



A LETTER TO OUR COMMUNITY REGARDING RESOURCE SHORTAGE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

COVID-19/Coronavirus is causing very high demand for services at ZSFG. The number of critically ill patients at ZSFG right now is more than our supply of some types of medical supplies and equipment. We wish to notify patients and their families or caregivers that our hospital has adjusted its policies in response to this shortage.

The hospital has created a special team and process to help our patients and medical teams during this situation. We have investigated what other hospitals and health systems have done in similar situations to understand what has worked.

We will always use our resources to help as many patients as possible. We will be using a new decision process to guide us through difficult choices, such as how to decide who will receive support from a breathing machine (called a ventilator) if there are more patients in need, than breathing machines available for use.

We created our decision process with a group of patients, ethicists, religious leaders, doctors, nurses, social workers, health equity experts and community advocates, including for people living with disabilities. We designed the process to try to save the most peoples' lives, to help young people have the opportunity to live through life's stages, to be fair, and to avoid discrimination. At ZSFG, we make decisions based on medical information, not on race, ethnicity, physical appearance, immigration status, insurance, religion, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, income, housing, occupation or other social factors.

If there is a severe shortage of a piece of equipment, medicine or staff members, we will always look first to see if there is a way to still offer every patient the opportunity to receive the treatment. If that is not possible, we will contact other hospitals and organizations to see if we can transfer the patient or if we can borrow supplies or staff. If we find that there is no other option, we will use a scoring system to prioritize patients for a treatment that is in a critical shortage – this is called an allocation decision.

We will evaluate patients based on how sick they are in the moment, and what health problems they had before being hospitalized. If we use the scarce treatment, such as a ventilator, we are using it to see if the treatment will work for the patient. If the patient does not get better with the treatment, we will change the plan according to the hospital's new decision process. The hospital has a special team who will make that allocation decision with the help of the patient's doctors.

When we change the treatment plan, we are making the change so that another person in our community has their fair chance for treatment.

Patients have the right to refuse any treatments or request changes. Our patients and staff must do certain things (like limiting the number of guests and wearing masks) to maintain the health of the public. The patient or their decision maker has the right to request an appeal about whether an allocation decision was made according to the hospital guidelines. The patient or their decision maker also has the right to request transfer to another acute care hospital.

Nothing is more difficult for medical teams than facing limits in peoples' access to health resources. Our medical teams will make every effort to provide the best medical care to you and your loved ones during this difficult time. We will always explain what is happening and provide compassionate care, and we will always relieve suffering. Our promise is to support our patients and our community with professionalism, dedication and compassion.

San Francisco has made it through very difficult times in the past. ZSFG is dedicated to caring for the most ill and most vulnerable members of our community. Working together, we will meet these challenges as equitably and successfully as possible.

In care of our community,

The ZSFG Care Team