

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

117 WEST DUVAL STREET, SUITE 425

4TH FLOOR, CITY HALL

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202

904-255-5137

**UF Health Community Call**

 **November 4, 2021**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Location:** Telephone conference call

**In attendance:** Council Members may have been listening to the teleconference but not identified

**UF Health:** Dr. Linda Edwards, Associate Professor & Dean, College of Medicine Jacksonville; Dr. Carmen Isache, Internal Medicine and Infectious Diseases; Chad Nielson MPH, UF Public Health Officer

**Also**: Florida Senator Aaron Bean – UF Health Jacksonville; State Representative Clay Yarborough; Florida’s 4th Judicial Circuit Public Defender – Charlie Cofer; Mayor Ellen Glasser – City of Atlantic Beach; Colleen Hampsey – Council Research Division

**Meeting Convened**: 10:00 a.m.

Senator Bean welcomed the group and explained the format for asking questions. This was the 20th UF Health community public health update teleconference call of this nature.

Chad Nielson, UF Health Public Health Officer, provided details about current pandemic conditions. The UF Health pandemic emergency control center has been activated for 613 days. and there are 15 patients admitted to UF Jacksonville two hospitals with COVID-19. The patients ages range from under 18 to over 90, with equal male-female and racial representation. More than 80 percent of those hospitalized are not vaccinated and the average hospital stay has been 8 days. The COVID-19 positivity rate in Duval County is now 2.9%, and 3% in Florida. In Duval County, 64% of those eligible are fully vaccinated, and 73% in Florida. The decrease in the positivity rate have permitted a relaxation of hospital restrictions on visitors and elective surgical procedures. UF Health has an employee vaccine mandate in place already and the federal mandate for health care workers and private companies with more than 100 employees is slated to begin in January. Mr. Nielson also said that flu season is coming and cautioned the listeners to remember to get their flu shot.

Dr. Isache, Infectious Diseases, talked about COVID-19 antibody testing, wherein the tests available may not be able to detect COVID spike proteins or exact immunity levels, and how the ‘safe’ amount of those levels is not known. She said that immunity achieved through illness plus vaccination provides twice the protection of immunity acquired though illness, and that the exact percentage needed for community herd immunity is not certain. Dr. Isache listed the high risks of not getting vaccinated, including severe illness, death, hospitalization, more intense and longer lasting infectious periods and varied long term effects. She mentioned the recent (11.2.2021) approval for the COVID-19 vaccine for those aged 5-11, which is approximately a third of the adult dose and was found to be 90% effective in clinical trials with no side effects. Clinical trials for those under the age of 5 are underway right now, with potential results next year. Dr. Isache talked about COVID-19 vaccine boosters, which are recommended for those over 65, and those with health issues or who work/live in high-risk environments (with 6 months having passed since the second shot of Moderna and Pfizer, 2 months for J&J). Mixing and matching boosters with whatever one received the first time is acceptable. She also said that it is safe to receive the flu vaccine and COVID vaccine on the same day, but that a mixed vaccine is not approved as of yet. Dr. Isache said that a flu/COVID co-infection can be very dangerous and reminded all to get their flu shot this season.

Dr. Edwards, Dean UF College of Medicine Jacksonville, thanked all on the UF Health team for their tireless work throughout the pandemic. She mentioned the youngest age group, not yet eligible for vaccines, noting that the best way to keep them safe is to surround them with those who are vaccinated. Dr. Edwards talked about UF Health’s vaccine education campaign, targeting college age students and other underserved populations. The campaign has reached almost two thousand individuals to date, and roughly 30 percent of those received vaccinations subsequently. Dr. Edwards highlighted various recent awards and recognitions UF Health has received, and some hospital growth projects on the North campus and near Kernan Road. She also talked about the Turkey Trot run in Atlantic Beach on Thanksgiving.

Q&A

One attendee asked about new COVID-19 variants. Mr. Nielson said that there are some being referred to as Delta plus, but he said that the variants are responsive to the COVID-19 vaccine and they are not prevalent enough to be focused on right now. The same attendee asked how to help with UF’s vaccine campaign, and Dr. Edwards encouraged the listener to spread the word about vaccine efficacy to their friends and to have one-on-one conversations with those who are still unsure. One attendee asked about herd immunity and whether 90% vaccination is the magic number. Dr. Isache reiterated that the magic number is not explicitly known, so the goal is to vaccinate as many people as possible.

The next community call will be held on December 2, 2021, at 10:00 am.

**Meeting adjourned:** 10:29 a.m.

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research Division

CHampsey@coj.net 904-255-5151

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