

Virtual press conference - Arizona hospitals opening remarks transcript – 01.13.21

CMO Participants

Dr. Marjorie Bessel, Chief Clinical Officer, Banner Health

Dr. Keith Frey, Chief Medical Officer - Arizona Division, Dignity Health

Dr. Alyssa Chapital, Hospital Medical Director, Mayo Clinic

Dr. Michael White, Executive Vice President, Chief Clinical Officer, Valleywise Health

Dr. Stephanie Jackson, Senior Vice President, Chief Clinical Value Officer, HonorHealth

Script

BESSEL

Arizona for weeks has remained one of the states with the highest COVID-19 infection rates in the country. A conservative estimate suggests that about 1 in 10 Arizonans is currently infected with the virus. Cases, hospitalizations and deaths in our state continue to climb. This week the total number COVID-19 deaths in Arizona surpassed 10,000, exceeding what was projected by the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation a few months ago. Our reproduction rate remains above 1.0, which means the virus is spreading faster than desired.

Hospitals in the state are under immense pressure as we continue to expand capacity and adjust operations to accommodate a much higher volume and acuity of patients.

Currently, 58% of hospital beds in Arizona are occupied by COVID-19 patients. That percentage is even higher in our ICUs. And, as I have told you week after week, these COVID-19 patients require much more attention and care than a typical ICU patient.

Today I am joined by several of the top clinical leaders from Arizona hospitals and health systems. I would like to thank them for joining me here to provide this media update. At this time, I would like to introduce Dr. Keith Frey, chief medical officer for Dignity Health in Arizona.

FREY

Good morning. Many of you have seen news coverage of events that are unfolding in LA County and other COVID-19 hotspots throughout the country. You may be wondering how close Arizona is to reaching that point, or how we haven't already declared crisis levels given the fact that we have one of the highest rates of infection in the world.

I can say with confidence that one of the main reasons for this is the collaboration that you see right in front of you. From the start of the pandemic, Arizona hospitals and health systems agreed that we would work together. Arizona was the first state to stand up a statewide surge line to ensure COVID-19 patients requiring hospitalization would have access to treatment at a health care facility with available capacity; and so that no one hospital or health system became overwhelmed. We also

agreed that no hospital would activate the triage addendum of the Arizona Crisis Standards of Care plan unless all hospitals reached a critical shortage of live-saving resources.

This collaboration and commitment along with our respective systems' efforts to scale up to meet the demand for health care services in our community are the reasons that we continue to be open and accessible for all those in need of care.

I will now invite to the podium Dr. Alyssa Chapital, hospital medical director for Mayo Clinic in Arizona.

CHAPITAL

Despite our efforts to scale up and meet demands, there will come a point at which the health care needs of our community will surpass hospital resources if we continue to experience uncontrolled spread of COVID-19 here in Arizona. The rate-limiting factor that would most likely cause us to activate the triage addendum is staffing.

I can tell you as a clinician, no provider *ever* wants to be in the position to implement something like this. As Dr. Frey mentioned, we have all worked together since the start of the pandemic and we have developed a state-wide triage plan that balances the load between our hospitals. We have educated our staff about it, but it is our sincere hope that Arizonans can help slow the spread of this virus to avoid a triage situation.

At this time, we are not rationing life-saving resources, but please keep in mind that the care provided at Arizona hospitals today cannot be defined as usual or customary. A patient's experience is much different now than in non-COVID times, and collectively we are not providing the care that we can safely delay for weeks or months like elective surgeries because of the current strain on our hospitals. But we cannot delay it indefinitely.

It is important for all of you to know that health care is still available to all who need it. Please contact your doctor when making decisions about your health care needs and visit an urgent care or emergency room if you are experiencing any urgent or emergent medical issues. Do not make the decision to delay care without first consulting with a provider.

I will now invite Dr. Michael White, executive vice president and chief clinical officer of Valleywise Health to the podium.

WHITE

We need more mitigation, more enforcement and more personal commitment from Arizonans to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This means implementing additional measures like a statewide mask mandate, a curfew, stopping indoor dining, canceling large gatherings and adhering to a bi-directional roadmap for the opening and closing of businesses based on

science and data. It also means that those rules must be enforced.

In addition to mitigation and enforcement, we need every Arizonan to do their part to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Shrink your circle to only those you live with. Wear a mask around all others outside of your small circle. Stop attending unmasked gatherings even if you feel well. It is very likely that someone at those gatherings has the virus, and they are spreading it to you. COVID-19 is highly contagious and can be transmitted to others even if you are experiencing no symptoms.

I'll now turn it over to Dr. Stephanie Jackson, chief clinical value officer at HonorHealth.

JACKSON

Thank you, Dr. White.

I know that many of you are frustrated. You are tired of feeling restricted and would like for life to return to normal. We all want the same thing.

The COVID-19 vaccine is our way out of this pandemic and is bringing hope to all of us that we can begin to bring an end to this global pandemic that has impacted each and every one of us. I would encourage all of you to get the vaccine when it is your turn. Please rest assured that the vaccine safety and

efficacy data has been independently reviewed by multiple committees at the FDA, federal, state, county and local levels.

For those who qualify as part of the Phase 1A and the prioritized Phase 1B populations, please be patient as our state, counties and health care providers work to vaccinate Arizonans as quickly as possible.

Continue to check your county's health department website for more information about who currently qualifies and how to schedule your appointment. Please remember, it will still be several months before enough people have immunity, either from a vaccine or past infection, before we can get back to normal life. Even after getting vaccinated, it will be necessary to continue with the core COVID-19 safety precautions, including wearing a mask, social distancing and washing your hands. These precautions will be necessary for the foreseeable future until we have more information about how long vaccine protection lasts and as more people become protected through the vaccination over time.

BESSEL

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. At this time, we'll open up for questions from members of the media.