NOVA COVID-19 Survey #2 Summary (May 2020)

NOVA members were sent a survey regarding COVID-19 preparedness in March and we thought it would be wise to resend – using similar questions – another survey in April to get a sense of how things are improving with respect to PPE, testing and concerns among frontline workers.

Attached is a summary (via survey monkey data) with percentages for each question. I have included an overview of the some of the comments here:

Question #1 - Do you feel your supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) continues to be adequate? This seems to have improved from the first survey with 55% saying they felt PPE was adequate. Most of the comments were made on the second question – about reuse of PPE.

Question #2 - Has your facility requested you reuse PPE? For how long (i.e., 1/patient; 1/day; 1/week)? This was surprising with most acknowledging that they are required to reuse PPE – most get one a week unless in COVID unit or surgery unit. CBOC’s use until soiled. Others mentioned using paper shields until damaged, surgical masks all day, and use of one gown for an extended time.

Question #3 - Does your facility give you new PPE as needed? Is it difficult to get new PPE when needed? This question caused some confusion, but most replied they could get PPE as needed, but it was difficult. Comments included - only receive N95 mask and reuse for entire week. It was hard, but less difficult now. It can be but getting better. It was mentioned that PPE is most difficult to obtain over the weekends, especially gowns. Facemasks seem to be of lower quality and supplies are monitored and kept locked and in a safe place.

Question #4 - Are you aware of the protocol for the distribution of equipment/supplies? Over 61% said Yes and commented that things are rapidly changing, but most seem to feel informed as to how this is handled in their facilities.

Question #5 - Do you feel confident that testing in your facility is appropriate? Comments were mixed, with remarks like the following: We just started testing employees, Testing has improved, but earlier on it was very scarce. Nurses have not been retested after confirmed positive for COVID. We do not test at the CBOC. Only after confirmed exposure are individuals tested. It is better now that we have more tests, but still not super easy to figure out who is being tested.

Question #6 - Do you feel you are being supported – mentally and physically? Has VA offered to provide staff mental health counselors or others to help mitigate stress during the crisis? Over 70% of respondents said Yes to this question. Comments included the use of Mental health, EAP, chaplain services and recreational therapy, various classes, yoga, Tai Chi, meditation for stress reduction, but some felt more physical support is needed – especially if you are exposed and asymptomatic.

Question #7 - Is communication between clinical staff, leadership, and Veterans sufficient? There seems to be a little change from the last survey results with some comments made about how communication is adequate and often, and others being given mixed or reactionary information by leadership. Several said they continue to have Town Hall meetings and daily huddles with their staff, as was reported last time around.
Question #8 - *What is your top concern with COVID-19?*

This question was provided a comment section only. Comments included – how does VA reestablish services, PPE, testing and personal safety. Continuing to protect as we reopen and complacency. That facilities will have sufficient PPE if we do fill up with COVID patients. Phasing in normal operations. Staff being tested, everyone in the hospital should be tested. That not all will follow the guidelines of our new normal. Care of veteran and safety of staff. And finally, many, as noted in the first survey comments are anxious about contracting the virus and bringing it home to their families as well as possibly (if asymptomatic) giving it to their vulnerable veteran population.

*All Survey Questions with computed percentages are attached in a separate document.*