

7th Annual ASC and Healthcare
Management Symposium
- November 8, 2020 -

Emergency Communication Lessons Learned From COVID- 19 and Best Practices for Improvement

AMSURG
An Envision Healthcare Solution

dialog  **health**
Two-way text messaging.

Lovelace
Health System



Panelists



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Current State (of Emergency)

- Coronavirus cases rising: 100,000+/day — true increases; not just due to “more testing”
- Daily infections in some states hitting highest levels since the pandemic began
- Hospitals scrambling to accommodate patient surge
- Some hospitals/health systems again limiting elective or nonurgent surgeries
- Flu season is here — “double pandemic”

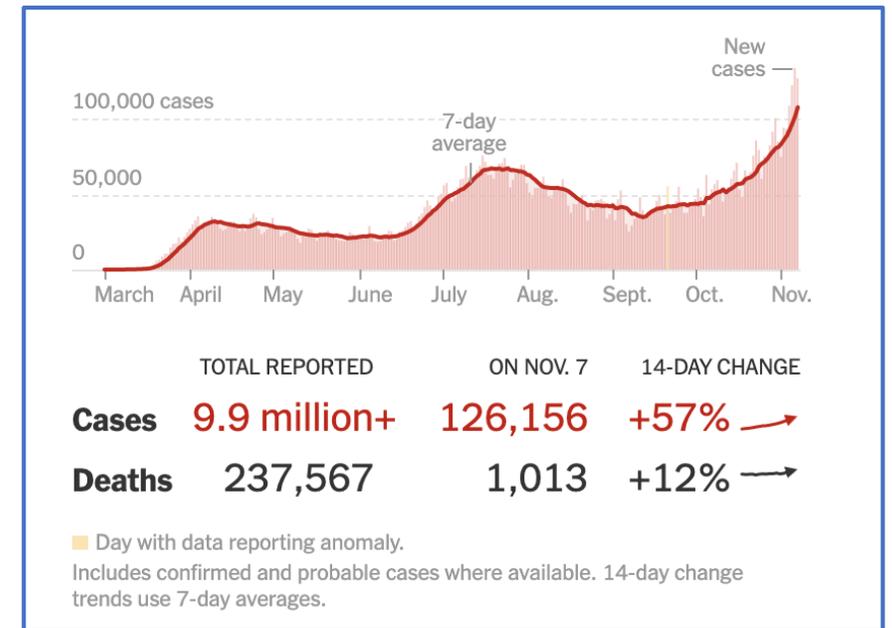
The New York Times

The Coronavirus Outbreak > **LIVE** Latest Updates Maps and Cases Vaccine Tracker Answers to Your Questions

U.S. Hits New Coronavirus Case Record for Third Straight Day

Last Updated Nov. 7, 2020

More than 132,700 new cases were announced across the United States on Friday. The country also reported more than 1,000 deaths for the fourth straight day.



Importance of Emergency/Crisis Communication Plan

- When emergency occurs, the need to communicate is immediate
- Organizations must be able to respond promptly, accurately, and confidently
- Many different audiences must be reached with targeted information
- Organization's image can be positively or negatively impacted by perceptions of incident handling



Audiences

- Staff
- Patients
- Family / Caregivers
- Vendor partners
- Public relations
- News media
- Community



Let's Go Back to March...

- How were your organizations affected by federal and state mandates?
- What did you communicate to your audiences?
- How did you communicate about changes?
- How effective were your communication efforts?
- Where were your struggles?



Lesson 1: Address Vulnerabilities Due to Reduction of In-Person Communication

Challenges:

- Bringing the emergency response team together
- Holding briefings, coordinating efforts
- Assign staff responsibilities (if any unclear)
- Address stakeholder questions

Best practices:

- Determine what requires in-person, what does not
- Can you do a hybrid meeting?
- Designate leadership responsibility for outreach and coordination. What tools are needed to effectively reach off-site staff?
- Leverage communication platforms (e.g., Teams, Slack)

Lesson 2: Attend to Emergency Communication Weaknesses

Challenges:

- Ability to effectively inform audiences about changing guidelines and protocols
- Ability to get that information and updates out fast and reliably
- What if there are questions?

Best practices:

- Understand shortcomings of more traditional communication mechanisms (e.g., phone, email). Where are they still needed? Where can they be useful?
- Leverage other communication mechanisms (e.g., texting, instant messaging)
- Prepare template messages, grouping of stakeholder contact information to save time

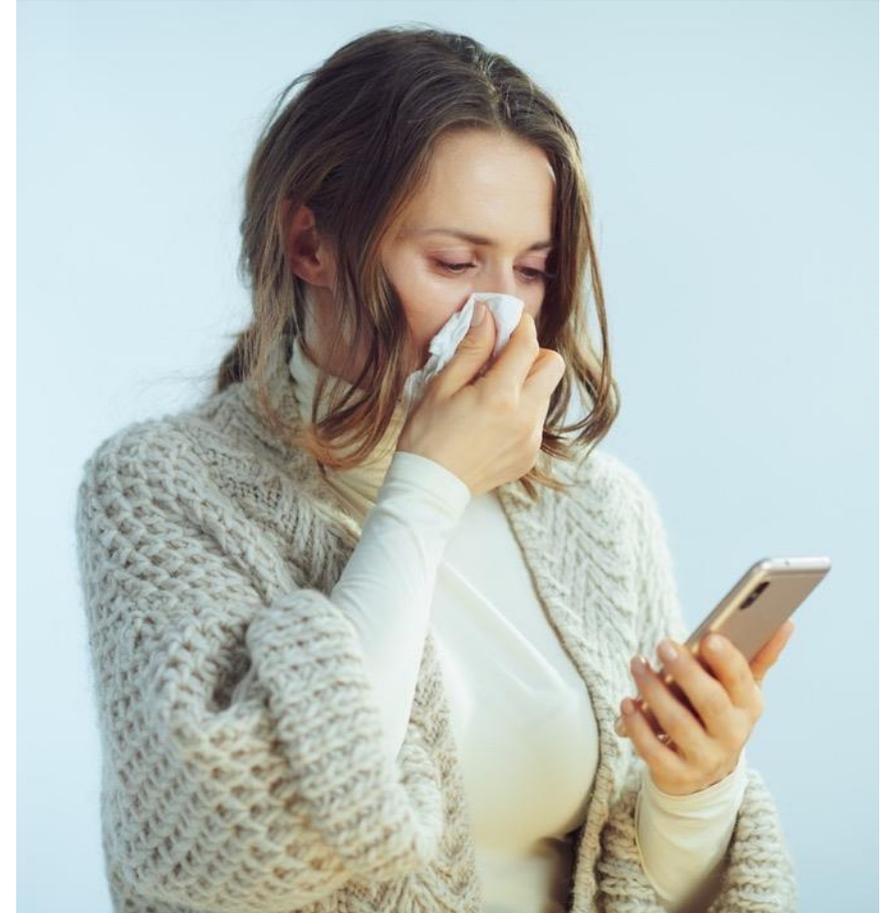
Lesson 3: Never Assume Emergency Message is Received

Challenges:

- Inability confirm that audiences received critical information and updates
- Dangers of assumption — “business as usual,” relying upon outdated information
- Lack of backup outreach plan to reach “unconfirmed” recipients

Best practices:

- Determine mechanisms to effectively verify messages have been received (two-way texting, read receipt, electronic signature)
- Develop plan for monitoring of message receipt and any necessary follow-up
- Account for those you cannot confirm. Sign on front doors? Post on website/social media?



Lesson 4: Prepare for Before, During, and After the Emergency Challenges:

- Significant attention paid to executing the initial response (good!)
- Less attention given to what follows (not good!)
- “Wait-and-see” approach wastes time and makes ongoing response, including to changes/updates, and successful reopening and resumption much more difficult

Best practices:

- Determine what is required to effectively execute middle and end of crisis communications
- Are communication methods/solutions well-suited for ongoing updates? Preparing audiences for changes? Streamlining reopening/resuming of services? Ramping up operations?
- Have you considered the role communication must play in educating about:
 - New services (e.g., telehealth)
 - Changes to hours/days of operation
 - Expanded availability of existing services

Lesson 5: Don't Overlook Value of Staff Support

Challenges:

- So much attention paid to changes (e.g., schedule, policies, procedures, protocols)
- It's easy to overlook mental health during crises
- Staff often hide distress to try to avoid adding to an already stressful situation

Best practices:

- Make staff mental health a cornerstone of your crisis plan
- Inform staff of resources (e.g., employee assistance programs)
- Send uplifting messages, other small gestures



What's Happening Today...

- How are you responding to the surges and re-emerging challenges?
- How are you preparing for what may be coming?
- How have you strengthened your emergency communications to help ensure a better response?
- What is your biggest emergency communication takeaway from this pandemic?



THANK YOU

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