Considerations in the Securing and Distribution of the Coronavirus Vaccine

Written by Members of the ASIS Healthcare Council

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Hospitals across the country are ramping up their efforts to figure out how to store, track, secure and administer the coronavirus vaccine following the recent news that an effective vaccine is on its way.

Hospitals will play a key role once a vaccine receives an emergency use authorization from the FDA, which could happen in the US before the end of December 2020. Each state and territory has its own distribution plan which was approved by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. These plans are centered around acquiring proper storage equipment, how to determine what order workers and patients will get the shot and how to educate people about its safety and effectiveness.

The storage requirements will depend on the vaccine or vaccines that receive authorization. The Pfizer shot, for example, requires a temperature of minus 80 degrees Celsius for transportation and long-term storage. The Moderna vaccine's temperature needs are less stringent. It must be stored long-term at minus 20 degrees Celsius, the same temperatures used for the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella). The Moderna vaccine can last at refrigerator temperatures for 30 days, whereas Pfizer's can be stable at those temperatures for only five days.

Hospitals need to review their security plans to make sure doses are kept secure, as they could be lucrative on the black and gray markets. Hospitals also need to review how staff can be kept safe if members of the general public turn up at a site demanding to be vaccinated. There are concerns around if and how hospitals will provide crowd control on Day One and how they will protect their hospital and healthcare workers. Hospitals also have to consider contingency planning in case of a natural disaster or other emergency that may cause power outages or similar disruptions.

A multi-layered security plan should be developed and in place before the vaccine arrives in order to minimize risks associated with the storage and distribution of the Coronavirus vaccine. Possible risks include theft, media interest, civil disturbance, protests, and sabotage.

Receipt, Stage and Store Location (RSS)

- Avoid public dissemination of details surrounding the dates and location of vaccine transportation and storage.
- Conduct a full security risk assessment of each RSS area and alternate areas.
- Confirm that RSS areas are equipped with alternate/emergency secure power sources.
- Establish electronic access control to the RSS area. (enables the ability to conduct periodic audits as to who is entering the area).
- Consider limiting overall access to the RSS. Consider a policy which requires at least two (2) employees in the RSS during hours of operation.
- Set up video surveillance monitoring of all RSS. (high-resolution cameras should be pointed at the RSS and document both sides of the ingress/egress point, and possibly a downward facing camera in any area where the drug is handled).
- Set up 24/hour remote alarm monitoring to the refrigerator(s)/freezer(s) where the vaccine will be stored. (Normal pharmacy alarm will suffice).

- Consider additional locks on vaccine refrigerator(s)/freezer(s) and storage areas.
- Conduct a daily inventory of the vaccine. This will provide hospital leadership with a real-time understanding of our supply and reduce opportunity for shrinkage.
- Confirm that all vaccine storage refrigerators/freezers, lighting, video surveillance, and access control equipment are connected to alternate/emergency secure power source.

Transportation

- Establish predetermined, secure route from receiving dock to the storage location in coordination with Shipping & Receiving, Pharmacy, and Security.
- Security personnel should provide escort during the transport from the RSS to the Point of Dispensing (POD) and during any other movements of the vaccine.

Place of Vaccination

- At a minimum, the POD should have a camera in the immediate area, allowing a view of persons in the hallway leading to the POD and at the entry point.
- Extra security rounding should be completed and documented.

Other Considerations

- Coordinate with local law enforcement partners and other healthcare facilities to stay abreast of any potential risks such as civil disturbances, protests or other security issues. Also coordinate response plans with other healthcare systems throughout the nation. Sharing of best practices will facilitate the highest level of protection for staff, facilities and the community.
- These recommendations are for the initial deployment of the vaccine. Continuous evaluation and updating of the security plan should be conducted weekly.
- Monitor ASIS and IAHSS websites for updates on the vaccines and distribution.