

## KP shares COVID-19 lessons learned with health leaders

Health and Human Services secretary Alex Azar and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services administrator Seema Verma acknowledged Kaiser Permanente and Providence St. Joseph Health for their innovative approaches taken to address the COVID-19 public health crisis.

[Janet Liang](#), executive vice president, group president and chief operating officer, care delivery, and [Stephen Parodi, MD](#), associate executive director, The Permanente Medical Group, addressed more than 2,000 hospital and health system leaders, sharing what Kaiser Permanente has learned since mid-February, when the first patient who tested positive for COVID-19 entered one of our facilities.

Liang spoke of 3 key priorities throughout this challenge: protecting our workforce, keeping our patients safe, and staying ahead of the curve. Despite Kaiser Permanente's vast experience navigating infectious disease outbreaks and public health crises, she noted that the scale of this outbreak has been unprecedented and has required a new way of working together across the enterprise.

One of the greatest challenges, she said, has been coordinating with and aligning across the various regulations stemming from disparate county health departments. She advised other health systems to deploy their government relations and advocacy teams the way Kaiser Permanente has to champion a coordinated response that removes unnecessary administrative hurdles.

She also highlighted how Kaiser Permanente has applied lessons learned in California and Washington state — where the virus first appeared in the United States — to our other markets as they have begun to encounter new cases. Health systems, she said, can't start communicating early enough to their workforce and should work with their labor partners to address concerns and ensure accurate, reputable information is being shared.

Dr. Parodi spoke of some of the challenges that, despite Kaiser Permanente's best efforts, we and many other health systems are currently facing, including the limited availability of tests and testing equipment, and decreasing supplies of personal protective equipment for health care workers.

He outlined some of the ways we've adapted to meet new demands, such as reaching out to other industries to source masks and other supplies, using telehealth tools to set up virtual exams to conserve protective equipment and limit exposure to front-line staff, and installing greeters at facilities to screen for symptoms and triage visitors, workers, and patients appropriately.

In response to a question from a participant about what the health care system can do to prepare, Dr. Parodi replied, "Don't wait until you have cases. It will be too late. Act now."