

From: [Schwartz, David](#)
Subject: DOM Covid Communication
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Dear Friends and Colleagues.

I don't have a great deal to report this week so I'll keep it simple to several key developments.

1. Covid cases will likely increase (however, the virus has surprised me in many ways):

- Over the past week, there has been an average of about 4,500 cases per day in Colorado, a decrease of 9% from the average 2 weeks earlier.
- This decrease in cases per day is reflected in the census data at UCH and the state-wide hospitalization data with both peaking and slowly going down over the past week (see graphs).
- Unfortunately, given the national trends in cases (12% increase in cases over the past 2 weeks), hospitalizations, and deaths, we are likely experiencing a temporary lull in cases. Moreover, IHME continues to indicate that cases, hospitalizations, and deaths will increase in Colorado through the end of January (<http://www.healthdata.org/covid/updates>).
- Dr. Fauci has advised us to prepare for the surge (increase of cases in November), on top of the surge (increase in cases due to Thanksgiving travel), on top of the surge (increase in cases due to anticipated Christmas travel).

2. We've prepared for an increase in Covid hospitalizations: We have developed a comprehensive plan to address the anticipated growth of inpatient Covid volumes at UCH. Our plan will be shared by Dr. Burden shortly, and was developed collaboratively with Pulmonary Medicine, Department Chairs outside of the DOM, CU Medicine, and UCH. The plan represents a tiered approach that will engage teams of physicians outside of Hospital Medicine and Pulmonary Medicine once we've reached specific bed capacity thresholds. The hospitalists have developed a reference for the care of patients with Covid, it will be regularly updated, and is available on the Source (<https://thesource.uhealth.org/sites/EpicCentral/Central%20UCH%20Documents/Provider%20Inpatient%20Onboarding/Chapters/COVID-19%20Fact%20Sheet%20for%20Inpatient%20Care.docx?Web=1>).

3. Stay healthy: Given the number of cases in the community, it's absolutely critical that you continue to protect yourselves and those with whom you live. Wear a mask, practice social distancing, wash your hands frequently, avoid gatherings involving food or drink, restrict travel (please, don't travel over Christmas), and stay at home if you're sick. If you have symptoms of Covid (fevers/chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, loss of taste/smell, GI symptoms, or excessive fatigue), have had prolonged contact (< 6 ft for > 15 min over 24 hrs) with someone with Covid in the past 14 days and were not wearing PPE, or have tested positive for Covid in the past 10 days, do not come to work and get in touch with our Occupational Health Services to self-report (https://www.cuanschutz.edu/coronavirus#:~:text=Testing%20for%20COVID%2D19,-lf%20you%20are&text=lf%20you%20are%20a%20faculty,8%20a.m.%20to%205%20p.m)). We need you, your family, and your friends to remain healthy.

4. Covid vaccines: Two mRNA-based vaccines directed at the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein have reported clinical trial efficacies in the 95% range, including in the elderly and other higher risk populations (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna). Much about the two mRNA vaccines is fascinating and exciting, including their being the first mRNA vaccines for wide-scale human use, their remarkable efficacies in the trial setting, the way the designs carefully encompassed and showed efficacy in important subgroups like the elderly and people of color, the lack of significant toxicities or major adverse events so far, and the occurrence of COVID-19 disease manifestations almost solely in the placebo groups. The trials were reassuringly large and multi-center, with over 30,000 patients in the Moderna trial (in which our campus participated under the direction of Tom Campbell), and over 40,000 in the Pfizer-BNT trial. It is also heartening to consider how they were developed so quickly and tested this year but were nevertheless based on many years of incremental lab, animal and clinical research on mRNA therapeutics. This is truly a triumph of biomedical research. The vaccines differ in some ways, such as different cold chain needs. But both vaccines express a full-length SARS-CoV-2 Spike protein and both appear to be efficacious to a similar degree at this point. Pandemic effectiveness will of course depend on a number of real world factors including, most importantly, uptake. The results reported (by press release so far) with the Astrazeneca vaccine (based on a replication-defective chimpanzee adenoviral vector) appear to be problematic, and this vaccine may require further study in an additional trial. Additional vaccines using different technology platforms are likely to come fairly soon.

Our next DOM Town Hall will focus on **Vaccine Distribution (Thursday, December 10, 7-8PM; Zoom Link:**

<https://ucdenver.zoom.us/j/92532756293>) will feature Drs. Michelle Barron, Heather Young, and Mary Bessesen. We've had a number of recent Covid-19 presentations in the DOM which were exceptional and are available on our website (DOM COVID-19 Resource Web Page: <https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/medicine/faculty-affairs/covid-19>) and through the specific links below:

DOM Recent COVID-19 Grand Rounds:

Sept 30: [The Triumph of Despair: Health Inequities and Structural Racism](#)

Oct 14: [Impact of COVID-19 on Family Members and Providers](#)

Oct 21: [Effect of HIV-1 and SARS-CoV-2 on innate lymphoid cells](#)

Oct 28: [The Neutralizing Antibody Response to SARS-CoV-2 Infection](#)

DOM Recent COVID-19 Town Halls:

Oct 28: [COVID-19: What's Next?](#)

Nov 5: [Fighting Stigma: Facing Barriers to Mental Health for Faculty and Staff](#)

Nov 12: Treatment: [What's Known and What's in the Pipeline?](#)

Nov 19: [Vaccine Development, Trials and Distribution](#)

Dec 2: [UCH COVID Command Center – What it is and How it Works](#)

10 exhausting months into this pandemic with public support no longer the wind at our backs, we can still lift our colleagues up and recognize the incredible work that they are doing. In a recent APP focus group, one of the attendees talked about how much she appreciated it when a few colleagues had ended their secure chat messages with "**thank you for all that you are doing**". Consider adding a brief thanks to your colleagues at the end of your texts and interactions. You might make someone's day. And if I haven't said it enough, thank you so much for all that you do to care for our patients and your colleagues. My very best wishes.

David

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