



December 1, 2020

Dear Fellow Employees,

As you all know, we continue to be seriously challenged by the pandemic as are all healthcare facilities and communities across this state and country. In speaking to the Madison County Health Department this morning, there are currently 94 active COVID positive cases in county. There were 19 COVID positives from yesterday alone. The county's positive rate is currently at 3.1%. If we hit 3.5% our county will go into the Governor's yellow zone. There does not appear to be an end in sight as the demand for testing continues to increase and we have seen a significant number of positives as a result which I will report shortly.

Please note the following:

1. PPE- Although we are in a surge at this time, prior to the recent surge things were pretty much under control and I am afraid we may have let our guard down in regards to adequately wearing the PPE within the organization. We have had 3 employees test positive recently. They were asymptomatic prior to receiving the positive result and therefore were working and most probably shedding the virus as they worked. This is no fault of their own and points to the issue that we need to wear our PPE consistently and throughout the day while at work. Please think about where you are at when you remove your mask and ensure that you are truly in an isolated area where you can enjoy refreshments and/or your meal. Going out on break with co-workers and once in a car, removing your mask is not recommended. We need to improve our compliance throughout our network to proper PPE wearing and I ask for your cooperation in doing just that.
2. Governor Announces Winter Plan to Combat COVID 19 Surge- The Governor has recently issued a plan that he would like all of NYS to follow to combat the surge that we are experiencing and may continue to experience throughout the winter months. The plan includes 5 strategies as follows:
 - A. Manage hospital capacity to enhance and equalize care
 - B. Increase and balance testing resources and availability
 - C. Keep schools open safely
 - D. Prevent viral spread from small gatherings
 - E. Operationalize an equitable and safe vaccination program

The strategies D and E were **bolded** in his communication as those are very important to our getting our arms around this virus. Strategy A requires us to update our surge capacity plan as to how we could better accommodate COVID positive patients in the event of a surge throughout the region that overwhelms the hospital settings. As you recall, back when the pandemic started, patients were moved upstate from downstate so that hospitals with capacity could assist in the care of COVID positive patients. We are reviewing our plan once again and the

challenge will be not increasing bed capacity but staffing up for that increase in capacity. More to come on this matter as we better understand the strategies and the impact on our organization.

3. COVID Testing Results- We currently have 8 COVID positive inpatients and our ECF has 9 COVID positive residents. We performed 100 rapid tests yesterday and 13 of those were positive. We received 145 results from Quest yesterday and 17 of those were positive. The bad news is that we currently have 370 tests pending with Quest which impacts our ability to communicate positive and/or negative results to those being tested.
4. Elective Surgery- You may have read that the Governor has stopped all elective surgery in Western NY. That is due to their high infection rate and increased utilization of hospital resources in that area. We currently are continuing to provide elective procedure care here with one limitation. That is, we cannot accommodate elective add-ons because they require a COVID test prior to the procedure and at this time due to the lack of rapid testing kits, we need to send those out to Quest. Therefore, at least 6 days prior to the scheduled surgery the swab needs to be gathered from the patient. We are working on trying to secure more rapid test kits as well as continuing to work on finding the solution to our PCR poor turn-around time. Again, more to come on this topic.

We have been approved to receive the COVID 19 vaccine once it is provided to NYS. That is good news in that we will have the vaccine available here when it is brought to the CNY region. The Governor has not released his plan for how the vaccine will be distributed throughout the state. Once we know that, we will plan for the potential to start vaccinating those who are interested in receiving the vaccine within our network.

I can't thank you all enough for what you are doing each and every day for our patients and residents. For those of you that consistently work in the COVID positive areas in the hospital, ER, ECF and practices such as Quick Care, thank you for being there for those individuals. If not for you as well as the support of many who help you throughout the day, our community members would not have a local option of exceptional care!

With Sincerest Gratitude,



Gene F. Morreale