

COVID-19: 8 Steps for Getting Ready to See Patients Again

Liz Seegert

May 07, 2020

9 [Read Comments](#)

[Add to Email Alerts](#)

Editor's note: Find the latest COVID-19 news and guidance in Medscape's [Coronavirus Resource Center](#).

After COVID-19 hit the Denver area, internist Jean Kutner, MD, and her clinical colleagues drastically reduced the number of patients they saw and kept a minimum number of people in the office. A small team sees patients who still require in-person visits on one side of the clinic; on the other side, another team conducts clinic-based telehealth visits. A rotating schedule allows for social distancing.

The rest of the practice's physicians are home, conducting more virtual visits.

Kutner is looking forward to reopening her practice completely at some point. She realizes that the practice probably won't be exactly the same as before.

"We have to embrace the fact that the way we practice medicine has fundamentally changed," said Kutner, professor of medicine at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, in Aurora, and incoming president of the Society of General Internal Medicine. She anticipates keeping many of these

changes in place for the foreseeable future.

▪ Nearly half of 2600 primary care physicians who responded to a [recent national survey](#) said they were struggling to remain open during the crisis. Most have had to limit wellness/chronic-disease management visits, and nearly half reported that physicians or staff were out sick. Layoffs, furloughs, and reduced hours are commonplace; some practices were forced to shut down entirely.

Social distancing helps reduce the rates of hospitalizations and deaths. Now, many physicians are considering when and how to reopen their offices and ramp up to full capacity.

But they're also aware that it won't be "business as usual" for quite some time. For example, remote monitoring capabilities have reduced the need for in-person checks of vital signs, such as respiratory rate oxygenation, blood glucose levels, heart rate. "We can't go back," she says.

Kutner sees the pandemic as an opportunity to innovate, to think about how primary practices can best utilize their resources, face-to-face time with patients, and when and how to best leverage virtual visits in a way that improves patient health. The goal, of course, is to meet the needs of the patients while keeping everyone safe.

Like many physicians in private practice, Kutner is concerned about revenue. She hopes the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) makes its [temporary waivers](#) permanent.

What You Need to Consider When Planning to Reopen Your Office

Physicians say their post-COVID-19 practices will look very different from their pre-pandemic practices. Many plan to maintain guidelines, such as those from [the AAFP](#), long after the pandemic has peaked.

If you are starting to think about reopening, here are some major considerations.



Medscape Medical News © 2020

Cite this: COVID-19: 8 Steps for Getting Ready to See Patients Again - Medscape - May 07, 2020.

TOP PICKS FOR YOU

Recommendations

2001



COVID-19: New Programs Provide Money to Keep Practices Running

2001



A Better Way to Prioritize Essential Care During COVID-19
