



Russell Meyers, CEO of Midland Health

COVID-19 Public Briefing: Tuesday, January 12th, 2021

Transcribed from a previously recorded live event.

Midland Health's portion selected out of the Unified Command Team Press Conference.

Mr. Meyers: Thank you, Erin. Some quick numbers off the top and then we'll spend most of our time talking about the vaccination program.

The hospital's census overall is 237 which is still very high, but as of this morning only 59 of those are COVID+ patients. So, I can't remember the last time we dipped below 60. So, that's a good sign. As the mayor was saying, our numbers have trended down from a high of 108 patients in the hospital a few weeks ago, a pretty steadily downward trend. Unfortunately, the region is up. We are over the 15% threshold as Region "J" now for 2 days per the state's website. It's a good reminder to us that our mitigation efforts do work. We have to continue them. We have to encourage our friends to continue them. But we are back on that path that could lead us to further restrictions as we hover just above the 15% mark as a region. Among those 59 patients that are in the hospital, the 22 who are in Critical Care range in age from 44 to 81. There's 37 in the Medical Units ranging from age 23 to 88.

We are continuing to track our employees' status. We have 77 staff members who are quarantined. 45 of those are positive for COVID. And there's another 44 beyond those who are self-monitoring but continuing to work and to check in with employee health every day.

We are giving the monoclonal antibody infusions. We are up to 262 patients who have received an infusion to date. Of those 262, only 3 hospitalizations have resulted. Just a little over 1%. That's a high-risk population that we would have expected to be of 20% hospitalized within a few days of a positive test. So, we are very encouraged that the antibody infusions work. They are very narrowly indicated as we've said several times, mostly older population or those with multiple chronic diseases. But if you are newly diagnosed as positive you can check our website for how to self-refer and get a monoclonal antibody infusion or ask your doctor to order it for you.

Let's see. Now, let's pivot to vaccines. I think that's really where the bulk of the conversation needs to happen today. Lots of things to tell you about this. Number 1, the hospital has been working to deliver the vaccine that we have been allocated. We are now on the 2nd round of Pfizer vaccine. We are vaccinating healthcare workers, primarily our own and those from a variety of other entities from around the community who got their 1st dose from us 3+ weeks ago. The state's website for reporting the use of the vaccine, so delivery of the vaccines continues to be behind. We are catching up and by the end of this week we are hopeful that it will all be current, but the state's data are behind. We have delivered a total of 2,431 1st doses and another 1,141 second doses to total over 3,500 doses delivered by Midland Health, not necessarily other providers in the community, but specifically by Midland Health so far. That's considerably more than what you'll see on the state's website. But we hope to have that caught up next week.

The state has, as of the last few days, changed its perspective on the allocation of vaccine. You may have heard the governor speak yesterday. I think he was in Lubbock. He and the vaccine advisory panel have determined, I think wisely, that distributing the vaccine in larger quantities to sites that can deliver



it in large quantities over a short period of time is the better policy for the state. Up until this point they have given some to hospitals around the state, but much of the distribution has been in very small numbers, 100 or 200 doses to pharmacies, to health departments, to others who don't have large capacity to deliver a lot of doses and aren't getting very much. And so, it's been a little bit haphazard. It's a slower process and one that's fraught with more uncertainty for the patients who want to get a vaccine and really don't know how to access the vaccine that's available. So, as the state changes this past week, they allocated to about 20 different sites around the state, mostly in larger communities than us about 10,000 doses per site. That's a change in direction and one we are doing our best to respond to by preparing a plan to deliver as many as 10,000 doses in a week here in Midland. We are working closely with our friends at the City and the County, Midland College staff members are involved. We've got some outside logistical coordination groups that may be able to help us and we've had a couple of conversations, we have another one scheduled for tomorrow with a goal of by this Thursday, certainly by the end of this week, having a comprehensive plan put together and documented and submitted to the state so that when the state's vaccination panel meets again on Monday, a week from yesterday, they'll have our plan in front of them and we'll be a candidate to get one of those large allocations that we can deliver to large numbers of people.

Now, a few things to consider on that front. We don't have a finished plan yet. There's no way to register for it, to sign up, to get on a waiting list just yet. We hope to be able to communicate that soon. But once we do, we'll have 1 or 2 sites available in the community. We'll be giving vaccine all day long focusing on whatever remaining healthcare workers there are, but most prominently on the over 65 population. We've looked at the data. There are a little over 18,000 people in Midland County who are over age 65. We can put a huge dent in that population if we can get a substantial vaccination allocation and deliver it at a mass vaccine site. We know that the nursing home vaccination process is ongoing led by the CVS and Walgreens folks who are actually working with the nursing homes directly. So, that population is being covered and we have confidence that they are already being served. It's the rest of the over 65 population that we need to focus on first. Our intention is to stand up those sites, to make them operational every day of the week, to take reservations. So, we will ask people to schedule their vaccine. That's part of the state's expectation. If our plan doesn't include a carefully scheduled registration process, we won't get the allocation. So, we do have a system that already exists and is ready to go to register people to document their vaccines, to report those to the state. Those components are in place. What we don't know is when we can do this, when we'll get the allocation, and over the next couple of days we'll know exactly where we're going to do it and have our team ready to go.

So, I think that's most of what I had to tell you. I'll be happy to answer questions about that to the extent I can. Just a reminder, that we are planning this on the big assumption, sort of a leap of faith that the state will be impressed with our plan and will come through with the number of vaccines we need to make a significant dent in the population that needs them here. But we don't know any of that for sure. We don't know how much allocation we can get nor the timing and we most likely won't know that before next Tuesday at the earliest. Probably a little later than that even. The state's vaccine panel meets on Mondays. They tend not to communicate for a couple of days after that. So, we're probably talking about the middle of next week before we can know for sure what's going to happen here, but we are trying to get ahead of that with planning and happy to hear questions and answer them as we can.



So, I'll stop there and take questions.

Moderator: Tasa, while we wait to see if any media ones come in do you have any from Facebook?

Tasa Richardson, Midland Health Public Relations Manager: We don't currently have any from Facebook at the moment.

Moderator: Russell, thank you.

Mr. Meyers: Thank you.

Moderator: And now since Whitney is out, we will turn it over to our local health authority, Dr. Wilson.

Dr. Larry Wilson (Vice President, Medical Affairs Midland Health): Thank you, Erin and thank you, everybody. So, I'm going to be standing in for Whitney today. As the Mayor said, we hope for her a speedy recovery and gets back up here next week. Numbers to start with, their case count currently is at almost 13,000 for Midland County at 12,861 cases. We have 1,517 individuals isolating currently and there are 8,083 that have considered to be recovered from the COVID infection. There's 2,716 under investigation currently. 351 that we have not been able to locate or have not communicated with us, and I think you can see on the website that we're closing in on 200 deaths in Midland County at 194. Currently, there are 24 full time investigators doing the contact tracing. They are getting pretty caught up with that which we are very happy about. There's 10 more full time persons coming on board within the next week or so or 2 weeks. So, we're very excited about that and there's part time workers from the city and others that are helping out as well so the ability to contact people as they become infected and then communicate to their potentially exposed people will help reduce the amount of disease in our community and we're very excited about that and we're looking forward to improvement as we move forward and get onto the vaccine pathway.

Speaking of vaccines, the health department was able to procure 200 doses, well they actually were able to get an extra dose out of most of the vials. So, we have 217 doses were given for 1st round through the Health Department. There are no more with the Health Department, currently. Whitney has told me that she's spoken with DSHS and they've asked for an additional 1,000 but as Russell mentioned moments ago, we are anticipating that the strategy for distribution might be changing. And we are hoping to get onto a pathway to get a larger quantity that the Health Department, Midland Health, and others can all help distribute in our combined efforts going forward.

There are currently about 4,000 people that have called the Health Department and gotten on a list for getting the vaccine. We're planning to stratify the list. Remember that our goal is tier 1A and 1B persons first round, getting all of the elderly over 65, those people that have underlying health conditions vaccinated soonest. So, that's our goal. So, we will risk stratify our list and combine that with Midland Health's list and move forward with our goals there.

That's what I have to bring from the Health Department's perspective today. I'm happy to answer any questions that I might.

Moderator: First question comes from Stewart at the MRT. He asks, "What are Dr. Wilson's thoughts on the rising numbers in the region?"



Dr. Wilson: Yeah, as Russell mentioned that was a little bit of a surprise to me as well because I'm most attentive to what I'm seeing happening in our own hospital and looking at the admissions through our Emergency Department, the number of people that we have in house, the test positivity rate that we have through our organization and all of those have been trending positively over the last 4 or 5 days. So, we've been, you know as Russell mentioned we're at under 60 patients in the hospital for the first time in several weeks. But unfortunately, it's just a reminder that this COVID-19 is still out there, it's all over the country. There's, you know it seems to be a little spotty sometimes. One area is getting hit really hard while another's not getting hit quite as hard. I understand that Odessa is getting a little bit harder hit right now than we are. It's got a little bit of a perplexing pattern sometimes. But I think the Mayor's right, our mitigation strategies, the efforts that people have made in our community has made a difference. And so, I'm hoping that that trend will continue, and I hope it spreads to other areas that they have decreased disease load as well.

Moderator: Ok, we'll give them just a second to see if anyone has anything else. Dr. Wilson, thank you.

Dr. Wilson: Thank you.