



Trends & Technology

Trends

Hospitals that don't submit daily COVID-19 data could lose participation in Medicare, Medicaid

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced October 6, 2020, that all hospitals not currently reporting daily COVID-19 data have 14 weeks to meet daily reporting requirements. Any hospital still not meeting daily reporting requirements by mid-January will risk their participation in Medicare and Medicaid. The daily reporting data include COVID-19 deaths, hospitalizations, and infected patients in the ICU. Hospitals must also submit the ages of admitted patients with suspected COVID-19 infections, as well as their inventory of the COVID-19 therapy remdesivir, any staffing shortages, and their ventilator inventory. Hospitals are also required to report weekly data on their stores of personal protective equipment and supply of critical medications. Hospitals are now also being required to report new data on influenza cases. Hospitals not in compliance will receive multiple notices until the January deadline to meet reporting requirements.

Source: <https://asamonitor.pub/37aaxmv>

ECRI warns against dangers of rushing COVID-19 vaccine approval

In a position statement, ECRI, a non-profit, independent patient safety organization, warns that a speedy approval of a novel coronavirus vaccine could put Americans' health at significant risk. ECRI recommends that U.S. health authorities must only approve COVID-19 vaccines after review of six months of trial data. ECRI presented its official position at the FDA Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee meeting in October 2020.

The U.S. government's Operation Warp Speed, a public-private partnership begun in May 2020 to develop nine potential COVID-19 vaccines, plans to begin vaccine distribution by January 2021. To meet this goal, Operation Warp Speed will work to streamline the vaccine approval process. ECRI cautions that regulatory approval based only on preliminary trial data would be a non-evidence-based practice that could put the public in danger.

Source: <https://asamonitor.pub/3mGM7pj>

AMA survey reveals COVID-19's threat to smaller physician practice viability

A new American Medical Association (AMA) survey of physicians across the nation released on October 28, 2020, finds that medical practices have encountered significant financial impact due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including a 32% average decline in revenue. This drop in revenue threatens the viability of many physician practices. The survey attributes this financial stress to a reduction in patient volume and revenue, paired with greater supplies expenses.

The survey included responses from 3,500 physicians across the nation and was administered from mid-July through August 2020. Eighty-one percent of surveyed physicians said revenue was currently lower than in February, before the pandemic struck. And one in five survey respondents said revenue had decreased by 50% or more. Although practices have seen an increase in telehealth visits since February, nearly seven out of 10 physicians reported providing fewer total visits – in-person and telehealth. According to the survey, personal protective equipment (PPE) spending has increased 50% or more for almost two out of five medical practice owners; 36% said that PPE was very or extremely difficult to obtain, especially for small practices lacking the purchasing power of larger health systems.

As the number of COVID-19 cases continues climbing in certain regions of the country, the financial impact of the pandemic is far from over. The AMA is calling for increased economic relief from Congress to aid the viability of smaller physician practices that are facing the greatest financial challenges.

Source: <https://asamonitor.pub/31XwO3I>

The pandemic fuels increased demand for teletherapy

Since March 2020, virtual mental health care providers have been reporting record increases in patients' demand for their services as a way to cope with the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Provider Ginger said use of its text-based mental health coaching had risen 159%, and virtual therapy and psychiatry has increased by 302%. The company's psychiatrists report writing 163% more psychotropic drugs, especially antidepressants, compared with pre-pandemic levels. Doctor On Demand, a telehealth provider, reported a massive increase in

new patients – an increase of 50% in the early fall of 2020.

Teladoc Health reported that a wider sampling of the general population is now pursuing virtual mental health care. Patients groups that have not previously embraced teletherapy, such as men, Medicaid patients, and patients over the age of 65, are now increasingly seeking these services.

Source: <https://asamonitor.pub/2TKuUia>

Technology

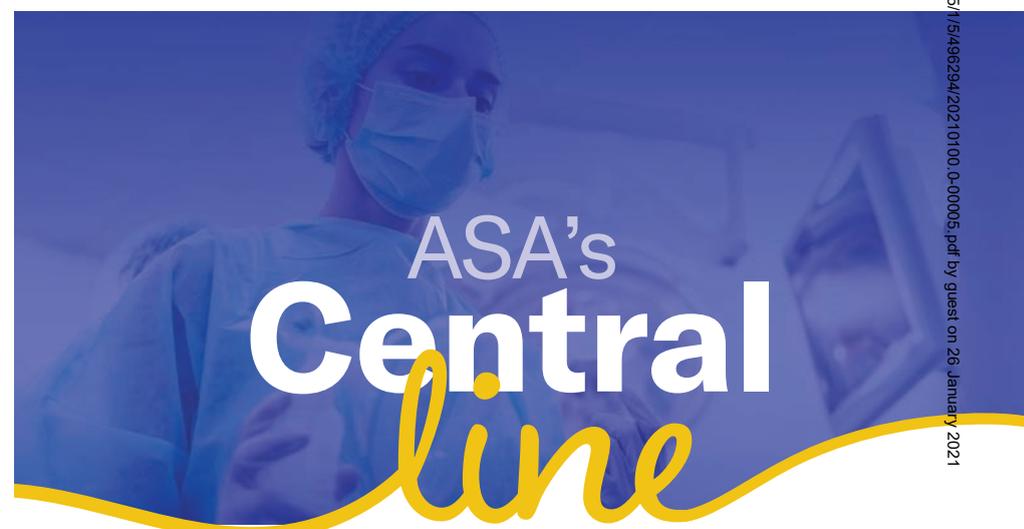
Avail plans to expand virtual surgery consultation system

Avail Medsystems has raised \$100 million to expand Procedural Telemedicine, its consultation system that virtually connects surgeons with remote experts and medical technology company representatives during procedures in real-time. Prior to this virtual consultation system, sales representatives were commonly present in the OR to offer advice on the devices being used.

Procedural Telemedicine facilitates a connection between experienced sales representatives and operating room or ambulatory surgery center staff via a remote-controlled portable console with camera-mounted arms or via a mobile app. This technology provides a valuable service in the COVID-19 era, when social distancing measures are mandated at many facilities, but it also provides the benefit of allowing sales representatives to be present at many more surgical sites as travel is no longer needed.

Virtual reality software offers scientists a tour inside of a cell

The program vLUME, developed by University of Cambridge researchers, can transform super-resolution microscopic scans into virtual, 3D worlds. Scientists can then tour individual cells and proteins with the use of a virtual reality headset. Scientists hope this tool can aid in the development of new treatments by providing a visual way to analyze neurons, immune cells, or cancer cells. ■



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