



July 1, 2021

Dear Fellow Employees,

As many of you are aware, the amount of patients choosing to come to Oneida Health for care continues to increase. This is true not only in the hospital but it is also true in the majority of our practices. Many have asked why the surge and there is a number of explanations that I wish to offer. The first is one that has been documented in the media in that many individuals put off seeking care due to the pandemic and are now in a situation where their care becomes a higher acuity. The second explanation which I think is also true is that we have offered a quality service to those who have received care from us in the past and word of mouth has created growth in individuals who wish to seek healthcare here. We have received recent accolades due to our quality outcomes and our high patient experience numbers and that is due to your efforts. Please understand that is why we are here and your fine efforts are truly appreciated.

Please note the following:

1. COVID Positives- As of today and in the recent past, we have 0 COVID positive inpatients and 0 COVID positive ECF residents. We did have an employee in the ECF recently test positive. We are currently monitoring residents and staff in that particular location. Although we continue to see positives through our testing of individuals, the need for hospitalization has become less and less.
2. Vaccine Administration- We have a supply of the Johnson and Johnson one dose vaccine available in our pharmacy. If you wish to receive that vaccine, please reach out to the Employee Health office and we will do our best to make arrangements to administer that to you.
3. COVID Variants- It has been reported that a highly contagious Delta variant, which was first identified in India, has led to a surge in COVID infections in countries around the world. The Delta variant is believed to be about twice as transmissible as other COVID virus variants. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases has said that it is "currently the greatest threat in the US to our attempt to eliminate COVID 19". There have been 83 cases of this Delta variant identified in the US to date. Discussion from scientists is that while an estimated 71% of the population might need to be immune to reach herd immunity against the original Corona virus strain, the threshold would increase to around 84% of the population with more transmissible variants such as the Delta variant. The variant is in NY State and according to health officials, vaccinations are an effective tool in minimizing the potential deadly effects of this fast spreading strain. With this said, the continued need for everyone to be vaccinated is there. In addition, the World Health Organization has stated that even individuals who have been vaccinated should continue to wear masks and remain isolated. The CDC has not released that type of guideline as of this date. I will continue to keep you posted on this as I learn more.
4. Staffing Update- We are continuing to be aggressive in regards to our recruitment and retention initiatives. This past Monday, we had 17 new members of our team in new hire orientation. Our

efforts continue in regards to developing initiatives to bring individuals that fit our culture and our approach to providing care and service to this organization. We are also continuing to look at ways to retain the talented staff that currently work throughout our organization. We understand that both need to occur in order for us to be able to meet the needs of our community members. We are looking at starting rates for a number of positions to determine how to make them as competitive as possible. That will also result in compression for current staff which will need to be addressed. The difficulty is ensuring that all actions taken will be affordable not just for this year but for years ahead. Please know that we are looking at all avenues to compete and ensure that we have sufficient staff each and every day.

It truly has been a challenging year and a half for everyone. Although it feels good to be able to go out and enjoy our free time without the concern of wearing a mask if vaccinated, it still remains a challenge for us to deliver care in this environment. Once again, please accept my sincerest appreciation for all you are doing, being here day in and day out to meet the needs of our patients and residents as well as supporting the caregivers. We truly are adhering to our commitments to patient centered care as well as teamwork.

I hope you continue to enjoy the summer weather.

With Sincerest Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gene F. Morreale". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Gene F. Morreale