American Society of Radiologic Technologists

Dear Senator/Representative:

The American Society of Radiologic Technologists is the national medical organization representing medical imaging and radiation therapy professionals. ASRT's 156,000 members work on the frontline in hospitals and health facilities, performing imaging examinations on patients, including those suspected of having, or who are diagnosed with COVID-19. Performing medical imaging examinations brings radiologic technologists into close personal contact with patients. During this global pandemic it is vital that radiologic technologists, in addition to all health care professionals, have access to personal protection equipment (PPE), including gowns, masks, gloves and eye protection.

Radiologic technologists are specially educated to perform chest x-rays and computed tomography (CT) examinations for patients experiencing respiratory symptoms from the coronavirus. Technologists work alongside other allied health workers in hospitals such as respiratory therapists, nurses, medical laboratory technologists and physicians who provide immediate care to patients. In addition to performing examinations on COVID-19 patients, radiologic technologists perform diagnostic imaging examinations, such as magnetic resonance, nuclear medicine and ultrasound imaging tests, along with radiation therapy treatments. All examinations and treatments place radiologic technologists and the equipment they use in immediate proximity to patients, requiring appropriate protective apparatus and disinfecting agents.

In the hospital setting, PPE along with handwashing and other aseptic measures, is the best way to limit transmission of infection and disease within the facility. Radiologic technologists and all health care workers rely on the availability of PPE to protect themselves and others while treating patients. ASRT recommends using recognized procedures and guidelines from the World Health Organization and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention to protect health care workers and the public, but without readily available PPE and disinfection products, the entire health care system is unable to meet the increased patient demand for care while slowing transmission of coronavirus. While the Food and Drug Administration has shared strategies to conserve masks and gowns, foregoing or reusing PPE while imaging a patient with unknown COVID-19 status may impede efforts to slow transmission of the virus. The Department of Health and Human Services readily admits that the Strategic National Stockpile supply of PPE is insufficient to meet projected needs.

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ASRT appreciates the administration's efforts to ensure an adequate supply of PPE for all health care workers caring for patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. The Defense Production Act (50 U.S.C., Chapter 55) allows President Trump to expedite the production and distribution of needed health care resources. The medical community, however, remains unclear about how and when this will take place. ASRT urges lawmakers to continue to press the administration for a clear plan about how manufacturers and distributors of PPE will be incentivized and current regulations relaxed to maximize production of critical equipment health care providers need to treat suspected and confirmed COVID-19 patients. ASRT also urges you to support legislation that will speed manufacture and distribution of needed health resources during this pandemic.

All Americans are facing uncertainty during this time, but health care providers should not have to question if there is a sufficient supply of equipment that they count on to protect themselves, their families and their patients from the spread of COVID-19. Radiologic technologists, and all health care workers, implore you to act immediately to ensure a sustainable supply of PPE is available and distributed to health care facilities.

Sincerely,

S. Martino

Sal Martino, Ed.D. R.T.(R), FASRT, FASAE, CAE
Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director

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