

Wednesday, July 21, 2021

Commissioners,

I appreciate your concern over the Covid-19 surge we are in currently. The numbers are indeed concerning. Masking, whether vaccinated or not, when in a group of people where you cannot social distance is important. Masking if unvaccinated when around others is crucial. Social distancing and good handwashing/ use of hand sanitizer are definite mitigation steps. The most important thing that we need to all focus on is **vaccination**. Our community needs its' members vaccinated. We know that there is a subset of the population that simply will not consider vaccination. This group is not our primary focus. The people we need to focus on are those refusing vaccination, who have hesitancy, fear or concerns. We need to be able to outreach to them as directly as possible. Vaccination will not guarantee you will not get ill, but will protect you from serious illness. It will protect 99% of us from death. Vaccination will also limit the ability for this virus to continue to change and to develop into a new variant with worse outcomes (increased infectivity, increased mortality or deaths and worst case - no protection from by the vaccine). This Delta variant is making people sicker and quicker in healthy, young people. It is, also, causing higher infection viral loads, so that, unlike the original Alpha strain, we are seeing infected, vaccinated people spreading the infection. What will the next variant do?

No one wants to mandate anything. No one wants to continue on the course we are on with this surge. No one wants businesses to have to close, which will lead to even more shuttering of businesses than before, because they simply cannot stand another shut down. Most importantly, no one wants to have friends and loved ones die. We are seeing younger people affected and younger people hospitalized, to follow will be the death of younger people. The only way we will prevent these negative outcomes is by first and foremost vaccination in all people able to be vaccinated currently. This is not a time for arguing, but to put ourselves, our loved ones, and our community first and take the shot. Get educated if you need to and take the shot. Next, we need to follow mitigation steps that we all know well, including masking. If we do not do these things, we are facing an increasingly worse situation. We are facing new variants, and we are facing the possible return of mandates to protect the community and limit spread. We can institutionalize people to require Tuberculosis treatment; arrest people for knowingly spreading HIV. There are well-tested precedents that allow the health of all to stand before one person's rights. We do not need, nor should we require the government to make us do the right things, just because it is uncomfortable for us. We know what works. We know what to do; we have done it before. Let's work together and shut down this surge.

I am including some graphs which show you where we have been, to where we are now in regards to case numbers, hospitalizations, and ventilated patients. The change in just a couple of weeks is shocking, and I hope all will take notice.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Martha Whyte, MD

