

VMG COVID-19 UPDATE

Tuesday, July 7, 2020

Issue # 72

I hope everyone had a great Independence Day Weekend and that you connected with others and stayed safe.

Every holiday now is certainly different from before COVID. We have memories (and, no, I'm not including a link to the Streisand tune) of past get-togethers, trips, time with local and distant friends and family, etc. Zooming is good but limited (and you can't really share a BBQ or go strawberry picking on Zoom). So we all get antsy, itchy, or whatever visceral reaction you pick for life that was only recently taken away and now is on hold (without hold music). Until there is an effective and safe vaccine that most people will take, and probably even after that, we're going to have to get used to living differently. This is the way it is. We can adapt. We will adapt. But we have to adapt wisely.

And speaking of independence..... The events of the last week seem to be confirming that opening states quickly, each on their own without a national plan, and especially if people were not willing to physical distance and wear masks, has led/is leading to viral spread and infection. States that seemed like they were avoiding the worst, and reopened on faith that the White House was right, are now deep in the pandemic. Testing supplies and PPE are once again going to get short as demand increases to handle surges in ERs, hospitals, ICUs, in those states.

The death rates seem to be holding steady or declining in some areas but rising in others. And even as some death rates decline, it is most likely due to better handling of the hospitalized patients and better protocols for treatment. It does NOT mean the virus is "totally harmless" as the President said at Mount Rushmore and in D.C. on the 4th. Yes, some people are asymptomatic and some still have mild infections (but are capable of spreading the virus to those who may have more serious infections). But people are still dying. And some of those who get sick and don't die are beginning to report lasting effects on their lungs and other organ systems. So let's not pretend this will go away by itself or that it is harmless.

We're not built for good risk assessment; especially for things that we almost do automatically. Our brains take short cuts when we are "not looking." So we have to keep looking. Have a mask in your car, at your front door, on your kitchen counter with your car keys, etc. We don't want to be reminded of the times we're in but we have to be reminded. And, when out, remember to wear the mask effectively (it does little good if noses are not covered along with mouths) and keep to physical distancing (at least six feet).

Since "everyday activities" will require some risk assessment on our part (and that assessment should include knowing your own risk based on age and health conditions), here's a graphic from the Texas Medical Association showing relative risks:



CNN Health has a good piece today on 7 myths fueling new COVID-19 surges: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/01/health/reopening-economy-false-sense-of-security/index.html>

Here's one story from the article from a young woman who went out with 15 friends to celebrate a birthday. No one was wearing a mask. "The virus seemed out of sight, out of mind because they didn't know anyone who contracted it. The group also had a false sense of security because their governor (Florida) said it was safe to reopen. All 15 came down with the virus. "I feel

foolish,” the woman said. And “young patients” are reporting serious conditions after infection (including lung damage, strokes, etc.).

Just because the Governor says it’s OK to do things, just because a person is young(er), just because we’ve checked temps at the doors, does not mean the virus can be ignored. Let’s help everyone not get fooled by these myths.

At VMG

We are continuing our current approach to providing needed care in the safest possible setting for our patients, staff, and practitioners. I’ll have more about VMG in Thursday’s update.

Here’s a Jimmy Fallon, Roots, and cast of Hamilton virtual chorus of *Helpless* from the play.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vo_s6PsVogI&feature=youtu.be

So let’s all stay safe and connected and remember,

- Please wash your hands (often),
- Don’t touch your face,
- Maintain social/physical distancing (it works),
- Definitely wear a mask (it is not a political statement; it’s a public health good),
- Continue to be in touch with and take care of each other, and help to educate everyone.

Be well. Help others to stay safe and be well.

Joel

Be patient; be mindful

P.S. As you have noticed, these Updates are switching from daily to twice weekly (unless the news requires more frequent publication).