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NEWS RELEASE



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ANA Calls Shortage of N-95 Respirators to Protect Against H1N1 Unacceptable

SILVER SPRING, MD – The American Nurses Association (ANA) conveyed to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) that reported shortages of respirator masks needed to protect registered nurses from the risk of contracting the H1N1 influenza are unacceptable, and warned the quality of patient care could needlessly decline during the H1N1 pandemic without adequate protection measures.

In a letter to the CDC, ANA expressed deep concern about shortages of the fitted N-95 respirators, the equipment CDC recommends as the minimum level of respiratory protection for health care workers who could be exposed to the H1N1 virus. Several state nurses associations have told ANA that nurses are indicating difficulties in obtaining the N-95 respirators on the job, and hospitals in their states are reporting shortages of the N-95 respirator.

ANA also questioned a strategy outlined by CDC whereby N-95 respirator use would be prioritized for health care personnel where shortages exist, leaving other workers to use facemasks. ANA said it is widely acknowledged that facemasks were not intended to be “personal protective equipment,” calling facemasks merely a “better than nothing” device since they don’t filter airborne particles and they do leak.

“Registered nurses want to come to work and do our jobs to take care of patients – we historically have put patients’ needs ahead of our own,” said ANA President Rebecca M. Patton, MSN, RN, CNOR. “So it’s absolutely essential to have adequate protection from exposure to the H1N1 virus. If nurses get sick and can’t come to work, who will take care of patients? It is reasonable to hold our employers accountable for providing necessary equipment to protect the safety of health care employees and our patients.”

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“Considering all the national planning that has taken place in the past few years to prepare to respond to a pandemic, it is inexcusable to be facing shortages of personal protective equipment at this stage,” Patton continued. “Employers need to improve their commitment to support and protect RNs and all other direct health care workers so we can safely care for patients without putting ourselves and patients at undue risk and harm.”

To read ANA’s letter to the CDC, go to: www.NursingWorld.org/LetterToCDC

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The ANA is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 2.9 million registered nurses through its constituent member nurses associations, its organizational affiliates, and its workforce advocacy affiliate, the Center for American Nurses. The ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.