

COVID-19 Update

A Message from Cottage Health to Our Community

March 23, 8:30 am

As I write this our hospitals are increasingly busy. With COVID-19 in our community, our emergency medicine physicians, intensivists, and infectious disease specialists are seeing a daily increase in the number of patients with symptoms that require assessment and in some cases testing, admission, and intensive care. For those dedicated to health care, this is the professional challenge of our lives.

Throughout our community, physicians, nurses, therapists, technologists and other frontline caregivers are the heroes of our day, along with the professionals who provide social and other support to patients, those who clean and disinfect rooms and equipment, and the many others working to support our frontline staff to ensure they have the tools and the protection they need. I can tell you from talking with the care teams working 24/7, they are incredible health care professionals and incredible people. Speaking with hospital staff today, I heard, "This is what I signed up for," and "It's what I do." Our community is extremely fortunate to have these dedicated health professionals.

While we are certainly seeing an increase in those with serious respiratory illness, and we are treating patients with COVID-19, we do not know what the future days and weeks will bring. In other parts of the country, we are witnessing patient demand that is taxing health care systems to their limits, and in some cases, well beyond. Collaborative efforts are underway with Santa Barbara County Public Health, Sansum Clinic, Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics, and area hospitals. Much of our situation will depend on the collective community effort to self-isolate, observe social distancing and slow the spread of the virus.

Since January, Cottage Health has had daily meetings of medical, nursing, and other clinical and support leadership to prepare for the arrival of this coronavirus in our community. We work to address projected supply shortages, surge planning, staffing, and how to protect our patients, employees, physicians and community.

In anticipation of supply shortages across the United States, preparations began at our hospitals in early January, but many routine supply orders placed in January have yet to arrive. Global demand overwhelmed the limited supplies being manufactured by some of our reliable vendors.

Cottage is working hard to maintain supplies of protective equipment for our healthcare workers on the frontlines. Every day we have teams working through alternate supply chain options and finding ways to get needed supplies to our hospitals. However, with an increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the community, and the protective equipment required to provide isolation care, we've gone from typical usage rate of about 25 masks per day to a current use of more than 500 masks a day. We expect that rate to significantly increase. We currently have approximately 37,400 N95 masks, and we are working to get more. We have a consistent supply of gloves, more than 800,000 currently in our stock, and a steady supply chain for those. In addition to neonatal ventilators, we have 39 adult and pediatric ventilators at our hospitals, with another 21 on order.

We welcome and are grateful to the many community members and organizations who have offered to donate medical supplies. Areas where we anticipate supply challenges are medical **goggles, face shields, protective masks and isolation gowns.**

On Tuesday, March 24 we will open a drive-through collection center for medical supply donations. The drop-off location will be in the parking area adjacent to Goleta Valley Cottage Hospital at 351 S. Patterson Avenue. Drop off hours will be 10 am – 5 pm until further notice.

Supplies being accepted include:

- Faces shields – single use or non-disposable
- Eye shields – single use or non-disposable
- Isolation Gowns or Standard level 3 gowns
- N95 Masks
- N99 Masks
- Standard Procedure Masks

For inquiries on supplies or other donations not listed above, please contact David Dietrich, Cottage Health Vice President for Advancement at ddietric@sbch.org or 805-569-7345.

State and local public health officials have had to make very difficult decisions in the past week. It has become necessary for our hospitals to restrict visitors. We know this is a hardship and places an emotional toll on families and patients. It's not what we would ever do in more normal times, and we're doing everything we can to make this situation more bearable and keep our patients, healthcare workers and community safe.

We are also screening every physician and employee entering the hospitals to provide further protection. With support from the medical community, we are also postponing elective surgical and procedural cases other than those for which delays would compromise an individual's long-term health.

We have prepared specialized units at the hospital with dedicated staff trained and equipped to safely and effectively manage patients admitted with symptoms of COVID-19. Cottage Health is fortunate to have extremely knowledgeable and dedicated nurses, infectious disease physicians, intensivists, emergency medicine and other specialists on staff, and an Infection Prevention & Control Department that supports the work of our clinical teams. We are here to provide safe care if you need it. If you don't need medical care, please stay home and help others stay healthy.

Getting fast and adequate testing for this virus has been a serious challenge locally and across the US. In order to assure the best use of very limited testing capacity for COVID-19, the healthcare providers in Santa Barbara County have collaborated to prioritize testing for those most at risk and in need. Together, partners across our county, public and private, are working hard to find solutions that will serve our community. We applaud the efforts of Sansum Clinic and Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics to provide testing on a limited basis for those meeting approved criteria. We cannot yet confirm when broad community testing capability will be available, but will share updates when we are confident that reliable testing systems are in place.

The situation with COVID-19 is changing rapidly with new developments coming day by day, hour by hour. For everyone in our community and our country, our lives have changed dramatically in the past few weeks. We will provide hospital updates as the situation evolves. Our absolute top priority is the safety of patients and healthcare workers in the hospitals.

On behalf of all the healthcare workers on the frontlines of fighting this virus, I ask for the community's support. We need you now more than ever to stand with us in safeguarding the health of this community.

Thank you for your support of our community, of one another, and of our health care professionals.

Ron Werft
President and CEO
Cottage Health