

# CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION AND THE RESPONSE TO COVID-19

## CME USHERS INNOVATION AND IMPROVES PATIENT OUTCOMES

- During normal times, health care professionals (HCPs) are required to routinely participate in Continuing Medical Education programs to maintain state licensure and certification, with the goal of improving their ability to diagnose, treat, and care for patients.
- CME courses reliably improve health professionals' knowledge and competence as they respond to the ever-changing world of medicine.

## CME IN THE WAKE OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

- Treatment and care for COVID-19 patients is rapidly changing and can be expected to evolve over the coming months and years.
  - Millions of clinicians — from Emergency Medical Services personnel to in-hospital healthcare workers to office-based physicians — will need to be educated on how to diagnose and treat patients with coronavirus.
- For Americans with high risk conditions, such as pulmonary disease or compromised immune systems, the emergence of a novel viral infection exposes them to new risks. HCPs who treat these patients require training on a broad range of topics including clinical diagnosis and management of COVID-19, necessary modifications to their clinical practice setting and procedures, and telehealth.
- To resume in-person office visits and surgical procedures, clinicians will need education and training on what can be done to protect patients and staff from coronavirus infection in the healthcare setting. Education includes information on infection control procedures, recognition of early signs and symptoms, testing, and quarantine recommendations before elective procedures.
- The deadly impact of COVID-19 will only worsen if HCPs are not trained to treat patients with acute COVID-19 while the pandemic continues and are unprepared to address the myriad of chronic health sequelae many patients may face after they recover from the acute infection.

## HOW THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN SUPPORT PROVIDER EDUCATION

- Historically, the cost of CME has been borne collectively by a combination of hospitals, grants from private industry, the government, and the clinicians themselves.
  - Each year, an estimated \$2.8 billion is spent on certified CME programming.
  - The total cost of educating America's HCPs on the impact of COVID-19 on their practice could be as high as \$375 million.
  - As a result of the severe financial stress impacting many hospitals, companies, and state governments, the traditional funding sources for continuing medical education from health systems have been decimated at a time of greatest need.
  - Without federal support, HCPs will not get the education and training they need, and patient care will suffer.
- There are several federal programs that provide funding for medical education in the context of the government's general support for improved public health. For example, titles III and VII of the Public Health Service Act support awards to schools of medicine, osteopathic medicine, public health, and integrative medicine programs.

In order to support the vital education of the nation's healthcare workforce, **Congress should appropriate \$100,000,000 for Public Health Workforce Development under the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)** to facilitate continuing medical education initiatives related to COVID-19.