**COVID-19**

Please consider the following COVID-19-related issues and their impact on oral and maxillofacial surgeons.

**About OMSs**

Oral and maxillofacial surgeons (OMSs) are the surgical specialists of the dental profession, undergoing extensive training that begins with dental school and continues with at least four years of hospital-based surgical residency. Typical procedures performed by OMSs include tooth extraction, dental implant placement, corrective jaw surgery, surgery for TMJ and facial pain, injury and trauma, oral, head and neck pathology as well as cleft left lip/palate and craniofacial surgery.

**What COVID-19 issues impact OMSs?**

- **Access to proper protective equipment (PPE):**
  - AAOMS supports increased production of PPE to ensure all healthcare providers have access to necessary PPE when delivering patient care during the pandemic. In particular, OMSs performing dental procedures during the pandemic must have access to proper PPE, such as N95 masks, because they are in close proximity to patients, and aerosols are generated, putting them and their staff at high risk for exposure to COVID-19.

- **Financial relief for healthcare providers:**
  - Small healthcare practices have faced significant hardship during the pandemic. AAOMS supports legislative proposals that would provide a tax credit to help cover the costs of PPE and additional infection control protections, offer a streamlined forgiveness process for smaller Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans, expand the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC), allow PPP recipients to qualify for the ERTC and remove negative tax implications on HHS Provider Relief Fund payments.

- **Liability immunity:**
  - Immunity protection should be provided to any healthcare provider delivering care – not just volunteer providers – whose actions or omissions are undertaken in good faith while providing services during the pandemic. Healthcare professionals, including OMSs, are being asked to provide care to patients in circumstances that may be outside their traditional scope of practice and in conditions that may lack adequate resources. AAOMS also supports legislation to shield businesses from lawsuits if they follow appropriate infection control recommendations or guidelines.

- **Testing:**
  - Additional federal investment in research is necessary to advance rapid point-of-service tests and ensure tests are widely available to all healthcare providers. The ability to conduct onsite testing of patients for COVID-19 when they arrive at offices for treatment will help OMSs and their staff feel comfortable returning to work without fear of being exposed – or exposing patients – to COVID-19.

- **Student loan relief:**
  - More than half of OMSs finish residency with $350,000 or more in student loan debt. Residents and early-career OMSs face a very uncertain employment environment in the upcoming months, and the ability to repay this massive debt will be particularly challenging.
  - While it is appreciated the Trump Administration temporarily set interest rates at 0 percent for all federally held student loans and suspended payments on these loans, please consider extending the freeze beyond Dec. 31, 2020, and codifying this relief for student loan borrowers.