



Florida State Oriental Medical Association

5-19-2020 News Update

Last night during the May 19, 2020, weekly Florida Department of Health COVID-19 Emergency Response Update Call several questions were submitted specifically related to Acupuncture best practices for in-person patient care. Florida Surgeon General Dr. Steven Rivkees answered the following questions with representatives from the Florida Department of Health and the Florida Agency for Healthcare Administration and about 1,000 healthcare administrators and providers on the call.

FSOMA would like to again stress that compliance with FDOH, AHCA, and CDC guidelines needs to be the highest priority for Chapter 457 licensee – Florida Acupuncturists. **FYI - *We have already had a complaint about an acupuncturist not using a mask during treatment.*** All healthcare providers including Licensed Acupuncturists are expected to follow CDC guidelines.

The Florida Department of Health, the Florida Agency for Healthcare Administration, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and FSOMA have provided in-depth online resources explaining policies, procedures, and regulators' expectations for healthcare practitioners during the COVID-19 epidemic healthcare response. It is very important for the profession to understand what is expected of Acupuncturists and for each of us to follow the policy guidelines while meeting patients' needs.

1. Q. Are face covers required by patients and providers during an acupuncture treatment?
 - A. Dr. Rivkees stated, "The CDC website provides guidelines and descriptions describing various types of PPE, and how and when specific types of PPE should be selected and used." His response included that, "Cloth face covers are not categorized as PPE by the CDC. Although, face covers are not appropriate PPE for healthcare providers, these can be used for viral infection source control when patients entering a healthcare office do not have a face mask. According to the CDC guideline healthcare providers and personnel should don PPE (minimally a face mask during in-person patient care and interactions."

See CDC website for description of cloth face cover vs. face mask (surgical and ventilator)

2. Q. Can Acupuncturists reuse their face masks with multiple patients?
 - A. Dr. Rivkees stated, "Yes, provided user care is taken not to contaminate the mask by touching its exterior filtering surface." His response included, "The CDC website provides guidance on how to properly select, don, doff, use and reuse PPE to conserve supplies, if needed. Hand washing and/or sanitizing before and after touching the mask is also recommended."

*Clarification on Question 2. This clarification is being offered to make clear that a provider may reuse THEIR face mask. This permission ONLY applies to providers reusing THEIR personal mask and DOES NOT apply to providers lending or reusing a single mask shared by multiple patients. To be clear if providers supply a face cover or face mask to a patient, then that face cover or face mask MAY NOT be reused by another/different patient. The patient may retain the face cover or face mask for reuse in your office or elsewhere. If a patient chooses to retain and reuse a mask supplied by a provider, then the patient should be instructed on the proper use, hygiene and storage of the mask.

3. Q. Do Acupuncturists have to use face shields?

A. Dr. Rivkees stated, "The CDC provides guidance for healthcare providers and personnel selecting and using PPE. The primary mode of transmission COVID-19 appears to be spread through airborne droplets emitted/projected from and entering through the nose and mouth. Depending on the treatment setting, patient proximity and procedure being performed determines viral transmission risk. So, providers need to consider the risks of transmission and choose appropriate PPE based on those factors. In situations where airborne transmission risk is high like, dental procedures or patient intubation a face shield or goggles would be necessary. In situations with lesser transmission risks face shields or goggles may not be required.

See CDC recommendations for patient face cover and provider face mask. Be mindful that, protecting/preventing the release and transmission of viral droplets through speaking closely or spontaneous coughing/sneezing are necessary to prevent viral spread. If an asymptomatic carrier of COVID-19 (patients/providers/other healthcare personnel) without face-covering is speaking within 6' of anyone or within 12'-15' of someone when a spontaneous cough/sneeze happens, then spread of viral droplets will occur and may result in viral transmission.

Dr. Rivkees mentioned some but not all of the following: CDC has provided new information regarding viral transmission. It explains: Mode of transmission: Current data suggest person-to-person transmission most commonly happens during close exposure to a person infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, primarily via respiratory droplets produced when the infected person speaks, coughs, or sneezes.

Droplets can land in the mouths, noses, or eyes of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs of those within close proximity. Transmission also might occur through contact with contaminated surfaces followed by self-delivery to the eyes, nose, or mouth.

Given that viral transmission includes droplets landing in the mouth, nose or eyes of people, including providers. If circumstances present where a patient enters your office having NO face cover and you are unable to provide them either a homemade face cover or PPE face mask, and you choose not to reschedule the patient allowing time for them to bring a face cover or for you to provide them a PPE face mask, then you should consider using a face shield or goggle to protect your eyes and to reduce your risk of being infected by an asymptomatic COVID-19 carrier.

4. Q. Do Acupuncturists have to wear disposal gowns or lab coats during in-person care?

A. Dr. Rivkees answered this question similarly to the question about face shields. Essentially, it is a function of setting, patient proximity, and procedure. Using disposable gowns provide an enhanced level of certainty about reducing the viral spread but may not be necessary given other PPE and precautions already followed and based the overall transmission risks of the procedure.

A separate but maybe related question was asked...

5. Q. How can an office location become as a COVID-19 testing location?

A. Dr. Rivkees stated, "Contact your local Emergency Operating Center, Emergency Management Services office or County Health Department to learn more about local COVID-19 testing coordination in your area."

FSOMA will continue monitoring Federal and State resources to provide updates to the COVID-19 healthcare response for the membership and Florida profession. Please contact FSOMA with any questions or to access helpful provider resources.