Pharmacy Employer Guidance

Overview

As the Coronavirus continues to spread across the country, the likelihood that one of your employees will test positive for COVID-19 increases. While some guidelines for this scenario exist, there are few one-size-fits-all recommendations. Each state and locale will have different requirements and consequently, each pharmacy or practice setting will need to respond differently. Below are some best practices for prevention as well as some recommendations on what to do if an employee tests positive (+) for the virus. In addition, you can visit the NCPA Coronavirus Resource Center (https://ncpa.org/coronavirus-information) for additional information.

Prevention

- Stay current on Coronavirus activity in your area.
- Prepare for a worse-case scenario. Run through as many "What happens if…" strategies as you can think of and ensure each employee knows what to do in each case.
    - Identify pharmacists on current staff who could fill in in your absence with little to no notice.
    - Compile a duties and responsibilities document so staff will know exactly what is expected/required.
    - Cross train personnel.
- Create a Reserve by identifying potential pharmacists and other staff who could assist in the event of an emergency.
    - Contact other pharmacists in your area who would be willing to work to prevent a potential emergency closing.
    - Contact your state pharmacy association for a list of pharmacists and technicians looking for hours.
    - Contact local schools of pharmacy to solicit student help. APPE students needing hours to meet graduation requirements may be interested and willing to assist. For more information, visit https://www.covidbestpractices.com/act.
- Have a sick leave policy in place for all employees.
- Sanitize regularly (wipe down everything); consider setting a timer to remind employees to wash hands and wipe down commonly touched surfaces hourly. Refer to the CDC "Environmental Cleaning and Disinfecting Recommendations."
    - Treat everything coming into the pharmacy as infectious and limit the number of individuals handling items that haven't been sanitized. The virus can live on different surfaces for a number of hours to days. Identify a holding area for incoming deliveries if not able to sanitize immediately.
- Employees should wear gloves, if available. Employees should wear masks if interacting face-to-face with patients. For example, masks and gloves should be worn to administer vaccines.
- If space allows, place barrier table or clear shower curtain in front of the pharmacy counter to ensure at least 6 ft separation between staff and patients.
- Utilize drive thru/curbside pick-up/home delivery to reduce risk of in-store exposure.
    - Use senior living tools (i.e. The Grabber) at drive-thru window
    - Consider placing meds on hood of car to minimize face-to-face interaction with curbside pick-up
- Employees may write COVID-19 on signature pad on behalf of patients when allowed by PBMs.
- Monitor employees daily for symptoms.
- Implement split team approach if staffing levels permit to limit staff exposure with each other. Consider assigning staff to one workstation during shift to minimize community spread.

What to Do If an Employee Exhibits Symptoms or Tests Positive

- Under the law as it stands today, there is no requirement to close the pharmacy if an employee tests positive or displays symptoms.
- Require the employee with symptoms to self-quarantine for 14 days or until the employee proves he/she is COVID-negative. May require physician note to return to work.
- Notify other staff that an employee has symptoms or positive test.
- Conduct daily symptom check-ins with employees. Don't allow an employee to enter the pharmacy if he/she has a fever, shortness of breath or cough. Be aware that not all infected individuals exhibit a fever.
- Deep clean/ sanitize all surfaces using approved disinfectants. This should include work surfaces, equipment, phones, pens, clipboards, credit card machines, door handles, sliding windows, shared spaces, etc. Refer to the CDC "Environmental Cleaning and Disinfecting Recommendations."
  - Set reminders to regularly sanitize on an hourly basis.
- Adjust operating hours as needed depending on staffing level.
  - Report any change in operating hours including temporary closings to state boards of pharmacy.
  - As a courtesy and if possible, notify area physicians of any changes to your operation.
- Contact individuals in your Reserves if needed to help with pharmacy coverage.

What to Do If I Get Sick or Test Positive

- Self-quarantine for 14 days. Let staff know of how you may have been exposed so they can sanitize and/or mitigate their exposure risk when you leave.
- Contact individuals in your Reserves if needed to help with pharmacy coverage.
- Notify the board of pharmacy if you need to reduce/alter operating hours or close your pharmacy.
  - Forms can usually be found on the state board's website and can be submitted electronically.
- IF you must close your pharmacy:
  - If the pharmacy is closed due to known exposure from an individual who has tested positive for the virus, refer to the CDC "Environmental Cleaning and Disinfecting Recommendations".
  - Every pharmacy has a contingency plan because it is required by HIPAA. Review the contingency plan and make modifications to access dispensing records as needed. HHS has called out Apple FaceTime, Facebook Messenger video chat, Google Hangouts video, or Skype as acceptable video chats during the COVID-19 public health emergency.
  - Communicate to patients about how and where they can fill/refill scripts during the temporary closure.
    - Check with your state board regarding allowances for patients to refill medications at other pharmacies while you are closed. Many states allow for an emergency 30-day supply of certain medications if the patient can present the prescription container.
  - Make arrangements to have someone perform a regular check of the pharmacy (security, refrigeration, etc.)

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