Talking points for PSW members to share with the contacts outside of healthcare...

As healthcare professionals undoubtedly fielding lots of questions from those close to us, we have an obligation to share accurate information regarding the novel coronavirus circulating the globe (COVID-19) and social distancing with those outside of the health care field. Social distancing is a deliberate, scientific public health strategy based on research to allow our healthcare system to manage treating patients by spreading out the volume and pace of spread. As a pharmacist you must relay the importance of social distancing to all family, friends, etc. in your orbit. Here are some talking points.

1. EXPECT THIS TO BE AROUND FOR AWHILE.

   - The virus is novel meaning humans have not encountered this before and we have no immunity to it.
   - We lack good data to help us understand and treat the virus.
   - We do not know if it will behave like the flu and "peak" after winter/early spring. Even if it does dissipate over the summer months, it could return in earnest later this year.
   - Expect this to be around and a danger for long time to come (months, more likely years).
   - We are at least a year or more out from a vaccine.
   - The only available treatments available for COVID-19 are investigational.
   - Expect significant social, economic, and political disruptions.

2. THERE IS A LACK OF TESTING AVAILABILITY. The virus, although mild for most people, is showing to be more deadly than the flu currently. This information is a bit skewed right now since only the real sick have been tested with mild or asymptomatic patients not being screened currently.

   - Efforts are underway to make testing more available in the U.S. to test those who need it.
   - Signs and symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to the flu: fever, cough, shortness of breath. However, most primary care offices cannot test for it as they do not have the protective gowns/masks to administer the test. You can call their office to see if you need to be tested and where to go.
   - If you become sick, but not so sick that you need to see a doctor, then stay home.
   - Seeking COVID-19 testing just in case or for your own curiosity is wasteful and will divert health care away from those who need it (see #4 below).

3. PEOPLE OVER 65 AND THOSE WITH PRE-EXISTING ILLNESSES ARE HIGHEST RISK.

   - Elderly are at higher risk from dying from this virus.
   - Most people can expect cold/flu like symptoms.
4. THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM IS NOT PREPARED. Many U.S. hospitals are close to full on a regular basis, not during a pandemic. There are not enough U.S. healthcare resources if COVID-19 is not contained and there is a “surge” in COVID-19-related hospital admissions.

- There is not enough protective equipment for health care workers, there are not enough airborne isolation rooms, there are not enough hospital beds for the ill, and there are not enough ventilators for those who fall critically ill.
- Physicians in Italy are having to decide who lives and who dies based on triage protocols because they don't have enough resources (think about it like wartime, when resources are scare those with a chance to survive are given the resources over those who worse off).

5. PREVENT THE SPREAD. It's the only way to contain this. The best thing you can do is stay away from other people as much as you can. We will all likely get this virus (some estimates suggest 40-70% of people worldwide may acquire the virus) but, if we can spread it out so that we are all not sick at the same time, it will provide better outcomes for everyone.

- It's spread via droplets meaning that if you are within a few feet of an ill person, they can spread it directly to you when it lands near your mouth/nose or their droplets land on a surface like a door knob and you pick it up that way.
- The virus can live several days on surfaces and may even have the potential for airborne spread. Meaning the residue from evaporated, infected droplets gets suspended in the air and indirectly infects those who breathe it in.
- Flimsy paper masks will not protect you so don't bother. If you become sick with COVID-19 then masks can help you prevent spreading the virus to others.
- WASH YOUR HANDS, WASH YOUR HANDS, WASH YOUR HANDS. You do not need sanitizer; soap and water do the trick nicely. Think about singing happy birthday twice while you scrub.
- Since it spreads person to person NOW IS THE TIME TO CANCEL SOCIAL EVENTS. AVOID LARGE GATHERINGS.
- Check in on older folks in your life - by phone if possible. Get them things they need so they don't have to go out, but otherwise stay away from them.
- STOCK A FEW ESSENTIALS, but there is no need to hoard supplies. Have enough so that if you are ill you don't have to run out to get things. Hoarding supplies reduces the amount of supplies available for the healthcare system.
- Plan necessary trips outside the home carefully (e.g. the grocery store).
- Opt for prescription delivery from your pharmacy and phone calls with your provider for prescription refills as needed if you have no other acute reason to visit your provider.
Talking points for pharmacists/pharmacy departments...

As pharmacists, we can take immediate actions that will protect ourselves, our colleagues, our patients as well as help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

1. Work remotely from home if and whenever possible. This will be impossible for some but, for others, it is possible. Discuss this with your supervisor. You’re less likely to get sick at home. Preserving our workforce is a priority.
2. If you get sick – STAY HOME! This is not the time to “power through.”
3. If you work in a hospital stay out of the room for patients in contact and/or airborne isolation who require personal protective equipment (PPE). We must conserve PPE. There is rarely an urgent need as a pharmacist to enter these rooms. Even if attending a code, you can bring the code cart to the door and pass medication into the room.
4. Cancel large meetings in your department; consider virtual meetings or email communication.
5. Understand the investigational agents being used to treat COVID-19 and the process to request compassionate use of remdesivir from Gilead.

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