Blue Shield of California Offers Digital Hospital-Triage Tool to Network Health Systems to Help Handle Anticipated Surge of COVID-19 Patients

Innovative system is customized by each hospital's emergency response plan; tool can be implemented on hospital websites in 48 hours.

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OAKLAND, Calif. (March 18, 2020) – Blue Shield of California is offering a new digital tool to its network hospitals at no additional cost to help them triage the influx of patients seeking advice on coronavirus (COVID-19) or other medical care.

This is the latest effort by the nonprofit health plan to support public health during the ongoing coronavirus crisis by helping hospitals be more effective and efficient in caring for their patients.

The "COVID-19 Screener and Emergency Response Assistant" (COVID-19 SERA) is a tool that patients can access via Internet-connected smartphone, tablet or computer on a participating hospital's website. COVID-19 SERA can be customized for each health system's emergency response plan, and it is updated in real-time with latest guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO). GYANT, a San Francisco-based company providing virtual triage and patient navigation services, developed this tool.

Patients would access COVID-19 SERA on a hospital's website, answer a few basic questions, and based on their reply, they would be directed to the appropriate medical settings for their health situation. The idea is to point patients in the most appropriate care setting so hospitals can better manage the inflow of patients.

The COVID-19 SERA service can be implemented on a hospital's website within 48 hours. Blue Shield will cover the costs for its network hospitals to implement, update and be licensed to use COVID-19 SERA system for three months during the pandemic.

"The tool provides relief to hospitals' overburdened call centers and front-desk resources. It can direct low-acuity cases to the appropriate medical settings and provide relevant information to patients affected by COVID-19 so that they can quickly receive medical care and help curb community transmission," said Terry Gilliland, M.D., executive vice president, Healthcare Quality and Affordability at Blue Shield. "These are trying times for everyone and we believe this system can make a difference for hospitals as they do their best to provide medical care for patients."

The COVID-19 SERA is developed by GYANT, a San Francisco-based company that uses artificial intelligence to provide digital services that help people access appropriate care.