



## April 2: COVID-19 Clinical Update

### Medication Substitution, Reschedule Appointments, Universal Mask Use, Role of Telehealth

*This daily communication is intended to facilitate the sharing of important clinical information during the COVID-19 healthcare crisis and to help respond to questions from physicians across the health system.*

In today's issue, you will find information about medication substitution to conserve supplies; rescheduling appointments and elective procedures for after April 30; universal mask distribution; and answers to frequently asked questions regarding telehealth from Richard Bernstein, MD, PhD, medical director of Telehealth.

#### **MEDICATION SUBSTITUTION**

We are closely monitoring the supplies of IV azithromycin and ceftriaxone as these antibiotics are frequently used to treat community-acquired pneumonia. Since azithromycin has also been recommended for use in combination with hydroxychloroquine to treat COVID-19, it is necessary for us to manage our supply. Therefore, we recommend the following changes:

- If a patient can take other oral medications, and if azithromycin treatment remains necessary, please consider switching to oral azithromycin at a dose of 250 mg daily.
- If a patient requires continued therapy for community-acquired pneumonia and is tolerating oral medications, consider switching to one of the following:
  - Amoxicillin 1000mg q 8h
  - Cefuroxime 500mg q 12h

#### **RESCHEDULING PROCEDURES, SURGICAL CASES, DIAGNOSTICS TESTS AND OFFICE VISITS**

Due to the extension of social distancing guidelines across the state, Northwestern Medicine is extending its timeframe for rescheduling postponable procedures, surgical cases, diagnostic tests and in-person office visits until after April 30.

To assist with rescheduling, please refer to the following documents:

- [\*\*Ambulatory Clinic Scheduling Algorithm\*\*](#)
- [\*\*COVID-19 Patient Monitoring Program\*\*](#)
- [\*\*COVID-19 Patient Monitoring Program for Private Physicians\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Epic Ordering Priority\*\*](#)

- [Hospital Outpatient Scheduling Algorithm](#)

#### UNIVERSAL MASK USE GO-LIVE IN MOST FACILITIES

To continue to reduce exposure to COVID-19 and maintain a safe environment for patients, employees and physicians, Northwestern Medicine has added mask distribution to the symptom screening process all regions. Marianjoy will implement universal masking by the end of this week.

Visit [NMI](#) and [Physician Forum](#) for PPE information and other COVID-19 related updates.

#### TELEHEALTH OVERVIEW AND RESOURCES

Telehealth is the capacity to evaluate patients remotely by phone, video or remote monitoring devices. Northwestern Medicine has implemented telehealth across the system during the COVID-19 outbreak to connect with inpatients and outpatients. Telehealth allows us to conserve PPE, protect staff and physicians, allow our patients to get the care they rely on from home and maximize our physician capacity. For video visits, NM encourages the use of Microsoft Teams for additional privacy and security. Other approved solutions include FaceTime or WhatsApp.

#### Ambulatory Practices

Telephone e-visits are the most common. You can convert to a video visit if direct observation of the patient is needed. See tip sheets, FAQs and documentation and billing information on the [Telehealth Resources page](#). Please note that you can now use the [Doximity Dialer mobile app](#) to mask your personal phone numbers when calling patients.

#### Inpatient Telehealth

- Inpatient E-Visits: Clinicians and patients can use personal devices to connect by phone or video when appropriate.
- Telemonitoring: We are developing a plan to enable nurses to maintain visual and audio contact with patients in respiratory isolation or in converted ICU settings where the doors are not transparent.
- AmWell: We plan to pilot a program to use iPads with a dedicated telehealth app for clinicians to conduct remote evaluations of patients who don't have, or can't manage, their own personal devices.

See [Telehealth FAQs](#) for answers to common questions about telehealth.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to our patients, their families and each other. Also, please continue to send your questions to [covid-19MD@nm.org](mailto:covid-19MD@nm.org).



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