



November 19, 2020

David Kessler, M.D.  
Co-chair, Biden COVID-19 Advisory Board

Vivek Murthy, M.D.  
Co-chair, Biden COVID-19 Advisory Board

Marcella Nunez-Smith, M.D., MHS  
Co-chair, Biden COVID-19 Advisory Board

Dear Drs. Kessler, Murthy & Nunez-Smith:

Congratulations on your appointment as co-chairs of President-elect Biden's COVID-19 Advisory Board. On behalf of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) and its HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA), we are deeply grateful for your leadership and expertise at this critical time, and we offer ourselves as resources to you. **IDSA and HIVMA represent over 12,000 infectious diseases physicians, scientists, public health professionals and other clinicians on the front lines of this pandemic, and we request a meeting with the advisory board to discuss how we can support your work and potentially amplify its reach through our leaders and members.**

We share the President-elect's vision of an evidence-based, nationally coordinated pandemic response led by health experts, and we support the pillars of his plan to beat COVID-19, including strengthening our testing capacity, ensuring the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), providing science-based guidance for community mitigation measures, encouraging mask use nationwide, addressing health disparities, distributing treatments and vaccines in an equitable and effective manner and enhancing our preparedness for the inevitable future health threats. We offer you our members' diverse and expansive expertise from the front lines to help you develop and implement strategies to realize the President-elect's vision and finally bring this pandemic under control. Our members are caring for patients with COVID-19, developing infection prevention and patient management protocols, leading multidisciplinary hospital teams, directing state and local health departments, developing treatment and diagnostic guidelines and conducting research to deepen our understanding of COVID-19 that will inform the development of new tools for prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

#### **Leading a Cultural Change through Education and National Mask Policies**

IDSA and HIVMA have been leaders in advocating for strong mask requirements in all states. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you to remove politics from mask wearing and bring about a culture change on their use so everyone in the country is empowered to wear masks for their health and to protect their loved ones. IDSA has teamed up with the Ad Council for "Mask Up, America," a public education campaign with ads appearing at colleges and universities, bars, restaurants, convenience stores, grocery and liquor stores and in other public gathering spots throughout the country. Online and

social media ads are also appearing in donated media space nationwide. Since March, the Ad Council's COVID-19 public service advertisements have generated 30 billion impressions, and 77% of American adults are aware of the Ad Council's COVID-related messaging.

IDSAs and HIVMAs have leveraged multiple communications platforms to successfully deliver evidence-based information to the health care community and the public, including regular media briefings with participation from major media outlets, podcasts, social media and statements and communications to national and state policymakers. We stand ready to amplify your messages and support efforts to ensure that clinicians and the American people receive the information they need to protect themselves and their loved ones.

### **Perspectives from the Front Lines Across the Country**

IDSAs and HIVMAs would also appreciate the opportunity to serve as a source of diverse frontline perspectives on the issues and questions you face. We were honored to act in a similar role for leaders of the Obama Administration's response to the West Africa Ebola outbreak of 2015, serving as a sounding board for draft guidance documents and policies, answering questions and providing feedback from the trenches.

### **Vaccines, Diagnostics and Therapeutics**

**Vaccines:** IDSAs members have been deeply engaged in planning for the distribution of vaccines and treatments and expanding testing and screening to meet evolving needs. IDSA has mobilized the medical and public health community to emphasize the importance of ensuring COVID-19 vaccines meet the Food and Drug Administration's rigorous standards for safety and efficacy, and we pledge to help educate vaccine providers and the public about COVID-19 vaccines to help build the confidence necessary for a successful vaccination campaign. Much more work remains to solve the significant logistical challenges with vaccine distribution and ensure we reach all populations, particularly those most impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Our members serve in leadership roles at the national and state levels, including on the Centers for Disease Control Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), and have helped develop their individual state COVID-19 vaccine distribution plans.

**Diagnostics:** Increased access to reliable and rapid diagnostics is critical to identify people earlier in the disease course for their own health and to prevent disease transmission. IDSA members have been leading efforts to improve diagnostics, address supply issues and develop [guidelines](#) for clinicians on the use of diagnostics.<sup>i</sup>

**Therapeutics:** The pandemic requires urgent attention to reducing hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19. Our members also have led efforts to develop evidence-based clinical recommendations and [guidelines](#)<sup>ii</sup> to inform the use of the therapeutic options available and to ensure their equitable distribution.

### **Public Health Data Transparency**

To effectively guide our response at the national, state and local levels, we must do a better job collecting and publicly reporting meaningful data, including COVID-19 data by race and ethnicity, hospital and ICU capacity, total number of tests and percent positive, hospitalizations and deaths. By placing the responsibility for the response back in the hands of public health and medical experts, we

are confident that President-elect Biden will help restore public faith in comprehensive, transparent COVID-19 data reporting.

### **Racial Equity and Health Disparities**

While the intersection of racial inequities and health disparities has been brutally exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, our members have long recognized and [worked to address](#) these issues in our work on the front lines of the HIV epidemic.<sup>iii</sup> We commend President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris for making racial equity one of their top transition priorities as attention to this issue is critical to enhancing the effectiveness of the COVID-19 response and to the health of our nation.

To further assist you, IDSA and HIVMA encourage you to visit our [COVID-19 Real-Time Learning Network](#), a curated repository of clinical guidance, emerging research and practice management tools for clinicians and decision-makers. Funded in part by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), this network averages 73,000 page views per month and is growing in popularity, with over 43,500 page views in the week of Nov. 9 alone.

Thank you for sharing your expertise to lead our nation out of this pandemic. We look forward to meeting with you and supporting you in any way we can on meeting the challenge of this public health emergency. Please feel free to contact us anytime through Amanda Jezek, IDSA's Senior Vice President of Public Policy and Government Relations at [ajezek@idsociety.org](mailto:ajezek@idsociety.org) and Andrea Weddle, HIVMA's Executive Director at [aweddle@hivma.org](mailto:aweddle@hivma.org).

Sincerely,



Barbara D. Alexander, M.D., MHS, FIDSA  
President, IDSA



Rajesh T. Gandhi, M.D., FIDSA  
Chair, HIVMA

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<sup>i</sup>Hanson, KE, et al. *Infectious Diseases Society of America Guidelines on the Diagnosis of COVID-19*. May 6, 2020. Online at: <https://www.idsociety.org/practice-guideline/covid-19-guideline-diagnostics/>.

<sup>ii</sup>Bhimraj, A. et al. *Infectious Diseases Society of America Guidelines on the Treatment and Management of Patients with COVID-19*. Sept. 25, 2020. Online at: <https://www.idsociety.org/practice-guideline/covid-19-guideline-treatment-and-management/>.

<sup>iii</sup>Adaora Adimora, MD, MPH. All Policy Is Health Policy: Pathways to HIV (and COVID-19). Edward Kass Lecture. IDWeek 2020. Online at: <https://idweek.org/kass/>.