

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202

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**UF Health Community Call**

**January 14, 2022**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Location:** Telephone conference call

**In attendance:** CMs Priestly Jackson and Freeman; other 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. Patel, UF Health Jacksonville; Chad Nielson MPH, UF Public Health Officer

**Also**: Florida Senator Aaron Bean – UF Health Jacksonville; Florida Senator Audrey Gibson; 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 22th UF Health community public health update teleconference call of this nature.

Russell Armistead, CEO UF Health Jacksonville, provided an update and said that there are currently 136 Covid patients in their hospital, and 160 staff members out for Covid related reasons. As a comparison, they had 6 Covid patients at the time of the December 2, 2021 Community Call. Mr. Armistead emphasized the pandemic effect on hospital staff, who are stressed and stretched to capacity. Staff turnover has increased to 25 percent, from an average of 14 percent pre-pandemic. UF Health Jacksonville has reduced elective procedures and delayed the annual Trauma 1 Gala that was slated for February. Mr. Armistead mentioned the Supreme Court ruling yesterday affirming the vaccine mandate for healthcare workers, and how it conflicts with Florida law preempting such mandates.

Chad Nielson, UF Health Public Health Officer, provided details about current pandemic conditions, which includes more than 800,000 positive cases reported nationally yesterday. Florida hospitals have about 11,000 Covid patients and the state vaccination rate is now at 72 percent. About 62 percent of those eligible in Duval County are fully vaccinated, 44 percent in Baker County and 72 percent in St. Johns County. The COVID-19 positivity rate in Duval County is 35%, and that count does not include positive at-home tests. Mr. Nielson said that he is optimistically hopeful that the surge from the omicron variant is beginning to plateau.

Dr. Patel, UF Health Jacksonville, spoke about the high level of transmissibility for this variant even if vaccinated, which is all happening at the same time as the regular viral/flu season. He stressed vigilance and minimizing risk, the use of masks, hand washing and distancing when possible. He said if exposed that on average there are 5 days before symptoms appear, so if exposed one should quarantine for 5 days. If symptomatic and positive, one should isolate from others and use a mask. Dr. Patel said that 80 percent of their hospitalized Covid patients are not vaccinated. The vaccination rate for children aged 5-11 is 16 percent, with a 30 percent positivity rate for that group. There has been a large increase in pediatric hospitalizations nationally (200,000 more in last 5 weeks than in the worst 5 weeks of the delta variant) and a risk for long term effects in children including an elevated risk of developing diabetes.

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 preferred protection associated with surgical masks as opposed to cloth masks. Dr. Edwards spoke about UF Health Jacksonville expansion, with a facility on Kernan Road, Northside facility, 3 urgent care centers and a partnership with Flagler Health.

Q&A

Mayor Glasser asked about herd immunity. Mr. Nielson said it is complicated by human behavior and low global vaccination rates, and viral mutations. Realistically the number would be closer to 90-95 percent for herd immunity, which is unlikely. Dr. Patel emphasized taking safety measures to protect each other until scientists can develop treatments to the serious effects of the disease. One attendee asked about children under 5, not yet eligible for the vaccine. Dr. Patel said to do what is possible to create a safe space for them, play outside if possible, and avoid crowds. Jerry Holland asked about Regeneron treatments for the omicron variant. Dr. Patel said it has not been found to be effective for omicron, but that another treatment is more effective but in limited supply. He said the same for anti-viral pill treatments, which are effective but scarce currently.

**Meeting adjourned:** 10:33 a.m.

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research Division

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