Letter to the Community
Oneida Health

We have surpassed the one year mark of the COVID-19 pandemic. The news is positive throughout our region in that COVID infection rates are significantly down.

At Oneida Health, we currently have one COVID-19 positive patient in the hospital and no COVID-19 positive residents in our Extended Care Facility. Our Emergency Department is experiencing similar significant decreases in volume of covid visits. In addition, the covid patients we are seeing in the ED are presenting with more mild symptoms as compared to when the pandemic first hit. This is good news.

Through the height of the pandemic, Oneida Health implemented changes to create an environment to deliver safe health care. Through those efforts, were able to render care to thousands in our community without increased risk of infection.

As we enter this next phase of the pandemic, I want to reassure you that Oneida Health is continuing to strive for the same safe health care experience for routine care, emergent care as well as for elective procedures.

We offered several vaccination clinics to our staff and to date have vaccinated the majority of our team.

Not only on the Oneida Health campus, but also in our Primary Care, Specialty Care and Quick Care practices we implemented policies and strategies that are proven effective in protecting both patients as well staff. We screen and monitor all persons presenting to any one of our programs or services. We continue to operate our standalone COVID-19 screening center as a resource to minimize symptomatic patients in the offices. Staff are continuing daily monitoring of symptoms as well as utilizing Personal Protective Equipment. We also continue with adherence to Infection Control cleaning guidelines.

The New York Times recently published an article titled "Advanced Cancers Are Emerging, Doctors Warn, Citing Pandemic Drop in Screenings." The article referenced statistics that numbers of patients being screened for breast, colon, and cervical cancers are significantly lower than pre-pandemic numbers. The results of this is individuals are presenting now with more advanced cancer when they finally decide to seek care.

The fear of being infected with COVID was one reason for the drop in screenings. Another reason referenced is some persons lost their jobs and their insurance coverage and could not afford the cost of a screening exam.

I mention cancer screening as there is proof that the earlier cancer is found, the better the outcome. Later stage cancers result in significantly more treatment which is not always effective in resulting in a cure or remission. This early detection benefit includes breast, colon, cervical, prostate and lung cancers.

There are State funds available for individuals to access payment for screenings, in the event you do not have insurance coverage. To access that program, you can call the New York State Cancer Services Program at 1-866-442-2262.

As this areas major health care provider, it is important that you understand that we are here for you. Making an appointment to see your primary care provider is one of the best things you can do for your

ongoing well being. Putting it off to a later date for fear of COVID is not in your best interest for your health.

Thank you for allowing us to serve you with our goal of providing you with exceptional care...always.

Sincerely,

Gene F. Morreale

Gene Morreale, President and CEO
Oneida Health