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## PVH underlines local COVID-19 impact: 'COVID-19 is real'

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Archived file photo by Uriel Avendano/Palo Verde Valley Times

The COVID-19 virus does not care about politics or whether you are a Democrat or Republican.

And, at this time, the virus has not taken a “time out.”

The truth is that Americans are dying, and people who are alive today may not be here at the end of the year.

We are all COVID-19-weary. There are none more weary than frontline workers who have faced the reality of COVID-19 "head-on" since March of 2020.

Every time someone fails to "mask-up," a frontline worker is put at risk, you or your loved one are put at risk, or a young adult is put at risk.

Currently, there are 100,000 people a day who are contracting the virus.

Hospitalizations lag the virus. Deaths lag hospitalization.

Although vaccinations are in the forefront, and they look promising, we are still beating the clock.

Palo Verde Hospital (PVH) is available to meet your basic healthcare needs. Every day, we are seeing a dramatic increase in the number of COVID-19 patients being treated in the emergency room.

We are treating patients who do not know how they contracted the virus.

We are treating patients who refused to social distance and refused to wear a mask in public.

We are treating patients who went to a large gathering and failed to take the proper precautions.

We are dealing with multiple patients at a time, coming from institutions that may not have put their best efforts in place to take preventive measures.

Every time we treat a COVID-19 patient who has not taken the scientific approved precautions to be safe, we are diverting resources from other patients who may have non-COVID-19 critical illnesses.

Patients who may be having a heart attack.

Patients who have had traumatic injuries.

Patients who have non-COVID-19 respiratory conditions.

We continue to stabilize and transfer.

The reality, though, is that sometimes it is taking 48 hours to transfer patients and find an accepting receiving facility. And although we do our best, like other rural facilities, we have limited resources and a limited number of practitioners.

Every safe and successful transfer to a larger facility for patients who need emergent or critical care is a victory.

In the United States alone, over 78,000 people are currently hospitalized.

We will soon be faced with the reality of not finding an accepting facility to receive a patient from our community.

There are many facets to the stark reality of COVID-19 and its effects on a small community hospital. Positivity rates are increasing in Riverside County. We cannot, as a community, mask the truth.

1. Supplies and other resources like the drug Remdesivir for the treatment of COVID-19, gloves, and other personal protective equipment are being allocated to hospitals. Additionally, we continue to face a tremendous number of back-orders and delivery delays.
2. There are no physician specialists in Blythe. No pulmonologists, no infectious disease physicians, and no cardiologists to care for patients in the facility or who may have COVID-related complications. This is despite all efforts to recruit or to affiliate with larger organizations.
3. The price of personal protective equipment and supplies have dramatically increased. For example, instead of paying \$7 for each box of gloves, we are now being charged \$40 per box. We have had to go to multiple vendors to order the supplies because again, many of the supplies are going to larger facilities.
4. It does not matter that key political figures are boasting about manufacturing additional equipment such as ventilators, we cannot get them on a timely basis. We ordered four brand new ventilators in June of this year from an existing, non-GM company, and the delivery date remains questionable. "Maybe sometime in April of 2021." We just received cardiac monitors that we ordered around the same time. However, not all the parts and pieces are in. Delivery of the needed parts remains questionable.

5. The hospital, due to thoughtful planning, was able to purchase rapid testing equipment for COVID-19. We have tested over 1,200 patients, and the overall positivity rate is 9%.

However, the recent surge of COVID-19 patients has skewed that figure and the rate is more likely to be around 14%. The positivity rate was as low as 5.8% prior to this latest surge.

We do not know how many residents have been tested in Arizona, Havasu, Indio, or El Centro. The "accepted" positivity rate should be below 5%. We are going in the wrong direction.

6. Non-COVID-19 patients are delaying their own care due to the surge of the virus so when they present to the facility, they are sicker and require more resources.

7. In the United States, we are behind other countries in curtailing the virus.

Do we believe so much in individual rights that we have forgotten the principle of the "greatest good for the greatest number?"

8. We need to stop polarizing the issue of whether we should "mask-up." It should be obvious as to what is the right thing to do.

9. We need to stay away from "super-spread" events.

10. COVID-19 does not care about misinformation claiming the virus is not "real." We need to control the spread.

COVID-19 and its devastating effects are obvious. Every frontline worker who is exposed to COVID-19 due to someone else's failure to wear a mask, is placed at increased risk.

We should all be doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do.

Stop the spread of COVID-19:

- Wear a mask with two or more layers to stop the spread;
- Ensure the mask covers your mouth and secure it under your chin;
- Do not wear a face shield alone;
- Wash your hands before you put on the mask;
- Do not touch the mask while it is being worn;
- Wash your hands before you remove the mask;
- Do not touch your eyes, mouth, or face when removing the mask;
- Continue to social distance;
- Follow guidelines that encourage limiting the number of people attending family or other gatherings until the virus is better under control;
- Ask someone whose family member died of the COVID-19 virus whether the virus is real.

It shows up in symptoms.

It shows up on X-ray.

It shows up in the patient's medical history of how COVID-19 was contracted.

Truth be told, we do not withhold care from positive COVID-19 patients because they did not wear a mask or maintain social distancing.

We continue to provide the safest and most effective care we can provide. Every single day, people are dying without family members at their side, gasping for breath, while an overworked healthcare worker tries to ease their pain and fright.

Here is the latest news flash.

At the beginning of the pandemic, it took around 98 days for 1,000,000 people to contract the COVID-19 virus. Currently, it has taken only six (6) days for 1,000,000 people to contract the virus. It goes without saying, we need to make every effort to curtail the transmission.

247,000 COVID-19 related deaths in the United States cannot dispute the fact that the virus is real.

As a community, we need to work together to take the right action in following recommended guidelines. Trite, but true, the life you save may be your own.