



California Association of Long Term Care Medicine
Promoting quality patient care through medical leadership and education

April 24, 2020

On February 29th, the first case of COVID-19 was announced, occurring in Washington state in the Kirkland nursing home. Geriatricians around the country immediately knew what this meant. CALTCM went into action and hosted our first COVID-19 webinar on March 9. It's seven weeks later, and we'd like to provide some direction that each County Department of Public Health can provide to the nursing homes in their area.

Nursing homes are an accelerator for the COVID-19 infection. We must literally put a "moat" around every nursing home in order to protect, contain and mitigate the impact of this virus on our residents and staff. We believe that there are three key pillars that form the base of providing the highest quality of care, in no particular order, abundant PPE, readily available testing, and stellar infection control. Every facility should have the ability to test all of their staff and residents (<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2008457>).

Nursing homes are inundated with information every day, as such, I have outlined the most critical pearls captured from CALTCM's webinars. (The relevant webinars are noted below in the order in which they should be viewed.)

1. Every nursing home must operate in Incident Command mode (3/25 webinar).
2. Every nursing home's Infection Preventionist (IP) must dedicate 100% of their time to their job; they should not be pulled off for other duties (3/9 webinar).
3. Every facility needs an abundance of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and the wherewithal and training to use it effectively (4/6 webinar).
4. Nursing home staff will struggle, and morale will be a challenge (3/30 webinar).
5. Nursing home teams will also be addressing serious goals of care discussions (4/13 webinar).

Nursing homes should view the webinar recordings at their earliest opportunity; the webinars are free and available at <https://www.caltcm.org/covid-19-webinars>.

When it comes to identifying COVID-19 skilled nursing facilities, you should proceed with caution. Without a significant increase in resources (staff and supplies), even the best nursing facility will buckle under the strain of this virus. Excellent clinical leadership from geriatricians, advance practice nurses, and geriatric pharmacists, combined with dedicated staff (including a full-time IP), will fail without abundant PPE, readily available testing, and stellar infection control. Our White Paper, found at <https://www.caltcm.org/covid-19>, describes a state led Support and Guidance Center that we believe is necessary to assist such facilities, as well as, to provide assistance to all nursing homes battling this deadly virus.

Be safe and thank you for serving and protecting the most vulnerable members of our society.

Sincerely,

Michael Wasserman, MD, CMD
President, CALTCM

*The California Association of Long Term Care Medicine (CALTCM)
is the organization for professionals working in post-acute and long-term care.*