



A Message from **Vinson Yates**

PRESIDENT OF OHIOHEALTH MANSFIELD HOSPITAL
AND OHIOHEALTH SHELBY HOSPITAL

Hospitals are used to adjusting to the ebb and flow of how many patients are in our care. In the spring and summer, we typically experience a dip in the number of patients hospitalized. This summer our hospitals have been busier than usual. Capacity has been a challenge at hospitals across Ohio, including OhioHealth. Several OhioHealth hospitals have been working at a higher occupancy, such as Mansfield and Shelby.

We are caring for more patients, and most of these patients are very ill. The latest challenge of capacity isn't due to caring for many COVID patients; we are now caring for more patients with a variety of conditions. Not only are we caring for more hospitalized patients, Mansfield Hospital emergency department has been extremely busy, and Mansfield Hospital's Level II Trauma Center, the only trauma center within 55 miles, has cared for record numbers of patients this summer. Teams are working closely to care for emergency and surgical patients who need an inpatient bed, transitional care or at-home services.

In addition to the high patient hospitalizations, COVID-19 positivity rates are steadily increasing and creating a fourth surge. In a two-week period (July 15-29, 2021), Richland Public Health reported 120 active cases. For the next two-week period (July 30-August 12), the public health department reported 409 active cases. This surge means the amount of COVID patients we are caring for is rising quickly, and we don't know when this trend will peak.

Now that most schools are back in session and fall events are bringing larger groups of people together, we are keeping a close eye on what the next few weeks will bring. With this variant of COVID, the virus is highly contagious and we are seeing younger patients, who were otherwise healthy.

We are trying to be as nimble as possible in order to adapt to current conditions and prepare for a growing surge. As a result, we have once again opened our hospital incident command center to monitor bed availability, staffing and COVID trends. Due to the increase in our hospitalized and outpatient COVID patients as well as the anticipation we will be caring for more, we have decided to:

- + **Cohort COVID patients** in three nursing units at Mansfield Hospital.
- + **Increase the number of days** we provide the outpatient monoclonal antibody infusion for recently-diagnosed COVID patients in order to reduce the risk of future hospitalization.
- + **Revisit our surge plans** for how we expand our care for more patients and how much equipment and resources we will need to take care of them.
- + **Continue our support financially yet limit our in-person engagement** at community events. We will continue to participate in community activities where we provide health education or clinical services.

Our focus will continually be to provide the best care for patients in the community. Our teams enjoy giving back and participating in meaningful community events, but we are keeping in mind that our most valuable resource is our team of associates, providers, students and volunteers. We appreciate everything they are doing to take care of the communities we serve and want to keep them safe and healthy. They have been wearing masks for 18 months. Most are still recovering from the first three surges of COVID. Some experienced much loss and are still managing through those emotions. Many nurse travelers have taken the whole summer off to recuperate. We have prioritized human recovery within our workforce and are working on ways to support our associates.

Surging means we'll need to be prepared for all hands on deck. We hired more than 25 associates and providers in July alone. We're fortunate that this includes new physicians, tenured nurses as well as new clinical graduates. We will see more staff come on board in the coming weeks from new hires and nurse travelers. In addition, procedural teams, educators and quality staff have been helping units with dressing patients, transporting patients to the lobby, and more. Non-clinical extenders are returning to sit with patients and answer phones for units.

How can you help? Layer up!

Masks Add a Layer of Protection

Please protect yourself. While masks may be a personal choice in other businesses, masks are required for visitors and most patients at OhioHealth. Whether you are vaccinated or not, we ask that you consider wearing a face mask in public settings and avoiding crowded areas and events.

A Second Layer is the Vaccine

When we look across the OhioHealth system, an overwhelming majority of hospitalized COVID patients have not been vaccinated. The COVID-19 vaccines are safe, prevent death and reduce the need for hospitalization. OhioHealth is requiring the COVID-19 vaccine for all associates, providers, volunteers, students, travelers and vendors. Associates who are not vaccinated by December 1 will be required to continue masking at all times and be tested weekly at no cost to them.

Final thoughts

At the start of 2021, we all were hopeful that the monoclonal antibody infusion and the vaccines would mean COVID would be subsiding. Early trends left us cautiously optimistic, but here we are, 8 months into the year with hospitalized COVID patients ramping back up for those who are unvaccinated. We're all tired hearing about and dealing with COVID, but it's not going away anytime soon.

We know the topics of masks, vaccines and the science of COVID, can raise a range of emotions. Social media and the news can create more divisiveness and distance. It's been unfortunate that a clinical condition seems to have become more political than medical. As a community, we wonder if we could provide more patience, grace and compassion for those around us – no matter their beliefs.

We appreciate your continued support and will continue to reach out with updates as the surge progresses. Please reach out if you have any questions.

Stay safe,

Vinson Yates, President