

YOU HAVE BEEN DEPLOYED TO A COVID UNIT, NOW WHAT?

1. With the rising volume of COVID-19 related admission, surgical teams are often asked to support front-line staffing of Emergency Department, ICU, and medical floors
2. Although local training is usually provided but this is often limited and variable
3. Specific attention to training on essential PPE when caring for COVID-19 patients including N95 mask fit testing
4. Seek as much information as possible before deployment on the anticipated tasks that you will be expected to perform, working hours, access to critical supply of PPE and staff support
5. Ensure access to key contact information and institutional protocols algorithms on the management of COVID-19 patients in ITU, specifically:
 - a. Ventilatory support in hypoxic patients and algorithm for when to escalate to intubation (NC > non-rebreather face mask > high-flow nasal cannula > BIPAP > intubation)
 - b. Ventilator management and maneuvers to improve respiratory mechanics (proning, PEEP)
 - c. COVID-19 order sets and interpretation of inflammatory marker levels and QTc interval
 - d. Treatment algorithms based on severity of COVID-19 (Chloroquine, antibiotics, anticoagulants, anti-IL6 agents, steroids)
6. The least predictable environment for deployment is the ED, and surgical teams should be prepared to be flexible and assist the ED staff with any tasks that can facilitate triage and management of COVID-19 patients
7. Practical and useful tips include creating communication hub with a designated individual to communicate with relatives
8. Be aware that equipment for remote monitoring of patients' vital signs may be insufficient and alternative methods need to be planned
9. It is essential that deployment schedules minimize the risk of extreme fatigue and burnout
10. It is important to remember that medical teams, hospitalists, intensivists and critical care teams are very appreciative for the assistance provided by surgical teams and volunteers coming to help during the COVID crisis.