

**12-08-2020 Covid 19 Update Report
Drs. Roth and Farnitano**

At the time of the last report, the governor had just “pulled the emergency brake” on the Blueprint for Safer Economy tier process, in agreement with the Association of Bay Area Health Officers, in response to alarmingly rising numbers of positive cases and decreasing ICU capacity.

There are now over 14 million confirmed cases in the United States and over 280,000 people have died. 47 states now have unchecked community spread. That means the virus is moving at this point in what would be considered an unstoppable rate.

As of this morning there are 1,351,199 cases in California with nearly just under 21,000 deaths. Yesterday we broke a record of 33,000 new cases in one day. For the first time since the pandemic began, the number of new cases here in the Bay Area exceeded 3,000. It was actually over 3,800 yesterday.

Since May, Contra Costa County has tested over 24,800 people who have tested positive. The case rate is 18.7 per 100,000, a significant rise from where we began, at 4 per 100,000. The positivity rate has doubled since October. Currently there are 138 people in the hospital; that is over 30 more than when we were at our high point in the summer surge.

Approximately 12% of the people tested will test positive. Of the 12%, it is known that 24% of those will require ICU care and that puts a huge strain on the already existing system.

Dr. Roth noted there have been many questions about the current census of the ICU this year compared to last year and the year before that. It is true that in general ICU's and hospitals in general do have a higher census in the winter. She said that while people generally speaking just about Covid 19 patients, people still have cardiac emergencies, strokes and trauma injuries.

The hospital has not yet reached the point of slowing down elective procedures. There are other emergent health considerations that are going to come up. Often those are actually the ones in the ICU, not the electives. These Covid 19 patients are on top of the ones that go into the ICU and require extremely highly technical care and tend to be there longer.

But why did we need to pull these brakes right now? Of the 25,000 cases that we have had here, we know the majority of them, over 15,000, weren't really sure how they got the virus. That indicates that the virus is moving unchecked through our community. So, we couldn't pinpoint exactly where people are getting the virus. We should all, at this point, assume that we have the possibility of being exposed every time we go out in public. That is one sort of primary reason for the stay home order. We also know based on our contact tracing kind of generally overall, 1,800 people who tested positive recently had gathered with 14 or more people. This is a general message about gatherings and we know, it is time to be clear about we really can't support really safer gatherings within your own household. But beyond that, it becomes a lot less safe very quickly.

So, we felt it was time for a very clear message and to someday home as much as you can. Leave your own only when essential. There is confidence that if people stay home, except for business, that will help us and put us in a strong position to start the new year off in the best position for the work ahead which is around vaccination.

Everyone is reminded that Health Services still wants you to get tested. That is considered essential. The new site at Davis park in San Pablo is open Sunday through Thursday. Appointments are available at CCHHealth.org.

Wear a mask. Keep social distanced. And most importantly, stay home whenever possible. We know that these things are making a difference.

Dr. Roth expressed her appreciation to staff. Right before Thanksgiving, the County added a feature on the website where people could submit thank you messages. There have been more than 400 messages sent in. No person said they

wanted to thank you our workers for everything they are doing to keep us safe. They ever grateful for the staff being so brave and putting their lives on the line and their heart was full of gratitude. Aother said -- and many wanted to thank our staff for the tireless hours. That would include all essential workers. Back-to-back shifts they have been doing and the nights away from their friends and family in service to our community.

The messages are greatly appreciated. The staff are reading them as well as the staff across the county. And we know that these are very, very difficult times for our community.

Contra Costa Health Services Department (CCHS) has already posted it's stores and distribution vaccination plan on the website. The plan is based on the California Department Of Public Health allocation guidelines. A local task force has convened to review to look through an ethical lens and consider the state and federal guidelines and think about local considerations around vaccines to put out recommendations as the vaccination plan will broaden rapidly.

Membership on that task force includes representatives from both the health sector, in and across the health system at large in Contra Costa county, as well as representatives from other sectors such as fire and some community-based organizations. The purpose of that group is to be able to sort through all the different guidelines, make recommendations and to be able also be able to provide local technical assistance that is really focused on Contra Costa County but considering the larger guidelines coming out both federally and at the state.

Dr. Farnitano reiterated the reasons for initiating the stay at home order before directed to by the State. The new number of cases of COVID identified every day in Contra Costa has more than doubled and the number of patients sick enough to be hospitalized has actually tripled. Every 17 days since the beginning of November the number of patients in our hospital beds due to COVID-19 has been doubling. Data indicates that a huge surge will be coming from Thanksgiving Day weekend activities, so December will be much worse. The County expects to have twice as many people in our area hospitals from Covid 19 on Christmas day as we have today.

So, based on the numbers Dr. Farnitano and the other county Health Officers across the Bay Area and largest Bay Area counties felt they could not wait for the new state restrictions to go into effect.

We could not wait until we hit that trigger, 15% ICU beds because we know we are heading that way.

And if we take action now, it will save lives. It will save hospitalizations and it will actually get us past this wave sooner than if we just wait until we are in crisis mode.

These type of actions take two or three weeks to show up in the hospital numbers. Waiting until we are at crisis is too late to wait. So, this is really an emergency and half measures are no longer enough.

With this level of community transmission, there's no safe setting to be close to other people outside your household.

The new health order went into effect Sunday night and basically applied the state's new regional stay-at-home order to Contra Costa County as well as the other Bay Area counties went the same.

It went into effect Sunday night and will stay in effect until January 4th. At that point, if projections are looking like we are past the crisis and the state has not imposed the state order because of the ICU capacity dropping below 15%, this local order will expire and we can go back to the purple tier of limited restrictions.

This new order does require many local businesses to further reduce their capacity, especially retail businesses to 20%. The state made an exception for grocery stores that they could be at 35%.

But all retail stores, including grocery stores need to write and enforce plans to make sure thundershower occupancy rules and face covering rules are followed.

Health Services has been hearing concerns from members of the public that retail stores were not tracking their capacity and were exceeding their capacity, leading to crowded conditions. Now stores are required to monitor, often by putting someone at the front door to count heads as they go in the store to make sure they are not exceeding the 20% capacity. Certain businesses will have to close such as hair care and nail care. But certain essential businesses like laundromats and other essential activities are able to operate with those limited capacity rules. The goal is to have people stay at

home as much as possible, to go out for the most essential needs that you have to. The more people can stay indoors, the better.

It is really to reduce the risk to the community and to preserve our hospital capacity, which is at risk. We do have surge capacity, but if a loved one was needing an ICU level care, needing to be on a ventilator, we would like them to be treated in an actual ICU and not in something that's having to adapt and adjust, but was not originally built and designed and set up to be an ICU.

Staffing is a major concern. ICU's take really highly skilled specialized workers, doctors and nurses. There's a limited supply of those and they are in demand across the nation as this virus is surging really every part of the nation right now. We know also that over the weekend, two large regions, southern California and san Joaquin Valley hit that ICU threshold of 15%. So, the state imposed the same regional stay-at-home order. The San Joaquin valley region is down to about 5% of their capacity.

When the Bay Area runs out of hospital beds and ICU beds, we may not be able to look to other regions for help. We may not be able to transfer patients to other parts of the state because everyone is experiencing this surge at the same time. W didn't want to wait until the situation got to that level before we took steps. So, if we take steps now, we can flatten that curve once again and keep our hospitals from being overwhelmed.

It is anticipated the F.D.A. will approve the Pfizer vaccine as soon as the end of this week and we could have our first shipment of vaccine rolling out to us next week. That first shipment will be extremely small. Contra Costa County will be getting less than 10,000 doses. There will be a second shipment which will be larger, but that will be about three weeks later.

The Health Department has formed an equitable vaccine committee which has been studying the Center for Disease Control federal guidelines as well as the state's guidelines by the California Department Of Public Health on how to equitably and fairly allocate these first initial doses.

It is still going to be months away before a large amount of the public will be able to receive a vaccine. We don't have any specific date or calculations on exact numbers of vaccine doses at this time. Staff is hopeful that there will be multiple brands of vaccine approved and available. The more different manufacturers get approved, that dramatically add together the supply of vaccine. But this will be late winter, early spring likely before a large part of that population will be able to get vaccine.