaries are working round-the-clock to circumvent the ever-increasing threat and spread of COVID-19 in the United States. HHS Secretary Alex Azar called a nationwide public health emergency in January. Plus, on March 11, **World Health Organization** (WHO) Director-General **Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus** pronounced COVID-19 a pandemic.

Luckily, there are several online resources and health IT tools available to you as your practice continues to monitor the situation and treat patients. Read on for the details.

1. Check CDC online tools. In addition to offering a plethora of helpful tips on identifying the virus, caring for patients, and limiting the spread of COVID-19, the **Centers for Disease Control & Prevention** (CDC) updates daily with new guidance on preventing self-contamination among healthcare professionals as well as at healthcare facilities like nursing homes as the threat evolves and more cases are uncovered.

Some highlights include risk assessment advice, analytics input, interactive maps, and videos.

Resource: See CDC updates, including prevention videos, resources, and more at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html.

2. Track COVID-19 cases with EHRs. A recent online offering from the **HHS Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT** (ONC) shows how the feds used EHRs in past outbreaks to thwart the spread of disease - and the best way to use this basic provider tool now in your practice.

EHRs can assist clinicians with workflow, virus identification, and treatment options, suggests the ONC guidance. "To work effectively these features need to work in tandem and be well designed to support patient-centered care and accurate, efficient diagnoses and treatment," ONC notes.

Resource: Review the ONC's research and helpful EHR links at www.healthit.gov/sites/default/files/page/2020-03/Presentation2182020withCTOLogo.pdf.

3. Employ telehealth to cut down on in-office visits. Last week, the **U.S. Congress** passed the "Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2020." The legislation lays out a coordinated response to the COVID-19 outbreak as well as offering \$8.3 billion in funding to local, state, and federal agencies to combat the virus.

One of the provisions of the legislation, "Telehealth During Certain Emergency Periods," outlines new waivers for telehealth during the crisis.

"This will enable healthcare providers to provide care via telehealth in urban and rural areas as well as in patients' homes within the 'emergency area,'" explains partner attorney **Eric D. Fader** of **Rivkin Radler LLP** in the Rivkin Rounds health blog. "The new law also relaxes restrictions on the delivery of care by video conference."

Resources: Read the act at www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/6074/text.

See more COVID-19 details on Medicare's telehealth coverage and payment rules at

www.cms.gov/files/document/03052020-medicare-covid-19-fact-sheet.pdf.

Review the COVID-19 logistics of Medicaid and CHIP telehealth coverage and payment rules at www.cms.gov/files/document/03052020-medicare-covid-19-fact-sheet.pdf.