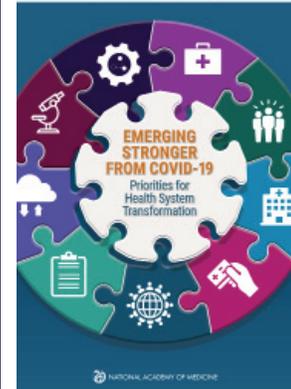


Emerging Stronger From COVID-19

Priorities for Health System Transformation

A Special Publication of the National Academy of Medicine



Emerging Stronger From COVID-19: A Call to Action

To date, in mid-2022, the United States has lost more than a million people to the COVID-19 pandemic. The American people have been real-time witnesses to scores of heroic responses to the disease, death, inequity, and economic strife unleashed by the virus, but have also experienced the consequences of poor pandemic preparedness and long-standing structural failures in our health system.

For decades, the U.S. health system has fallen far short of its potential to support and improve individual and population health. In contrast to health care spending that exceeds any other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nation, the U.S. experiences lower life expectancies, higher rates of death by suicide, higher chronic disease burden, higher obesity rates, and higher hospitalization rates than any of our peers. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented death and devastation - but also an unprecedented opportunity to leverage lessons learned from the pandemic and truly transform U.S. health, health care, and health delivery.

To capitalize on this opportunity, the National Academy of Medicine gathered field leaders from across all of the major health system sectors to assess health system weaknesses that existed prior to COVID-19, how each sector has responded to the pandemic, and the opportunities that exist for health system transformation. The opportunity is now to capitalize on the hard-won lessons of COVID-19 and build a health care system that centers **patients, families, and communities**; cares for **clinicians**; supports **care systems, public health, and biomedical research** to perform at the best of their abilities; applies innovations from **digital health and quality, safety, and standards organizations**; and encourages **health care payers and health product manufacturers and innovators** to produce products that benefit all. **We know what to do - we must now have the will to do it.**

Health System Sectors Covered in Emerging Stronger

1. Patients, Families, and Communities
2. Clinicians and Professional Societies
3. Care Systems
4. Digital Health
5. Public Health
6. Health Care Payers
7. Health Product Manufacturers and Innovators
8. Biomedical Research
9. Quality, Safety, and Standards Organizations
10. Health System Transformation: Common Priorities Across Sectors

Transformation Priorities Across Sectors

The final chapter of *Emerging Stronger* collects cross-cutting challenges experienced by all sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic and identifies priority areas for cross-sector transformation (listed above). The challenges experienced by sectors across the health care system were specific to each sector, but also coalesced around common themes, including: **trust, communication, equity, workforce, data interoperability and sharing, telehealth, payment, quality and safety, evidence generation, and system capacity** - which can be used to galvanize and focus transformative efforts on those areas that will have the largest and most immediate impact across all of the health system's sectors. These priorities are as follows:

1. Centering health system actions and accountability on **individuals, families, and communities**;
2. Committing to the pursuit of **equity** as core to health system performance;
3. Securing the **public health infrastructure** for 21st century population health challenges;
4. Building a robust and integrated digital health and **data sharing infrastructure**;
5. Integrating **telehealth** into payment and delivery systems;
6. Investing in **workforce** capacity and readiness;
7. Streamlining **innovation pathways** for biomedical science;
8. Strengthening stewardship of the health product **supply chain**;
9. Restructuring health care payments to focus on **outcomes and population health**; and
10. Fostering **communication and collaboration** across sectors and stakeholders.

The societally disruptive, intense, and too often tragic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic offer an unprecedented opportunity to build coalitions, embrace aspirational goals, and implement lasting change. The authors of this Special Publication urge others throughout the nation to join with us: to emerge stronger by applying what we have learned to build a system committed to the relentless pursuit of equity, efficiency, effectiveness, and continuous learning—and to achieve better health for all.

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