

Q: Will Mercy have everything and everyone it needs when they arrive in Los Angeles?

A: Yes. With exception of a few more personnel that will join immediately upon the ship's arrival in Los Angeles, the ship is fully stocked with adequate supplies and is ready to begin the mission.

Q. When will Mercy begin embarking patients?

A. Mercy will be ready on arrival and will coordinate transfers with local hospitals as early as possible with careful consideration to the safety and security of patients and care providers. Medical planners are working with state, federal, and local partners to establish the means by which we coordinate care.

Q: How were the locations selected of where the ships will deploy/support?

A: As FEMA director Gaynor stated, FEMA selected the locations based on analysis for the potential need for hospital beds on each coast and where the ships would have the greatest impact.

Q: How long will USNS Mercy remain?

A: The ship will stay as long as local officials consider their presence to be of value. The USNS Mercy's mission is not to treat COVID-19 patients onboard, but to help the local health care system by treating other patients who do not suffer from COVID-19.

Q: How long can the ship operate without resupply?

A: The ship will operate pierside in Los Angeles and will resupply using in-port procedures with mitigations in place to ensure the safe on load of supplies.

Q: Are the doctors and crew on board USNS Mercy permanently assigned to the ship?

A: No. Our hospital ships do not maintain a full crew or medical staff. Care providers will be coming from various Navy medical treatment facilities across the country and carefully selected reservists who volunteered for this mission.

Q. What is size the medical crew?

A: As of April 8, the medical contingent aboard USNS Mercy has approximately 1,071 medical treatment facility personnel onboard.

Q: Has it been determined where the medical staffs will come from to support the USNS Mercy?

A: The physicians, nurses and other medical support personnel are being drawn from Navy Medicine professionals at Military Treatment Facilities across the country. Available reservists will also fill some of the medical positions aboard. All reservists have volunteered for this mission.

The Defense Health Agency, as the administrator of these Military Treatment Facilities, will work to reduce the impact of the movement of these active duty medical professionals to the ship. Local medical commanders from their home units are working to minimize the impact to

patient care. We appreciate the shared sacrifice and inconvenience of everyone affected as we work with national authorities to position medical resources where they are most needed.

Q: Will bringing in Navy Reservists who are medical professionals negatively impact their own communities?

A: We have worked to ensure our volunteer Reservists are available to support the medical relief efforts while minimizing impact to their local communities. When the Navy Reserve was asked to help find medical professionals to help support this mission, Commander, Navy Reserve Force received over 200 volunteer requests from our Reserve medical community to help support the active-duty medical community and the USNS Comfort (T-AH20) and USNS Mercy (T-AH 19). The specialized skillsets that our Navy Reservists possess make us an indispensable force multiplier in support of this critical mission.

Each volunteer Reservist was screened and asked directly whether or not they could help without hurting their community; if there was no impact to their community and they were still willing to help, then we gave them orders.

Q: Will any of the crewmembers be allowed liberty in the local communities?

A: In order to mitigate the risk of the virus being brought aboard, liberty will not be authorized for military or civilians serving aboard USNS Mercy.

COVID-19 SCREENING

Q. Does the ship have the capacity to test for COVID-19?

A. Yes, the ship has the capacity to test for COVID-19.

Q. Were the crewmembers been tested for COVID-19 prior to embarking the ship?

A. All crewmembers supporting this mission have undergone two screening processes, the same one in use by medical professionals across the country, one before departing their home of record and one before boarding USNS Mercy. The screening consists of a temperature check and health questionnaire. Based on that screening, Crewmembers and medical staff will be screened for COVID-19 and tested as necessary in order to minimize the risk of any outbreak aboard USNS Mercy.

Q: How will crewmembers protect themselves from contracting COVID-19 once onboard?

A: The hospital ships have infection control procedures that will be followed, just as any hospital ashore. The ship is equipped with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as required. Additionally, all personnel aboard Mercy will practice preventative hygiene measures recommended by the CDC to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Q. What is the screening process for crewmembers embarking on the USNS Mercy?

A. Crewmembers and medical staff are screened using the same process that medical professionals across the country are using, which is a series of questions addressing member's recent health and contact history.

Q. Does Mercy have access to adequate personal protective equipment, and how much is required?

A. The ship has personal protective equipment in the form of face masks and shields, protective suites, gloves, boot covers, etc. We have supplied the ship to meet this mission with the expectation that there will be a high turnover rate. We also expect our capability to expand as more medical professionals arrive in Los Angeles.

Patient/Local Los Angeles Questions

Q: Where is the ship going to moor?

A: USNS Mercy is moored at the World Cruise Center Terminal, Berth 93 in the Port of Los Angeles.

Q. Will Mercy take walk-in patients?

A: No. The hospital ships will work with local health officials and accept non-COVID patient transfers from local hospitals. We are, in essence, a “relief valve” for the local civilian hospitals in coastal locations so that local health professionals can better focus on COVID-19 cases. By providing care to patients in need of treatment NOT related to COVID-19, we increase the local civilian hospitals’ capacity to focus on the treatment of their COVID-19 patients.

Q: How will patients be selected to receive medical care aboard the Navy hospital ships? And how will they be prioritized?

A: Local health officials will identify candidates for transfer to USNS Mercy after the patients have been screened for COVID-19. Doctors aboard USNS Mercy will then work directly with the patients’ civilian doctor to ensure a safe and thorough turn over process before the patients are transferred. The hospital ships will serve as a relief valve for the civilian hospitals by reducing their non-COVID-19 workload. The ship's medical staff will work with local health authorities to use the hospital ships referral centers, essentially functioning as a tertiary care center for the location. Local health officials will decide on required care and prioritize based on capabilities and where they need the most support.

Q: If I am referred to be seen by a doctor on the ship, what do I need to bring with me?

A: For patients referred to the hospital ship, your care provider will let you know if you need to bring anything. Physicians aboard USNS Mercy will work directly with the patients’ civilian physician to ensure a safe and thorough turn over process before the patients transfer to the ship.

Q: My child is home from school, can I bring him/her?

A: No, the ship is not equipped to support non-patient children. In order to mitigate the risk of the COVID-19 virus from being brought aboard USNS Mercy, and to maintain a sterile environment, patients may not bring minors aboard the ship at any time.

Q: Can I bring my support/service animal on the ship while being treated?

A: No, in order to mitigate the risk of the COVID-19 virus from being brought aboard USNS Mercy, and to maintain a sterile environment aboard the ship, patients will not be allowed to bring support/service animals aboard on the ship.

Q: How do I get to the ship? Is there parking?

A: If your doctor refers you to the ship, you will receive instructions on how to get to the ship. There is no parking available at the pier for patients.

Q: Will USNS Mercy keep patients overnight if needed?

A: Yes, some patients may require an overnight or longer stay, which will be determined by ship physicians in coordination with the patients' physician. The ship will be able to accommodate up to 1,000 patients at any given time.

Q: Will civilian clergy be allowed to visit patients being treated on the ship?

A: Visitor policy, to include hours and visitation by clergy, is currently being determined; however, minors will not be allowed aboard the ship at any time. In order to mitigate the risk of the COVID-19 virus, and to maintain a sterile environment aboard the ship, the ship will adhere to all CDC guidelines to mitigate the spread of the virus. The ship does have a military chaplain aboard to support the religious needs of patients.

Q: Will kosher, halal or other special meals be available on the ship for patients?

A: Yes, the ship is equipped to provide meals to individuals who have religious meal requirements.

Q: My regular physician is licensed in Los Angeles. Are the medical personnel on the ship also licensed to practice in Los Angeles?

A: Our qualified care providers are licensed to practice on this DOD ship in Los Angeles while aboard the ship. They will be coming from various Navy medical facilities across the country, as well as reservists with medical backgrounds.

Q: I heard reports that the USNS Mercy is only for military or veterans. Is that correct?

A: No, USNS Mercy will be giving care to patients from the local community in coordination with various local agencies in Los Angeles. Identified patients that will then transfer to USNS Mercy for care. Prior to patient transfer, both the civilian physicians and the USNS Mercy physicians will develop a patient care plan. All patients will be screened for COVID-19 before transferring to the ship. The hospital ships will relieve civilian hospitals by reducing their non-COVID-19 workload.

Q: What happens if someone dies onboard? Is there a morgue? Is there some federal coroner or will the state or city coroner be in charge?

A: Just like our civilian counterparts, our medical professionals onboard USNS Mercy will adhere to the same medical requirements. Yes, the hospital ship is equipped with a morgue. The ship will work closely with the state coroner in the event someone dies while onboard.

Q: What types of procedures will/can be performed aboard the Mercy?

A: USNS Mercy will provide added medical capacity to Los Angeles hospitals for the treatment of non-COVID-19 patients. The hospital ship has a full spectrum of surgical and medical services, including: 12 operating rooms, four X-rays, one CAT scan unit, a dental suite, an optometry and lens laboratory, a physical therapy center, a pharmacy, an invasive angiography suite and two oxygen-producing plants. Mercy also maintains up to 5,000 units of blood and has

1,000 beds. Patients are assessed for various medical treatments and whether surgery is deemed necessary.

Q: Will the ship deliver babies?

A: No, the ship will not be delivering babies aboard. Currently the ship is not equipped with an OBGYN Birth Center; however, each patient will be accessed based on need on a case-by-case basis. The ship's operating rooms contain the same contemporary equipment used in shore-based hospitals.

Q: Will patients have private rooms? If not, can I pay extra to get a private room?

A: No, the hospital ship has an open-bay design configuration and with 1,000 available beds. Patients cannot pay to get a special or private room.

Q: How are arrangements made for patients to be admitted to the USNS MERCY?

A: All patient transfers are coordinated through the LA County Medical Alert Center (MAC). The MAC will connect the transferring provider with a MERCY Liaison Officer (LNO) to conduct the initial screening.

Q: Will the transferring physician have the opportunity to speak with the accepting physician aboard the USNS MERCY?

A: Yes. If the patient is determined to be appropriate for admission to the MERCY based on the initial screening criteria, a physician-to-physician handoff will be arranged with the accepting physician aboard the MERCY. Once the patient is formally accepted for admission, the MAC will arrange transportation of the patient to the ship.

Q: Will a nurse-to-nurse handoff be arranged?

A: Yes. Once the patient is accepted for admission, a nurse-to-nurse handoff will take place using the MAC system.

Q: What are some important factors that the transferring team and patient should be aware of when considering admission to the ship?

A: In order to maintain the ship COVID-19 free to the greatest extent possible, no visitors will be allowed aboard the ship.

There are no private patient rooms. The wards are open-bay. However, as with any other U.S. hospital, measures are taken to protect patient information in compliance with the HIPAA.

There is no natural light in the patient wards or ICU. However, arrangements can be made to assist patients to decks that receive natural light if determined to be safe for the patient.

Due to the open-bay configuration of the patient wards, the MERCY is unable to accept patients requiring disease-transmission precautions (e.g. contact) in order to protect all patients aboard the ship.

Space for personal belongings is limited. If personal items are unable to be placed in safekeeping prior to transfer, the items will be securely stored off the ship and returned to the patient upon discharge. Unfortunately, the patient will not have access to these items while on board.

Q: Will the patient's family members be able to call the ship to speak to the patient or get updates on the patient's status?

A: Yes, the ship can be reached by family members from an outside line which will be attended 24/7.

Wi Fi is available on the ship for use with personal devices but cell phone reception is poor in most areas of the ship.

Q: What level of care is the MERCY able to provide?

A: The MERCY will be accepting interfacility transfers only and does not have an emergency room. The level of care provided by the MERCY ranges from medical-surgical ward to ICU level of care. Patients requiring telemetry monitoring would be admitted to the ICU. There is no step-down unit.

Q: What services are not available on the ship?

A: Pediatrics (< 18 years-old), psychiatry, oncology, cardiac and thoracic surgery, pediatric surgery, acute trauma care, obstetrics, nuclear medicine, MRI, mammography, electrophysiology, cardiac catheterization, negative-pressure isolation, speech therapy and occupational therapy are unavailable.

Q: Are chronic dialysis patients suitable for admission to the USNS MERCY?

A: The MERCY is currently in the process of increasing this capability. Please contact the MAC to discuss admission of patients with this need. Peritoneal dialysis is not available on the ship.

Q: Will patients who are MRSA colonized be admitted to the USNS MERCY?

A: Due to the open-bay configuration of the patient wards, the MERCY is unable to accept patients requiring disease-transmission precautions (e.g. contact) in order to protect all patients aboard the ship. The MERCY's policy regarding MRSA colonized patients would be to place them on contact precautions and therefore we cannot accept these patients at this time. This policy may be relaxed if demand for hospital beds necessitates it.

Q: Will the patients be billed for medical services rendered aboard the MERCY?

A: No. Neither the patient nor their insurance will be billed for any services provided while aboard the MERCY. Patients should be aware that they may be charged for durable medical equipment, medications or services that are prescribed by the MERCY providers upon discharge that are acquired in the community.

Q: How would patients who test positive for COVID-19 while aboard the ship be managed?

A: If the patient is stable for transportation, arrangements would be made to safely transfer the patient off the ship and repatriate to the original facility or other appropriate care facilities.

Q: How are patients who require emergency care (acute stroke, acute MI) that is not available on board the ship be managed?

A: 9-1-1 emergency services would be activated and the patient would be safely transported off the ship to meet the ambulance at the pier.

Q: Are translation services available aboard the MERCY?

A: Yes, using a dial-in translation services company.

Q: Will case managers be able to receive updates while patients are on board the MERCY?

A: Yes. Multidisciplinary rounds will be conducted every morning and case managers will be given the contact information for the MERCY crewmember handling discharge planning issues. DHS Utilization Management Department serves as the facilitator between the MERCY and the referring hospital. Your case management department will continue to remain engaged in strong partnership to facilitate transition of care. Discharge planning needs (including housing, follow up medical care, home health, transportation, and durable medical equipment) will be coordinated with your hospital and the MERCY discharge planning staff.