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Universal Masking to Prevent SARS-CoV-2 Transmission—The Time Is Now

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In this issue of *JAMA*, Wang et al present evidence that universal masking of health care workers and patients can help reduce transmission of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 infections.¹ In the largest health care system in Massachusetts with more than 75 000 employees, we implemented routine symptom screening and diagnostic testing of symptomatic HCWs for SARS-CoV-2 and mandated a policy of universal masking for all HCWs as well as for all patients. The authors report that prior to implementation of universal masking in late March 2020, new infections among HCWs from indirect patient contact were increasing exponentially, from 0% to 21.3% (a mean increase of 0.49% per day). However, after the universal masking policy was in place, the proportion of symptomatic HCWs with positive results steadily declined, from 14.7% to 11.5% (a mean decrease of 0.49% per day). Although not a randomized clinical trial, this study provides critically important data to emphasize that masking helps prevent transmission of SARS-CoV-2.

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