



December 28, 2021

Dear Fellow Employees,

We are in the thick of a pandemic surge as the majority of you know. If it is not impacting our community members who need our care, it is impacting members of our staff as well as their families in a negative way. In reading today's healthcare update, the following headlines speak as to the current situation we are in as a community, a state and a nation. The headlines include:

- **Fauci says NY was right to ease quarantine rules for healthcare workers**
- **Where vaccination rates are low in the US...**- In the United States over 204 million people are fully vaccinated but is still only 62% of the population, which is much lower than in most other wealthy countries.
- **Why COVID death rates are rising for some groups**- The virus is now responsible for a higher share of deaths from all causes for younger Americans and white Americans than it was before all adults were eligible for vaccines.
- **The latest worker shortage may affect your health; Pharmacies don't have enough staff to keep up with prescriptions**- Pushed to breaking point, Pharmacy Technicians are quitting in waves and stores are struggling to hire, leading to shorter hours, delayed prescriptions and risky mistakes.
- **NY COVID hospitalizations top 5,000 for the first time since February; Admissions among NY City kids soar**

As you can glean from the above article topics and the brief descriptions, we are in a significant crisis once again. It appears that this will continue for the foreseeable near future with the post-holiday surge impact that as of today has not occurred.

Please note the following:

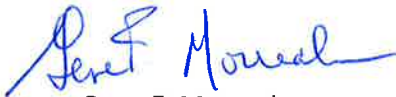
1. **COVID Positives**- The COVID positivity rate today in NY State is at 12.4% and for Madison County it is 10.2%. This means of the number of tests performed, this is how many have come back positive for COVID. We currently have 12 COVID positive inpatients and are concerned about that continued growth in admissions due to COVID. The positive is that a good number of our COVID positive patients are being sent home and managed in that way.
2. **PPE**- I apologize for sounding like a broken record on this topic but, it is so important that you protect yourself by following the necessary precautions including wearing your mask properly in the healthcare setting. Also, washing your hands regularly and keeping them away from your eyes, nose and mouth will help prevent infection. As I have stated in previous updates, our community and Oneida Health needs each and every one of you to stay healthy and be here to support care for those who need us. If you become ill, our ability to meet current healthcare demand diminishes as we have seen with the amount of time our ED is on ambulance diversion. Protecting yourself, your family and your loved ones is an obligation today for all of us in healthcare.

3. Monitoring, Testing and Clearance Policy/Procedures- This has been updated and is in line with recommendations of the CDC and the NY State DOH. Please print out and familiarize yourself with it so that you are knowledgeable and prepared to act appropriately.
4. Rapid Test Kits- Because of the significant surge in COVID cases, the availability of rapid testing swabs is becoming scarce. If you are ordering COVID tests and can use a PCR versus rapid, please do so in order to help us prevent running out of COVID rapid tests altogether. The PCR tests are sent to Quest and are returned within 48-72 hours.
5. 2022 Pay Increases- Please note that we will be announcing the 2022 pay increases at this afternoon's Department Head meeting. Shortly thereafter, the notice will be given to your manager to provide each of you with the plan for 2022. As a reminder, this applies to non-union and non-contracted employees.

I still remain optimistic that we will survive this and we will be stronger as a healthcare provider as a result. We have learned so much over these 2 years dealing with this pandemic and continue to learn each day as to how to be prepared for whatever comes our way. I understand the challenges are significant for all our staff, especially those in the trenches dealing with high acuity and high volume patient population. Please know that every effort that you make each and every day is not only greatly appreciated by those you serve but also recognized as a gift that you are providing to our community for their benefit and for the benefit of this organizations continued viability.

Thank you all for continuing to fight the battle with this pandemic. It will end and we will recover!

With Sincerest Gratitude,



Gene F. Morreale