



May 16, 2020

Dear Fellow Employee,

I have been forwarded copies of Facebook posts that are criticizing Oneida Health for not doing “open” testing for COVID 19. Open testing is what currently happens at the East Syracuse Walmart and what is planned for the Oneida Walmart. Anyone can be tested whether they are symptomatic or not. The actual test kit is one where the person swabs him/herself and gives the swab back to the worker. The problem with this test kit, as I have read and been told, is that because the swab is not deep enough in the nasal passageway, the False Negative result is quite high. Therefore, it is not a good use of your money nor of your insurance coverage. It does give the Counties the number of tests needed to open up and stay open, which I guess is a good thing, but not very helpful in determining the extent of COVID in our area, again, because of the high false negative results.

What we do in our network is the more invasive swab, performed by an RN trained to do the test. The person presenting needs to meet criteria for the test which includes an order from their provider. Although there are false negatives with this test, that percentage is much lower. We are offering this testing to patients who are in our network of services as well as through our Quick Care service. We are hesitant to open it up as we do not have sufficient testing kits to accommodate a big increase in volume. Today for example, we were testing 72 individuals in our hospital circle. These are all people who are scheduled for surgery or endoscopy. We need to ensure we have enough test kits to meet both the numbers of patients presenting for procedures and well as for those who are in our network and meet criteria for testing. Quest Laboratory, who supplies our testing kits and does the actual test, provides us with replacement kits as we send specimen's in. They have said they cannot replace the number of kits we will be using when we start testing our employees in the ECF, so we need to continue to test appropriately until such time as the kits become plentiful.

To date, we have tested 1525 individuals, 1314 negative, 136 positive and 75 pending. We received 13 results last night as follows: Elective procedure 3/0 positive, Inpatient 5/0 positive, ED 0/0 and Practices 5/0 positive. We currently have 0 inpatient positives with 12 inpatients pending. We have had 1 hospital death to date and 0 positives in our ECF.

Thank you for your continued support of all we need to do to be safe.

With Sincerest Gratitude,

Gene F. Morreale  
President and CEO