

A message from Ed Ellison, MD, executive medical director, Southern California Permanente Medical Group, and Julie Miller-Phipps, president, Kaiser Permanente Southern California Health Plan and Hospitals announcing a series of new actions to respond to the coronavirus:

As our valued colleagues, we would like to share key messages with you on our current approach to the rapidly evolving status of COVID-19. First and foremost, thank you for your support. You have been exceptional in your commitment and we are deeply grateful. Secondly, we want to reiterate that by diligently following our evidence-based protocols, we provide the right care for our patients and protection for our people.

Now, let's frame the situation. We are taking an enterprise view, learning from the experience of our colleagues in Washington and other parts of the organization who thus far have been more heavily impacted by this event, and executing together on the most impactful solutions.

Kaiser Permanente is taking an aggressive stance to help mitigate this challenge. While the fluid and ever-changing nature of this situation requires our continued vigilance and flexibility, we are - to borrow a hockey expression - skating to where we believe the puck will be, rather than where it is. Although we don't know exactly when it will occur, we anticipate a significant surge in affected patients in the coming weeks and want to put our system and our people in the best possible position to respond and continue to provide outstanding care to our members.

With the consultation of our Infectious Disease and COVID-19 Regional Command Center leaders, and guidance from the CDC, we are implementing the following immediately:

- Moving from a containment to a mitigation strategy aligned with CDC recommendations, which will slow the spread of the virus, reduce the surge of patients requiring care, and provide the right level of care for members.
- Moving to protective equipment protocols aligned with enhanced droplet precautions as part of that mitigation strategy.
- Implementing new testing protocols, which allow sputum collection in addition to swabs for testing, helping to address the nationwide shortage of swabs.
- Postponing elective surgeries and procedures, freeing up personnel, facilities, and protective and supportive equipment.
- Aggressively expanding virtual care appointments in Primary and Specialty Care for member convenience and to mitigate exposure.
- Implementing a targeted, temporary work-from-home policy for employees.

- Proactively addressing facility entry management involving greeters and single facility entrances.

In Southern California, there has been an overall shift from containment to mitigation, including the recent school closures, event cancellations, and social distancing guidelines. Based on learnings from other countries and areas in the U.S. where the COVID-19 virus has already spread significantly, we recognize that the sooner we employ comprehensive mitigation strategies, our ability to reduce the increase of confirmed cases will be significantly strengthened, while conserving our resources and protecting our valued physicians and staff.

Further details on the initiatives described above will be forthcoming from your local leaders and through our regular COVID-19 communication channels including InsideKP and the COVID-19 email updates. We will continue to provide updates as we move forward in this journey. Throughout it all, please know we appreciate everything you are doing, every day. We see your dedication to our patients, members, and our communities. Please take care of yourselves, your loved ones, and each other.

With gratitude,

Ed and Julie