Q & A

Answers to
8 Critical Questions
Your C-Suite
is Asking Right Now

1 How do we make sure the local community is getting tested and accessing the care it needs?

Ensuring the local community is well-served—particularly during crises—first requires that you have a deep knowledge of the population your hospital serves. Use the data you have regarding at-risk groups and areas within your community to decide where to set up testing sites, how to disseminate health information, and what considerations you have to evaluate when patients arrive for help and/or are discharged to go home.

Also, consider setting up points of care at offsite locations to promote safety and establishing a phone screening/triage service to direct patients to the right care for their symptoms.

2 How do we effectively communicate important messages to the workforce and community?

Take advantage of the numerous ways to get in touch with others, including mobile app push notifications (via your patient portal app or local news station), emails/texts, social media posts, signs outside the local grocery stores or pharmacies, and more. Create a reliable cadence and structure for your communications to each major stakeholder (workforce, past patients, general public, etc.). Each group may be receiving some of the same information, but it will need to be packaged and phrased uniquely—and accompanied by varying additional resources. Also, don't forget to send reminders. Recipients may need to see messages a few times before they read or digest the information.

3 What role do virtual care options play in addressing patient, clinician, and hospital needs during this time?

Virtual care was growing in popularity for years, but in 2020 it's become essential—and the benefits stretch far beyond being able to remotely address a minor health concern.

For patients, telehealth has allowed them to see their PCP, mental health provider, or other clinician from the safety of home. Remote communication tools have allowed them to ask important questions via online chats or dedicated information lines instead of waiting on hold or searching around on Google.

For clinicians, telehealth has enabled them to reduce exposure potential within the hospital, continue working remotely even after they've been exposed or infected, and get a much-needed break from the hospital setting while still serving patients and supporting colleagues. For hospitals, virtual health options relieve some of the staffing challenges that are particularly difficult during crises. Telehealth also provides an extra opportunity to prove excellence in service and outcomes to the community, therefore increasing brand awareness and promoting patient loyalty.

4 Which virtual health technologies are smart investments for both immediate needs and future plans?

Telehealth is not one-size-fits-all. Consider which tech-enabled solutions apply most to you and will be most impactful given your organization's mission, local population, current situation, and capabilities. For example, right now you might choose to invest in advanced telemedicine carts because they allow exposed clinicians to remotely serve admitted patients. In the future however, you could use them to allow remote physicians to fill on-site schedule gaps across one or multiple facilities. Or, you may use AI-enabled, online tools right now to screen for COVID-19, then repurpose the technology later to help patients make informed decisions on where to get the right care for their symptoms in light of their social determinants of health, proximity to a site of care, etc.

5 How do we engage and support a weary clinical staff?

Your clinical staff may be understandably weary from the toll this year in particular has taken on them. Though each person will have different dynamics, responses, and needs, there are several tactics you can use to reach your clinicians and let them know that their leaders are invested in their wellbeing. These include regularly conveying your genuine gratitude for their selflessness and consistent care; providing (and destigmatizing) mental health resources (therapy, support groups, quiet rooms, etc.); and proactively acknowledging and addressing other local, national, or global situations that may be adding more feelings of stress and loss.

6 How do we recoup financial losses and restart growth?

Realize a portion of your usual acute and emergent care volume may never return to those sites of care, and consider how you can capitalize on other touchpoints to engage patients throughout the continuum.

Prioritize streamlined communication and information sharing between virtual, urgent, primary, acute, and post-acute care locations throughout your system or community to increase access and drive patient loyalty.

Work to optimize your staffing situation by getting a good handle on the volume and acuity you expect to return, relying on a "flex-up" strategy, and engaging in rapid cycle review with relevant data to ensure you are not incurring unnecessary excess costs nor creating unsafe conditions.

Lastly, consider the opportunity to partner with organizations that offer affordable solutions for improving financial stability, operational efficiency, and clinical excellence.

7 How do we rebuild trust and security in the minds of our patients and community members?

Take cues from other industries.
- Airlines have been consistently emailing their flyers with clear answers to important questions about sanitation and boarding requirements.
- Restaurants are placing small cards on each prepared table to signal it has been sanitized.
- Veterinarians have posted detailed guidelines on social media and business websites for what to do upon arrival, how long to expect your pet to be inside, how to get medication via mail, and how to execute non-contact payment.

SCP
HEALTH
TOGETHER, WE HEAL   scp-health.com

Be creative and clear in your communication with patients and the community so they know exactly what you are doing to keep them safe and what they can expect if they choose your hospital or system for care.

How do I navigate nursing layoffs and staffing challenges?

Throughout COVID-19, delayed or cancelled surgeries and lower volume have been major factors that have forced some nurses out of a job. Those nurses who have kept their jobs often find themselves enduring extreme stress and even burnout from the intense difficulty of caring throughout this crisis. It's important that leadership realizes the disengagement and distrust that both of these situations may have created in their nursing workforce. Consider making time for individual conversations with your nurses to listen to their experiences and discuss how you can help them rediscover joy and rebuild confidence. Focus on optimizing your nursing skill mix, relying on team-based care, creating an empowering, collaborative environment, and boldly approaching difficult conversations or necessary changes.

Go deeper with these resources:

General:
- COVID-19 as a Catalyst: Rebuilding the House While Preparing for the Future (Modern Healthcare & SCP Health webinar collaboration, June 2020, TRT: 60 min)
- Blueprint for COVID-19 Recovery
- Q&A: COVID-19 as a Catalyst
- 5 Lessons Learned from COVID-19 –So Far
- SCP Health Coronavirus Management Hub

Telehealth:
- Navigate the New Virtual World: Tips for Providers
- Dos and Don'ts of the New Virtual World: Tips for Healthcare Leaders
- COVID-19 Reports: Patient Information Line
- Healing Warriors: Stories from the Front Lines of COVID-19

Clinician engagement and wellbeing:
- 7 Tips to Address Physician Burnout
- Coronavirus Survival Kit
- 4 Ways to Rebuild Staff & Physician Satisfaction, Trust as the Pandemic Continues
- Is the Nursing Shortage Reaching 'Pandemic' Proportions?

Patient experience:
- What We've Learned about Patient Experience from COVID-19
- Patient Loyalty Guide
- Rebuilding Trust in the Community
- Improve Community Health and Win Back Patient Trust

Get support to turn these answers into action:

- Learn more about our robust solutions for emergency and hospitalist program management, as well as telehealth, care coordination, and post-acute provider solutions on SCP Health's website.
- Contact our team to start a conversation.

SCP
— HEALTH —
TOGETHER, WE HEAL

scp-health.com