



District of Columbia

D E N T A L S O C I E T Y

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May 8, 2020

The Honorable Mayor Muriel Bowser
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Chris Rodriguez, Director
Homeland Security & Emergency
Management Agency
2720 Martin Luther King Jr Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20032

Dear Mayor Bowser and Director Rodriguez,

I am writing on behalf of the 500 dentists who are members of the DC Dental Society as well as the thousands of dental hygienists, dental assistants and other staff who support our members and the hundreds of thousands of patients we care for collectively every year. I am writing to inform you of: 1) the current personal protection equipment (PPE) needs of dentists in the District of Columbia and 2) to request that you inform your colleagues at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of these same needs based on this survey data.

As reported recently in *The New York Times* ("The Workers Who Face the Greatest Coronavirus Risk," March 15, 2020), dentists are among the professions highest at risk for contracting the novel Coronavirus because of their close proximity to patients and prolonged exposure to patients. In addition, dentists are exposed to high risk aerosolized particles capable of penetrating all but the highest level of PPE. Our staff, particularly dental hygienists and dental assistants, are also at risk of exposure due to their supportive role during those procedures that produce aerosolized particles, include drilling, root canals and tooth extractions.

We understand that FEMA recently designated dentists as a priority recipient for PPE and that supplies of PPE may have been allocated to the District of Columbia. In the interest of the health and safety of the workforces we represent, and in the interest of safeguarding public health, we request assistance obtaining N95 masks because they are capable of protecting against the highly infective aerosolized particles described above. We also request assistance obtaining face shields and other PPE because they provide supplemental protection and enable N95 masks to be worn for a longer period of time.

Earlier this week, the DC Dental Society conducted a survey of members to assess the levels of PPE they hold in stock. That survey had participation of nearly one-third of our members. The survey reveals a desperate situation with respect to PPE stocks. A majority of our members (52%) do not have a sufficient supply of N95 masks to support one day of current operations, which are reduced to emergency or urgent procedures only under guidance from DC Health (Recommendations for

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Conserving the Supply of Personal Protective Equipment in DC, March 26, 2020). The situation for other types of PPE is similar. One-third of our members lack sufficient face shields to support even one day at reduced operations, and another 20% have a supply for only 1-9 days of reduced operations. In terms of disposable gowns, 18% have no supply and another 30% have a supply for only 1-9 days of reduced operations.

Dentists should be a priority for the distribution of PPE, especially N95/KN95 masks, since our efforts to treat emergency and near-emergency cases is keeping our patients out of hospital emergency departments. With that in mind and on behalf of the patients, dentists and dental staff in DC, we urge you to work with FEMA to prioritize a request for PPE to help us meet oral health needs that were necessarily paused during the COVID-19 crisis.

We appreciate all the work you and your teams are engaged in for DC. The members of the DC Dental Society are your partner in advancing health and well-being in the District of Columbia and we stand ready to help you with any additional information we can provide. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven A. Guttenberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "S".

Steven A. Guttenberg, DDS, MD, FICD, FACD
President