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From the first announcement to the current screening, closings, and practice modifications, the novel coronavirus (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, which is the cause of coronavirus disease 2019 [COVID-19]) has increasingly created panic among the general public. For those of us in the health care profession, it has been an ongoing battle to keep up with the changing guidelines while helping the public and patients understand the virus, how it is spread, and why appointments are being rescheduled or modified in some fashion. Although the practices listed here are “preaching to the choir,” it’s always a good idea to review the basics. Here are just a few tips to keep in mind:

The Basics of Prevention

From day one we are all taught proper infection control, such as [hand hygiene](#) [5], the correct way to don and utilize personal protective equipment (PPE), proper cleaning and disinfecting techniques, and other basic infection control measures. Even though we have been implementing these measures on a daily basis since beginning our practices, it is always a good idea to have a “refresher course” on these basics. We can always learn something new from any educational presentation, even if we have been practicing these principles for many years.



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Protecting the Clinical Environment

Although most facilities have adopted stringent cleaning processes, it's important to keep the clinical area clean between those deep cleanings. Cleaning and disinfecting should be routine practices between each patient visit every day, not only during times of pandemic. Keep ample supplies of disinfectants and PPE because providers may have limited access to these supplies in some facilities. Advise patients who are ill to stay home. Advise patients who are not in need of emergency care to stay home.

Protecting Your Patients

All health care facilities are now required to screen patients for the novel coronavirus as they enter the facility. Most facilities are now rescheduling appointments. However, we know in the wound care world that some patients cannot wait to be seen in six to eight weeks. Arrange clinic appointments to minimize exposure to other patients.

Protecting Yourself

Practicing proper [hand hygiene](#) [7] and proper use of PPE, as with any virus or bacterium, will help guard against the transmission of infection, as we all know. Most health care providers work very well at caring for others, but we often do not care for ourselves as we should. Staying hydrated, eating healthy food, and getting plenty of rest are simple measures to keep ourselves healthy, but these goals are not always easily attained in the health care world. With the current excess stress in the nation as well as in the health care arena, it is vital to practice good self-care. If you are sick, stay home.

COVID-19 Education

Probably the most important role health care providers can undertake is that of educating our patients and the public about the facts of COVID-19 and how it is transmitted. In today's world there are many forms of communication, including social media, that transmit misinformation. Our patients and the public look to us as leaders in health care information and communication. Direct patients to reputable sources of information such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website.¹ Dispelling incorrect information is pertinent during this time. You might consider asking the patient if they have questions or concerns regarding COVID-19. To properly inform, one must be properly informed. Stay abreast of new information so that you can provide factual, current information to your patients and the public. Use lay terms as appropriate.

Conclusion

Although these practices are very basic, they can be utilized at all times to help prevent the spread of a number of viruses and other germs. Amid the current chaos and confusion, the public will be looking to health care professionals for guidance. As leaders in the health care industry, it is important not only to provide accurate information to the public but also to model these guidelines in our everyday practice.

Reference

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Coronavirus (COVID-19). <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> [8]. Accessed March 19, 2020.

About the Author

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