



7906 Davenport Street
Omaha, NE 68114-3678

www.omahamedical.com

Phone 402.393.1415
Fax 402.393.3216

To Our Colleagues and Valued Physician Members,

Together we find ourselves in a strange scenario. Since the middle of March, our social and professional lives changed dramatically. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted most facets of our lives significantly, and much remains unknown about our future. Officials estimate over 68,000 deaths in the U.S. alone and over 1.1 million people known to be infected, and these numbers will undoubtedly increase.

Though all industries were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become obvious how important direct personal interaction is to our industry, the practice of medicine. During this viral pandemic, our strength, the all-important physical examination, oddly becomes a potential weakness. Touching the patient to permit a proper exam exposes both doctor and patient, not to mention that the mere act of speaking may aerosolize viral particles. This begs the rhetorical question, how can we diagnose and treat with our hands tied and our voices silenced?

There is a laundry list of other challenges as well.

Despite our digital interconnection for many activities via cell phones and laptops, it can be difficult or impossible to care for many patients in a world when we are not physically present and testing equipment cannot be used. This requires new ways of thinking, of applying technology, and new models of providing care, where and when feasible. In that regard, telehealth has been of significant benefit to some physicians and patients. In order to gather additional information and consider an appropriate strategic approach with other parties involved, MOMS is forming a task force to evaluate the potential for further benefits in telehealth. Please contact us to participate.

Unfortunately, telehealth is limited in its potential presently in certain specialties, and reimbursement can be subpar. It is a tool, not a panacea.

Society in general has been stressed by the pandemic, and our patients are frightened and anxious, looking to us for reassurance.

Practice economics reveal that patient visits on average decreased by 60% (75% or greater reductions in some specialties), revenue by 55%, elective and non-urgent surgery was postponed entirely. Unemployment skyrocketed to 16%, and some physicians work for reduced or no pay, while staff work fewer hours, are furloughed or laid off. The stock market plunged during early 2020, and though it is rebounding, it is occurring in an unconvincing and skittish manner.

Since practices have been forced to shut down except for urgent and emergent care, most have had to apply for government assistance via PPP Loans, EIDL, the Medicare Advance Payment initiative, and may have received the HHS stimulus. The stress and time consumed with analyzing and obtaining these financial programs, managing cash flow, personnel, assuring PPE and supplies along with the uncertainty regarding new vague financial regulations and their implications is daunting.



7906 Davenport Street
Omaha, NE 68114-3678

www.omahamedical.com

Phone 402.393.1415
Fax 402.393.3216

Social distancing has led to cancellation of business and leisure travel. It has also led to potential isolation with consequent anxiety and depression for some, unable to get together with friends, family and colleagues. Going to the store for supplies can be an odd experience surrounded by masked strangers, attempting to maintain a six-foot radius of safety and eager to disinfect invisibly contaminated surfaces. I doubt Lady Macbeth washed her hands as often as many of us do now.

All of this presents a bleak landscape, but there is help, particularly with an organization like the Metro Omaha Medical Society advocating on our behalf.

Resources have been organized and provided by MOMS via its website and E-bulletin with a multitude of links to facilitate access to business and clinical information in a streamlined fashion. Some of this has been coordinated with the NMA as well. Topics include updated coronavirus information, testing, community resources, health policies, business loans and finances, employment issues, and reimbursement, just to name a few items.

As supplies of medical equipment were becoming scarce, the MOMS Foundation stepped up and utilized donated funds for its Personal Protective Equipment program obtaining and distributing much-needed equipment to medical practices. 39,088 face shields, 1,590 N95 & KN95 masks, 26 boxes of procedural masks, 84 dust masks, 40 boxes of gloves, 80 coveralls, 17 lab coats, 19 boxes of shoe covers, and 15 sanitizing items were distributed to 131 clinics, hospitals, and federally qualified health centers in Omaha and Greater Nebraska. 60 fabric masks were donated to local community organizations. Join the cause. Online giving is available through the MOMS website and MOMS Foundation is also participating in the Omaha Gives program.

Our beloved and energetic medical students organized and administered childcare, pet-sitting and dog-walking services to allow physicians to continue their work despite school and daycare closures. They also kindly helped with distribution of goods from the PPE program.

Dr.'s Richards and Wengel generously provided a free hour-long, recorded webinar on stress management for physicians.

And now, with a gradual re-opening of medical practices, we emerge on the other side of a chapter in our lives we will not forget. This is not a new "normal". It is a new "dynamic". No one with a shred of sanity is making predictions as to how we will be functioning in six months, and the ground may shift beneath our feet at any time.

Under these circumstances, pooled and organized ideas and resources are a godsend. We need to work with each other for the benefit of our patients, our practices, and physicians. And that is exactly what MOMS is doing. In addition to their regular work, the staff at MOMS continues to push for new ways to help physicians and the medical community. We are here to support you. Thank you to the MOMS staff, and each of you as physicians. With our collective effort, we strengthen our ability to overcome tremendous adversity. In doing so we will look back on this challenge someday, less for the suffering it brought, and more for the opportunity. The opportunity for growth. Together.

John D. Peters, M.D.
Metro Omaha Medical Society President



7906 Davenport Street
Omaha, NE 68114-3678

www.omahamedical.com

Phone 402.393.1415
Fax 402.393.3216