Mercyhealth System
Reorganizing Operations to Conserve PPE

Conserving personal protective equipment (PPE) isn’t just a matter of how to treat COVID-19 patients at Mercyhealth, but where. John Dorsey, MD, the system’s chief medical officer, said a key way to preserve PPE is to care for COVID-19 patients in a designated area of the hospital.

The system’s two Illinois hospitals—Mercyhealth Hospital and Medical Center in Harvard and Mercyhealth Javon Bea Hospital in Rockford—also have been working to ensure PPE is on hand as need rises. The hospitals have been analyzing PPE use and anticipating future need.

Another strategy—delaying non-urgent surgeries and visits—has helped save PPE for staff treating COVID-19 patients, as well as open up bed capacity for patients with the most critical cases. Both hospitals created additional negative pressure and isolation rooms.

To add to its PPE supply, Rockford-based Mercyhealth began accepting donations of N-95 masks and face shields in March. One industrial distributor, Magid Glove & Safety, donated over 1,000 N-95 masks.

Although Mercyhealth has accepted homemade items as backup, Dr. Dorsey noted: “We haven’t had to use any homemade masks. They wouldn’t replace a mask, but they’d be put over a mask as an extra barrier. They can also be sterilized and could potentially help in a surge situation.”

Mercyhealth Hospital and Medical Center and Mercyhealth Javon Bea Hospital have held mock drills and maintained communication with Rockford hospitals to prepare for an influx of patients.

Illinois hospitals are all in. Read about the rapid transformation of patient rooms at Riverside Healthcare in Kankakee, where several negative pressure rooms were built to treat COVID-19 patients.