



LTC 100 Coronavirus Task Force Executive Summary – Call #6

Managing COVID: Factors SNFs Must Master Now & Going Forward

April 20, 2020

As cases start to flatten, SNF executives are strategizing about how to approach the next phase of the COVID pandemic. Building on experience gleaned over the last two months, providers are narrowing in on practices that must be mastered to persevere throughout the COVID era and beyond.

Featured Contributors

Edward Farbenblum, CEO, VestraCare

Tim Fields, CEO & Co-Founder, Ignite Medical Resorts

John Muller, COO, Carespring Health Care Management

Matt Salmon, CEO, Salmon Health and Retirement

Dave Thimons, Medical Director, Brighton Rehabilitation & Wellness

Outbreak Management

Tim Fields (Ignite Medical Resorts) shared how they are proactively accepting COVID patients and keeping residents out of the hospital by creating three distinct units within their facilities: COVID positive, COVID negative, and COVID unknown with specific staffing patterns for each unit. They also started their own medical bunker and stockpiled PPE. **John Muller** (Carespring) shared how their outbreak in a northern Kentucky facility was small but rapid (a positive staff member and six positive patients in two days). Their messaging service proved to be an effective communication tool for updating families as well staff, especially on using PPE. They also worked with a collaborative of local hospitals to push for pre-admission testing.

Medical Protocol

Dave Thimons (Brighton Rehabilitation, Beaver County, PA) expressed that current national recommendations don't address the nursing home setting and its unique subset of patients. The University of Minnesota has a national clinical trial looking at post exposure prophylaxis of hydroxychloroquine and zinc in patients who have been exposed but have yet to test positive. Brighton has obtained consent to implement a similar trial with 180 patients being treated with this protocol. They are closely tracking the data and expect meaningful results in a few weeks.

Dedicated COVID Buildings

Edward Farbenblum, CEO of VestraCare (17 buildings in NY), leased a former SNF in Orchard Park, and in fourteen days created an 80-bed operational skilled facility dedicated to medically stable COVID cases. **Salmon Health** was the first SNF in the country to dedicate a facility to COVID positive patients. CEO **Matt Salmon** started this conversation with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and UMASS health system on March 16. Between March 28 and April 1 they transferred 147 residents out of one



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Salmon facility and into other SNFs in the area (mostly their own) to create a COVID dedicated building. An unforeseen consequence of the compressed timeline, and testing only symptomatic residents, was 15 transferred residents became symptomatic and COVID positive within three to five days. With the help of UMASS, who offered much guidance on infection control, they built temporary walls on each floor to create a separated donning and doffing space.

Creative Solutions

John Muller (Carespring) described an innovative testing strategy they implemented utilizing Gravity Labs in Northern Kentucky. Carespring is sending staff directly to the lab for return-to-work testing which has reduced the turnaround time for results. Carespring, along with a group of regional providers, also created a Dropbox where experiences and policies could be shared. They have been engaged in internal trading of supplies with local friendly competitors. **Salmon Health** is using a robot for telemedicine visits to avoid wasting valuable PPE. **Tim Fields** (Ignite Medical Resorts) is successfully quelling staff fears with Zoom town halls to support staff education and create lines of communication between staff and medical directors.

Coronavirus & The Stigma of Congregate Care

At least one contributor addressed the high rate of death within senior care facilities. **Dave Thimons** (Brighton) called the media criticism of SNFs undeserving, and believes SNFs – and their frontline workers – deserve the same level of moral and financial support being given to hospitals. He suggested a greater effort should be made to get CMS, legislators and the media to appreciate the enormity of the challenge senior care facilities are facing with its highly vulnerable population.

■ LTC 100 COVID-19 Business Planning & Crisis Management Resources

To receive an invitation to participate in task force calls, please contact:

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New Dates for 2020 Conferences

LTC 100
November 8 – 11
Four Seasons Resort Orlando

HI
November 1-2
Westin Chicago River North

Senior Care 360
December 9 - 10
Gaylord Resort, MD