

April 3, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

The members of the Endocrine Society appreciate the swift actions already taken by Congress and the Administration to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The Endocrine Society is the world's largest professional organization of endocrinologists, representing the interests of over 18,000 physicians and scientists engaged in the treatment and research of endocrine disorders, including diabetes, cancer, obesity, osteoporosis, thyroid disease, and infertility. Our members continue to provide care to vulnerable patients with these complex, chronic conditions that place them at higher risk during this public health emergency. We appreciate that Congress and the Administration accepted our previous recommendations to reauthorize the Special Diabetes Program and eliminate the requirement for an in-office visit every three months for patients with insulin pumps. I write today to urge you to take additional steps to protect the health of our providers and their patients as Congress develops the contents of the fourth COVID-19 stimulus package.

We implore you to include the following provisions to protect vulnerable patients with endocrine disorders, physicians and first-responders:

- **Alleviate the critical shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).** While the Administration has acted in recent days to address the shortage of PPE for physicians and other health care providers across the country, there is still a crisis-level shortage of PPE at our nation's hospitals. Endocrinologists, along with providers on the front lines, lack the protection needed to treat patients without endangering both themselves and the patients that they treat. Without an adequate supply of PPE, providers have had to reuse PPE or use ponchos, trash bags, bandanas and other items that do not protect the provider or the patient from the spread of COVID-19. **Therefore, the Society urges Congress to direct the Administration to streamline the implementation of the Defense Protection Act (DPA) to ensure the timely and adequate manufacturing and distribution of PPE.**



- **Support research funding on how COVID-19 impacts patients with diabetes.** We appreciate that the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (P.L. 116-136) provided funding for the National Institutes of Health, including specific institutions like the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, but did not include funding for the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease (NIDDK), which supports significant amounts of research on diabetes and other chronic diseases. As we have come to learn more about signs, symptoms and complications of COVID-19 patients it is very clear that diabetes significantly increases the risk of death when COVID-19 infections occur. There is a significant gap in knowledge and research on how COVID-19 impacts patients with comorbidities, including patients with diabetes. Without additional funding, NIDDK will not have the capacity to continue existing research projects and undertake new research on COVID-related comorbidities that will be critical both for disease mitigation and the development of effective treatments and vaccines.
- **Provide patients with a 90-day supply of diabetes test strips.** Some insurers, including Medicare and Medicaid, only cover a 30-day supply of diabetes test strips. Medicare used to provide a greater supply, which reassured patients that their access to test strips was secure during times like this. **The Society urges Congress to direct Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurers to cover a 90-day supply of these strips during a public health emergency to prevent these vulnerable patients from unnecessary exposure to COVID-19.**
- **Eliminate patient cost sharing for insulin.** As Congress is well aware, spiraling insulin costs have created a dangerous barrier between many people with diabetes and this lifesaving treatment. Individuals with diabetes must maintain their medication regimen to avoid unnecessary hospitalizations and complications, but the rising cost of insulin has already made this difficult for many individuals prior to this public health emergency. As the COVID-19 crisis has also created record levels of unemployment and economic hardship to millions of Americans, the effect of the high cost of insulin is even more dangerous. Therefore, **the Society urges you to eliminate patient cost sharing for insulin for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency.** Many Americans have already lost their jobs and many who still are able to work are concerned about reductions in their income. Individuals dependent on insulin cannot ration this medication without risking their lives or becoming sicker and putting more pressure on our health system at this time.



Thank you again for all that you are doing to support patients and providers during this difficult time and for considering these additional policy recommendations.

Sincerely,

E. Dale Abel MD Ph.D.
President, Endocrine Society