



The New Jersey
Academy of Ophthalmology
New Jersey Eye MDs

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Dear NJAO members:

In these unprecedented times of uncertainty, the health and well-being of family and loved ones is paramount. We are also responsible for caring for our patients without putting ourselves at risk. It is a delicate balance that I struggle with daily as COVID-19 continues to spread and more of our daily routines, including patient care and surgery are upended. At the same time, our medical practices are at risk financially, both for ourselves personally, and all of our employees who depend upon us for their income.

Crises can bring out the best and worst in us. Let's make sure that we rise to the occasion, Check in on the more vulnerable in your communities. There will likely be more difficult times ahead, but we will endure and survive.

Practice management consultant Patricia Morris has provided the information below as a service to NJAO members. Please feel free to reach out to her for additional information.

Also, the AAO is maintaining a very informative webpage with resources that are both general and specific to ophthalmology:

www.aao.org/coronavirus

Stay safe.

Michael Farbowitz, MD

President, NJAO

Practice Management Suggestions (recommended by Patricia M. Morris,
M.B.A., C.O.E)

I want to offer some practical suggestions we can do now for both health

related and practice financial emergency preparedness.

Staff

- * Provide staff with factual information and assure staff that their health and safety is paramount.
- * Should an employee refuse to come to work for fear of contracting the virus. Under OSHA employees are entitled to refuse to work if they believe they are in imminent danger.
- * If a staff member discloses you MAY NOT tell their coworkers HIPAA still applies. You may inform your staff that possible exposure has occurred in the practice.
- * Employees who show signs of respiratory illness can be asked to leave the practice and stay at home until they are symptom free.
- * If an employee discloses they have been in contact with a person that has the diagnosis they should self-quarantine. You can require the employee who has been exposed to the virus to stay at home.

Patients

- * Provide sanitizing gel and masks
- * Identify patients with symptoms and quarantine them or ask them to wear a mask
- * Assure them that we are doing all we can to keep them and our staff safe.
- * Be liberal with cancel and rescheduling policies

Resource available: office sign, quick triage,

Operations

- * Update your confirmation calls/texts with instructions for patients
- * Perform more frequent sanitizing of all of your common areas, don't forget door handles, chair arms, clipboards, pens, counter tops and patient hand rails, All diagnostic testing equipment, tables, chairs, patient restrooms etc.
- * Consider utilizing your dilation wait or pediatric wait as a "quarantine" room for patients with cold or flu symptoms
- * Consider condensing schedules to match patient demand (reduce sessions where possible)

Resource available: confirmation call script, CDC recommendations for infection control, AAO alert, answers to COVID questions

Revenue

- * Collect copays and past due balances
- * Submit claims clean and quickly
- * Perform recalls and data mining to fill schedules as long as possible
- * Perform services as medically necessary, bill and code for all services

performed

- * Manage the A/R

Ask us about data mining, wait lists and recalls

Undergirding our Revenue

- * If you do not have a credit line - apply for one
- * If you have one check with your bank on limits, availability and repayment

terms

- * At a minimum have enough cash or line availability to cover 14 days overhead.

Expenses

- * Postpone major expenditures (build outs, equipment)
- * Postpone raises
- * Postpone bonus pay outs and draws
- * Postpone hiring
- * Monitor clinical and office supply purchases
- * Eliminate overtime and reduce hours as appropriate clinic demand,

consider staff furlough

- * Condense schedules where appropriate. Reduce days in office.
- * Negotiate with your vendors on terms for leases and other expenses as

appropriate

Resource available: Employee furlough letter template, Info on furlough.

Also check with your insurance policies for loss of business riders and possible coverage.

Regards,

Patricia M. Morris, M.B.A., C.O.E

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AAO Resources on Covid-19

All our members are seeking general and ophthalmology-specific information on COVID-19. In response, several weeks ago the Academy assembled a team of experts in ophthalmology, virology, and public health to develop a resource for ophthalmologists worldwide. Additionally, multiple Academy staff have been assigned to the project to maintain the capacity for, at a minimum, daily (and sometimes hourly) updates to content. The site is located outside the Academy login and may be accessed by anyone using any digital platform.

During the past ten days, this site has emerged as the most frequently visited site for coronavirus and the eye. It is now being accessed by over 50,000 unique visitors a day.

Our goal is to provide on one site all the information ophthalmologists seek. And that information is vetted by a panel of trusted experts before it gets posted.

We would therefore encourage all ophthalmology societies to ensure that their members are aware of this resource to them during these challenging and complex times. The site is www.aao.org/coronavirus.

Thank you and stay well.

David W. Parke II, MD

Academy CEO