

IHS Week in Review for the week of November 22, 2020

As cases of COVID-19 continue to rise, we must renew our sense of personal accountability to protect ourselves, and those around us<<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>>. With colder weather moving people indoors and pandemic fatigue setting in, we must think about alternative ways to stay connected<<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/personal-social-activities.html#gatherings>> with our friends and loved ones this holiday season. This includes hosting a virtual holiday event or safely preparing traditional dishes and delivering them to family and neighbors, that does not involve contact with others. Travel increases your chance of getting and spreading COVID-19, staying home<<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/when-to-delay-travel.html>> is the best way to protect yourself and others. Our goal is to slow the spread, decrease hospitalizations, and decrease fatalities while keeping the economy open.

A vaccine is on the way, but in the meantime, we cannot succumb to pandemic fatigue. We all need to hang in there a little longer and remember now more than ever it's important to Wash your hands, Watch your distance, and Wear a mask<<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>>.

I'm proud of our team across the Indian health system who are working tirelessly to provide extraordinary health care throughout Indian Country during these unprecedented times. I want to give a special thank you to those of you who continued to serve our patients over the holiday. Your hard work is truly appreciated and valued each and every day, and plays a vital role in fulfilling our mission of raising the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level.

Phoenix Indian Medical Center visit

On Wednesday, I visited Phoenix Indian Medical Center team and thanked them for their service, especially during the pandemic. I also met with the governing board and executive leadership to discuss the PIMC plan for labor and delivery services. Patient safety is the highest priority for the IHS, and we remain dedicated to providing high quality obstetrical care for Phoenix Indian Medical Center patients. After my visit, I feel strongly that PIMC's efforts to reopen OB services in a safe environment will be successful.

Department of Veterans Affairs MOU for resources and services

Throughout this pandemic, the IHS has faced instances where it could not procure necessary goods through its ordinary sources of supply, and experienced a medical surge where access to care faced life-threatening circumstances. I am happy to share that the Department of Veteran Affairs<<https://www.va.gov/>> entered into an agreement with IHS that will assist our IHS federal facilities to access VA resources and services, such as staffing, acute care and Intensive Care Unit beds where appropriate and available during the pandemic. We established guidance and procedures for federal staff to use on making requests and reimbursing VA under the agreement, as well as, for services that VA provided since April 2020. For example, the VA will bill IHS for those services and supports by applying the VA Interagency Rates published in the Federal Register<<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/07/28/2020-16323/cost-based-and-inter-agency-billing-rates-for-medical-care-or-services-provided-by-the-department-of->>. We are grateful for our partnership with the VA.

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