PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

March 24, 2020

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Provider Guidance: Care for Patients at Long Term Care Facilities

Situation Update

There are now 53 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Marin County. Due to limited testing, this number is an underestimate of the prevalence of COVID-19. Newly diagnosed cases show that local transmission is increasing. Outbreaks of COVID-19 in long-term care facilities (LTCF), including skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, independent living facilities, and residential care homes (i.e., board and care facilities) will have a critical impact on vulnerable older adults. Older residents of LTCFs appear to be particularly at risk for rapid transmission of and severe disease from COVID-19, including death.

Recommendations

Marin County Public Health recommends that all primary care providers who have patients in long-term care facilities take immediate steps to prepare patients, families, and authorized proxies for COVID-19.

1. Stay up to date on clinical guidance for COVID-19 (see resources below).
2. Review, understand, and follow long-term care facilities’ plans for COVID-19, including infection control procedures (includes use of personal protective equipment [PPE] during essential visits).
3. Visit (if asymptomatic and using appropriate PPE) or set up telehealth visits with patients, families, and authorized proxies.
      i. Review symptoms, clinical progression and expected outcomes (e.g., Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome; mechanical ventilation).
      ii. Confirm patients’ care preferences (i.e., home with palliative or hospice care; remain at LTCF with symptom management; hospitalization for symptom management; hospitalization for full life saving measures if available¹).

¹ Patients, families, and authorized proxies should be informed that acute care / critical care resources may be limited during a medical surge.
iii. Review and complete Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST).

iv. Advise patients, families, and authorized proxies to review and update Advance Directives.

4. Discuss consultation protocol for patients residing in long-term care facilities (e.g., telehealth visits). Develop care plans to avoid unnecessary emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

Additional Information

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organizations
https://www.nhpco.org/coronavirus

Five Wishes
https://fivewishes.org/five-wishes-covid-19-resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

California Department of Public Health (CDPH).
https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx

Marin Health and Human Services
https://www.marinhhs.org/coronavirus-health-care-providers

UpToDate.

American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)

American Geriatrics Society
https://www.americangeriatrics.org/covid19

American Medical Association (AMA)

Sincerely,

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