

Introduction

- 8 week internship with NYC Health + Hospitals Special Pathogens Program during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- NYC Health + Hospitals is one of the largest public healthcare systems in the county. NYC Health + Hospitals has 11 hospitals throughout the city and 7 ambulatory care centers.
- Many of these hospitals serve low-income and racial minority populations, who were disproportionately afflicted by the coronavirus pandemic.
- The Special Pathogens Program focuses on analyzing, developing, and recommending preparedness and response plans for infectious diseases such as Ebola, yearly influenza, measles, and currently, COVID-19.

Internship Goals

- The objective of this internship was to get firsthand experience in analyzing and developing public health policy, with a focus on how to effectively identify, isolate, and manage infectious disease and special pathogen patients.
- The internship also provided an opportunity to get involved in directly addressing a current pandemic — conducting data analysis and developing recommendations based on the analyses' findings

Acknowledgements

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NYC Health + Hospitals Special Pathogens Program

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Internship Project

The Scenario

- Throughout the summer, NYC H+H employees conducted "secret shopper" drills at all 11 NYC H+H Hospital ERs. The "secret shopper" would present to the ER, reporting COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat) and recent domestic travel.
- While inside the ER, the "secret shopper" would document the ER's screening and infection control protocols in place, and other methods aimed at containing the spread of COVID-19.

The Interns' Role

- Determined what data points should be recorded in drills (e.g., time to isolation/triage, screening for COVID-19 symptoms, waiting room social distancing and hygiene measures, isolation process).
- Analyzed data from the drills and recorded trends observed throughout all 11 facilities.
- Based on the secret shoppers' findings, determined each facility's strengths and weaknesses in identifying and isolating COVID-19 patients.
- Developed facility-specific and system-wide recommendations to improve a facility's capability to successfully and effectively screen for and isolate potential cases of COVID-19.
- Prepared figures, PowerPoint presentation, and After Action Report, which discussed the results of the drills, strengths and weaknesses observed, and proposed recommendations.
- Helped present these materials in facility-specific debriefs for the facility's CEO, CNO, infection preventionists, and other relevant administrators and healthcare providers.

Proposed Recommendations

Objective I: Screening

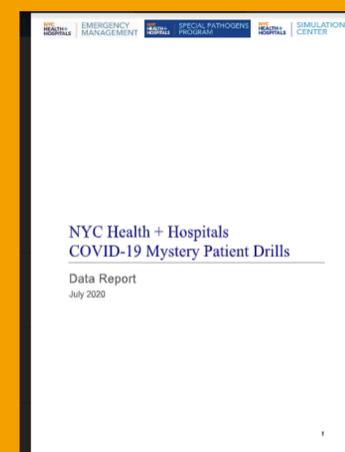
- 1. All visitors and patients** should undergo **temperature** and **symptom** screening at entrance to the facility and be asked to **sanitize hands**.
- Facilities should have **masks** visibly available in the waiting area or have clear **signage** placed at entrance directing patients to front desk to get a mask, if needed.
- 3. Social distancing floor decals** should be placed in the ED waiting area, especially leading up to the registration desk.
- 4. All seats** in waiting area should be appropriately **socially distanced** with clear signage on *each* seat, to **maintain social distancing**.
- 5. Signage** should be **visibly** and **strategically** placed. **All facilities** should have explicit **signage mandating face coverings** for **all** patients and visitors and visible **signage** informing that COVID-19 **symptoms** and **recent travel** history should be immediately reported to staff.

Objective II: Isolation and Infection Control

- 1.** Patients reporting COVID-19 symptoms at registration should have an **expedited registration process** to limit contact with other patients.
- 2. All suspected COVID-19 patients** should be placed in a **negative pressure isolation room**. If one is unavailable, they should be placed in a **private room** with a **closed door**.
- 3.** All rooms that have a suspected COVID-19 patient should have appropriate **infection control** and **PPE signage** posted outside the room.
- 4. All healthcare workers** entering rooms with suspected COVID-19 patients should be wearing **appropriate PPE**, ideally a gown, gloves, surgical/N95 mask, and eye protection.

Conclusion

- "Secret shopper" drills are important in accurately capturing healthcare facilities' readiness and capabilities to identify and isolate special pathogens patients and subsequently inform the relevant public health figures of the case.
- These drills can reveal strengths and areas for improvement in a facility's current procedures, which subsequently can be used to inform recommendations for preventing the spread of infectious disease, and ultimately ensure patient and provider safety.
- The NYC H+H System-wide special pathogens team is currently working with each facility to implement needed changes, enabling the system to more efficiently identify and isolate potential COVID-19 patients and contain COVID-19 in NYC.



Captions: (LEFT) Presence of infection control signage was a major data point recorded in the drills. This poster was present in most of the ERs. (CENTER) Presence of social distancing decals and socially distanced seating areas were also evaluated in the drills. Pictured is signage enforcing social distancing in an ER waiting area. (RIGHT) The cover page of the After Action Report developed by the interns, which was distributed to the leaders of all the facilities, and detailed the results of the drills, strengths and weaknesses observed, and recommendations for improvement.