

COVID-19

Situation Report #24

20 August 2020

project
HOPE[®]
Emergency
Response

Key Updates

- In Houston, TX, Project HOPE has reached more than **1,100 patients** through its ongoing medical surge staffing support to Lyndon B. Johnson Hospital and Ben Taub Hospital in coordination with Harris Health System. See the “Deep Dive” on our response below.
- In Illinois, Project HOPE has provided COVID-19 risk assessment and mitigation planning to **45 long-term care facilities** in Chicago and Cook County, reaching more than **6,250 residents**.
- In Maryland, Project HOPE administered **130 COVID-19 tests** between August 10-18 in shelters and other high-risk communities in Montgomery County, supporting the county’s Public Health System.
- In Colombia, Project HOPE held a handover ceremony of **56,400 N95 masks** with the Departmental Health Institute of Norte de Santander on August 6. Masks will be distributed to more than 15 hospital systems across the department.
- In Mexico, Project HOPE is supporting distribution of more than **300,000 pieces of personal protective equipment** in coordination with the government to priority hospitals.
- In Namibia, Project HOPE recently held a handover ceremony with the Ministry of Health and Social Services for **78,000 surgical masks and 3,800 isolation gowns**.
- In the Americas, Project HOPE recently launched new **COVID-19 ECHO** sessions in Spanish and Portuguese on Infection Prevention & Control, reaching up to **200 providers**.

Situation Update

Project HOPE continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, with an emphasis on ensuring health care workers and frontline personnel have the skills and resources they need to care for patients and reduce transmission. As the global situation continues to evolve, so does Project HOPE’s approach and activities in order to meet the most current needs.



Project HOPE volunteer nurses, Lisa Olsen and Erika Byers, provided surge staffing to LBJ and Ben Taub Hospitals in Houston, TX.

COVID-19 Response Highlights

- **62,100+** health care workers and frontline personnel trained
- **2,400+** participants in e-Learning curriculum
- **8.9 million+** PPE and supplies distributed in 14 countries, including:
 - 1.19 million+** respirator masks distributed
 - 5.4 million+** surgical masks distributed
 - 1.17 million+** gowns, coveralls and lab coats distributed
 - 1.17 million+** pairs of exam gloves distributed
 - 18,000** COVID-19 tests

In the United States, Project HOPE continues to support state agencies, health systems and facilities with staff surge capacity to implement infection prevention control activities, COVID-19 testing for at-risk communities, and direct care for patients hospitalized with COVID-19.

In mid-July, Project HOPE began deploying rotations of medical surge teams to support Harris Health System, the public healthcare system serving Harris County in Texas, which includes the city of Houston. The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Harris County has nearly doubled in the last month reaching 90, 415 as of August 18.ⁱ Hospitalizations and ICU stays for patients with COVID-19 have decreased in the last two weeks; however, hospitals and health care workers remain in need of support and more work needs to be done to ensure this trend continues. See below for a more in-depth look at what Project HOPE medical teams have experienced in Houston, TX.

DEEP DIVE: Project HOPE's Response in Houston, TX

Over the last five weeks, in coordination with Harris Health System, Project HOPE nurses have cared for approximately 600 patients at Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) Hospital, administered more than 500 COVID-19 tests to symptomatic employees of Harris Health System, and supported Nursing Operations through administrative oversight of 110 nurses at Ben Taub Hospital.ⁱⁱ Project HOPE volunteer nurses are assigned to hospital units in response to the latest needs, which have included the ICU, Emergency Department (ED), Occupational Health, and Nursing Operations to-date.

Caring for Patients with COVID-19 in the ICU at LBJ Hospital

For two weeks, Project HOPE volunteer nurses provided critically needed surge staffing to the ICU at LBJ Hospital, where they worked tirelessly to care for patients severely ill with COVID-19. One Project HOPE nurse was assigned to the unit full-time during her two-week rotation, which included approximately five 12-hour shifts per week. Another Project HOPE nurse was assigned to the occupational health unit at Ben Taub Hospital (see below); however, did a weekend shift in the ICU due to the high number of patients and need for additional staffing.

Project HOPE volunteer nurses supporting the ICU, reported that the hospital's number one need during their rotation was additional surge staffing. This need remains, both to help meet patient needs and also to alleviate staff burnout due to the heavy physical and emotional toll of caring for severely ill COVID-19 patients.

Other observations over the two-week period included:

- The hospital was well-stocked with PPE, medical equipment and medicines needed for COVID-19 care and treatment.
- The hospital had sufficient bed capacity, with two 16-bed ICU's (Medical ICU and Surgical ICU). There are also eight designated ICU beds in the

We as caregivers do all we can to keep the patient stable. But with each passing day you saw the slow decline of the patients you cared for the day before. It becomes a very uphill battle. It can also become discouraging. But, everyone involved in the care of the patients maintained determination, resilience and compassion. I was so impressed with the integrity and professionalism of every healthcare worker at LBJ. They are a wonderful team!

- Lisa Olsen, Project HOPE volunteer ICU nurse

ED and the Post-anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) that can be used for overflow; however, there were only enough staff to cover the available beds in the ED.

- Of the 32 available beds in the Medical and Surgical ICUs, 22 were occupied by patients with COVID-19. All eight patients in the ED ICU overflow were also ill with COVID-19.
- The Project HOPE nurse fully assigned to the ICU cared for patients in the Medical ICU and ED ICU. All patients were intubated at the time and had been admitted for at least two weeks with some for as long as four weeks.
- Each nurse at the hospital (including staff and volunteers) was assigned two patients with COVID-19 per shift, which is a normal matrix for the ICU; however, on very busy days, nurses could be assigned three patients, which is a significant increase as patients with COVID-19 require a high amount of intensive care and attention. The ideal staffing support for ICU patients with COVID-19 is a 1:1 ratio between patient and health care worker during a shift.
- The average age of ICU patients with COVID-19 was between 53-57 years old and about 50/50 male and female. There were also patients as young as 36-38 years old. A 36 year old male passed away during a shift.
- The Project HOPE nurse fully assigned to the ICU reported that all patients during her rotation were Hispanic. (More than 26% of COVID-19 cases have been among the Hispanic/Latino population according to Harris County dataⁱⁱⁱ).
- Main complications seen in patients were the inability to protect their airway and frequent respiratory distress.
- Patients with COVID-19 were prone positioned at least once during a 12-hour shift. Proning involves shifting patients from their back to their stomach to help oxygenation improve temporarily. It takes about five health care workers to prone position one patient with COVID-19 to ensure safe adjustment of the patient and all IV tubing, catheters, etc.

Project HOPE nurses have emphasized the importance of additional surge staffing in Houston and the emotional toll health care workers are experiencing on a regular basis. They reported that it is rare to see improvement in the patients' status, and the care focus is on keeping a patient stable. During the two-week rotation, only one patient was transferred out of the ICU to a step down unit.

Project HOPE nurses supporting the ICU cared for approximately **24 patients** with COVID-19 over a two-week period. Due to the overflow to the ED and other units, another team of Project HOPE nurses provided care to approximately **576 patients** in the ED and floated between the ICU and other units to meet shifts in staffing needs for three weeks.

Supporting Employee COVID-19 Testing at Ben Taub Hospital

Project HOPE also supported the Occupational Health Unit at Ben Taub Hospital through administering COVID-19 tests to symptomatic Harris Health System employees. Project HOPE spent two weeks working at the drive-up clinic, which is set up and taken down twice a day for a morning shift and afternoon shift.

Approximately 45-60 employees with COVID-19 symptoms would get tested each day. Many tests were coming back positive over the two-week period at the end of July. The turnaround for test results was 1-3 days. The Occupational Health Unit was then responsible for following-up with patients and conducting contact tracing. Project HOPE administered approximately 500 COVID-19 tests over two weeks.

Overseeing Crisis Nurses and Volunteers at Ben Taub and LBJ Hospitals

Since mid-July, a Project HOPE volunteer nurse has been working with Harris Health System Nursing Operations, serving in the role of liaison between the Crisis Nurses and Ben Taub and LBJ Hospitals.

Between the two hospitals, there are approximately 110 Crisis Nurses and volunteers providing care and services to Houston residents who are hospitalized with COVID-19 in the facilities. Project HOPE's team member is supporting the following activities:

- Monitoring, collaborating and communicating with hospital nurses, nursing leadership and other stakeholders;
- Collecting, analyzing and utilizing data and feedback to identify opportunities to improve various processes and relationships between the crisis nurses and facility stakeholders; and
- Conducting daily rounding in the facilities and relaying reports on any incidents and updates related to the crisis nurses.

Project HOPE will continue to support Harris Health System with staff surging as long as there is a need and as Harris County continues to fight the ongoing outbreak.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ <https://www.statnews.com/2020/03/26/covid-19-tracker/>

ⁱⁱ Please note: This number does not represent a unique number of beneficiaries reached as nurses working with the ICU could be assigned the same patient during different shifts.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://publichealth.harriscountytexas.gov/Resourses/2019-Novel-Coronavirus>

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