



Liability Takes a COVID Holiday



WACEP President's Message, April 2020
 Ryan Thompson, MD, FACEP

Emergency Medicine is more stressful than ever these days. The COVID-19 pandemic is an ever-present threat, with even asymptomatic patients posing possible infection risk. We worry about our vulnerable patients, older partners, family members and ourselves contracting the disease. On top of that, the drop in ED volumes combined with drops in hospital revenue from cancelled elective procedures, has forced cuts in both pay and shift counts for EM docs, adding a financial strain to the existential one.

With constantly shifting criteria for testing and admission, treatment recommendations, and the unknown of possible coming surge, the last thing EM docs in Wisconsin need right now is to worry about civil liability. The pace of this pandemic and the changes it has brought to the practice of medicine mean that standards of care can vary even within a single shift. That is a liability nightmare!

I am proud that WACEP led the charge on obtaining temporary liability protections for physicians in Wisconsin. We brought the idea to the Wisconsin Medical Society and Wisconsin Hospital Association who quickly joined the fight. As a result of a concerted lobbying effort, civil liability immunity was included in the state COVID-response bill, which breezed through the legislature with strong bipartisan support and was signed by Governor Evers into law.

What this means for us boots-on-the-ground docs is that we are protected from civil liability for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency for all care provided in good faith. The bill was even addended to clarify that this extends to all care provided during the emergency, not just for COVID-19 patients. This is important because we have necessarily had to change how we approach all patients during this crisis.

I hope that you are all holding up out there on the front lines, and that removing at least one potential source of stress in these difficult times will help you take even better care of your patients and yourselves.

Stay safe and be well.

- Ryan

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Virtual Hill Day is April 28

TODAY is the last day to register for ACEP's [Virtual Hill Day](#), taking place on April 28. If you are available the afternoon on April 28, please join Team Wisconsin and participate in this free ACEP event!

There has never been a more important time to ensure Members of Congress are aware of the life and death risks you are taking during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Just like the Leadership & Advocacy Conference (LAC), Virtual Hill Day will include state-specific advocacy teams comprised of first-timers and veterans alike. Teams will have telephone meetings with Members of Congress and their key staff to discuss the most pressing issues you are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

An Issues Briefing Webinar will be held for all registrants in advance of the Virtual Hill Day to ensure you are prepared to speak to the most pressing advocacy issues facing EM physicians and patients during these challenging times.

In the News

WACEP Leaders have been interviewed by the media in recent weeks regarding COVID-19:

CBS-58 News Milwaukee featuring Brad Burmeister, MD, WACEP President-Elect: April 21 ([link](#))

Fox-11 News Green Bay COVID-19 series featuring Brad Burmeister, MD, WACEP President-Elect: April 21 ([link](#)); April 17 ([link](#)); April 14 ([link](#)); April 7 ([link](#))

The Cap Times featuring Ryan Thompson, MD, FACEP, WACEP President: March 20 ([link](#))

COVID-19 Updates

On Tuesday, NIH released their Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Treatment Guidelines ([link](#))

CMS is allowing independent freestanding EDs to temporarily participate in Medicare and Medicaid ([link](#))

Up to \$100,000 in new research grants is available through EMF ([link](#))

View WACEP's COVID-19 Resource Page ([link](#)) for updated news, information and resources.

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