

The Messenger Post: Opinion / Letter to the Editor

April 7, 2020

On April 3, Governor Cuomo announced his intention to sign an executive order requiring Upstate New York hospitals make available unused medical equipment and supplies for other healthcare facilities in immediate need. Today he signed that order, making this an official mandate—but not a reason for Ontario County residents to worry more about their health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

UR Medicine Thompson Health has a close connection with the Hospital Association of New York State (HANYS), which has agreed to serve as a clearinghouse for ventilator needs and their availability statewide. While the state Department of Health maintains a daily inventory of equipment at all hospitals, the HANYS clearinghouse is focused on how many ventilators can safely be made available by each hospital if there are critical shortages in another part of the state. This voluntary clearinghouse greatly reduces the chance that state government will see a need to take ventilators involuntarily.

Last week, for example, we identified one ventilator and two bi-level positive airway pressure (BiPAP) machines for lending. We are confident we can do this without compromising our readiness to treat COVID-19 in our community. Should a need be identified elsewhere for that equipment, we are proud to step up and help our fellow healthcare providers on the front lines of this pandemic. We are all fighting on the same battleground.

Under the HANYS plan, UR Medicine hospitals may not be required to provide breathing equipment to other regions and could, in fact, receive ventilators from other parts of the state if a shortage develops here.

Thompson Health is very fortunate to be affiliated with UR Medicine in Rochester. We have worked collaboratively to establish multiple contingency plans and ensure we are sharing our resources to every extent possible. Being a part of a coordinated effort during a time of tremendous demands on our healthcare system, statewide and beyond, is something we consider an honor and a privilege. Improving the health of the residents and communities of the Finger Lakes and the surrounding region has always been – and always will be – Thompson's priority, and being part of UR Medicine helps us deliver on that promise.

We are well prepared for this crisis, we are resolute, and we have an incredible team of associates dedicated to caring for our community's needs.

The important thing to note here is that there is no immediate plan to pull any items from Thompson Health. As you see and hear news coming in on COVID-19, please verify your sources and ensure you aren't falling prey to "fake news." COVID-19 poses real threats that we can assess and address by working together; fear-mongering only makes it harder to achieve that goal.

On April 6, Gov. Cuomo announced that no New York hospital is currently in need of ventilators or other equipment. He shared encouraging signs that the projected shortages of equipment may not materialize, in large part because social distancing is proving to be effective.

This leads to a final and important note. **Everyone, please continue adhering to strict social distancing measures.** Encourage your neighbors and loved ones to do the same—by telephone, video chat, or a

friendly wave from across the street. These measures will help to flatten the curve and keep the number of local people affected by COVID-19 as minimal as possible. We appreciate the community's support as we all navigate the coming weeks and months together, safely.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Stapleton, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Michael F. Stapleton, Jr. FACHE
President and CEO
UR Medicine Thompson Health