



Russell Meyers, CEO of Midland Health

COVID-19 Public Briefing: Thursday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020

Transcribed from a previously recorded live event.

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

Mr. Meyers: Good morning, everybody. I'm Russell Meyers, CEO of Midland Health. You're going to hear that message reinforced several times during the course of today's conference. The holiday season remains upon us. We've had very good numbers throughout what should have been the spike post-Thanksgiving. That's not a reason to let down our guard. It's a reason to reinforce that all the extra things we did to be particularly careful with family gatherings and other celebrations around Thanksgiving should be repeated here as we get into the Christmas and New Year's holidays and we'll talk more about that as we go.

Here in the hospital, we are at 250 patients in the house today. We continue to have very, very high census levels, but the COVID component of those, the active infections is down to 65 today. We have another 13 patients who are convalescing, who've been in the hospital long enough that they are no longer considered infectious with COVID-19, but they are still recovering from the damage the disease has done to their bodies and they'll be with us for a little while, but they are not occupying one of our COVID beds with the special negative airflow and those other precautions. So, census is down just a little bit.

Testing volume has been down as well. Last week in our testing centers we tested a little over 1,000 patients which is down about 13% from the week before. In addition, the percentage of those coming back positive declined to 24.5% last week. And so far, this week it's been closer to 20%. So, we continue to see some encouraging signs as testing volume declines, as the number of positive tests coming back declines. We have plenty of capacity for testing as those volumes have declined. We haven't changed our hours. As the holidays unfold, we'll squeeze the hours just a little bit, but we're testing every day except Christmas Day on our regular schedule. And so, if you need a test, believe that you do, if you've been exposed, if you have symptoms, if you need clearance to travel, all those are good reasons. You can call 68NURSE and we can almost certainly get you in the same day for a test at one of our two testing sites.

Hospital has down to only 27 ventilators in use today. ER volumes were at 136 yesterday. That's continuing to be pretty steady.

There are a few things to report that are new. One is that we reopened visitation as of Monday. Every patient in the hospital who is not COVID positive can have 1 visitor. Pediatric patients can have both parents with one staying overnight. Labor and Delivery patients can still have two as they have throughout. On the outpatient side, everywhere but in endoscopy and in the testing center we can allow a visitor to accompany a patient. So, if you're coming in for outpatient surgery, you can bring your visitor with you. We'll ask that person to stay in your day surgery room. The waiting areas remain closed so we don't gather together, but the visitors can come in. You can bring a support person with you to the ER for an ER visit. Throughout the hospital, visitation is reinstated on a limited basis as of this past Monday.



We are also beginning again to do elective inpatient surgery. We had curtailed that for several weeks as the numbers rose above the 15% mark across our region. We are down below that mark now for 8 or 9 days I guess it is in a row. And so elective inpatients are now allowed. Here as we get to the end of the year this is a common time for people to try to schedule those last elective surgeries before their deductible resets in January. So, we would encourage you if you and your surgeon are talking about a procedure, please do plan to come on. We have the capacity to do that over these last couple weeks.

Let's see. On the vaccine front, a lot of activity. We have, as you all have probably have heard us say before, we were assigned 1,950 doses of the Pfizer vaccine. We have given about 1,250 of those through yesterday. We vaccinated some over the weekend. About 600 of those are to our own employees and then we have distributed available vaccine to at least another 10 entities that are involved in caregiving throughout the community. Physicians and their staffs, a variety of other entities like Oceans Behavioral Health and Springboard Center, Encompass Rehab Hospital, our EMS providers, school nurses, dentists in the community, a lot of people have been able to get vaccine through our initial allocation and we are continuing to vaccinate not only our own employees, but the people who are in those categories as well. One good thing that's come of the vaccine experience, lots of good things, but one particularly good thing, those 1,950 have turned into over 2,300 doses because many of the vials, they're overfilled. They are expected to have 5 doses of the vaccine in them. They are typically having 6. And so, we have more vaccine to give than we expected to. Still have about 1,000 doses available that we can give. And we're actively recruiting not only our own staff, but others in the community who fit the criteria and can come get a vaccine. So, we will be in touch with a variety of entities locally about trying to make sure we give all that we have as soon as we can and that will continue, not on Christmas Day, but right through Christmas Eve and we'll pick up again the following week and continue to give vaccines on a regular basis.

An update on our employees, we have 79 people in quarantine. 50 of them are positive. We were fortunate to receive another 18 staff members yesterday from the FEMA allocation, so that's very positive. We are being helped tremendously to manage this super high census even though we've got a lot of employees out because the FEMA and state resources continue to help support us and to keep our doors open.

We are treating patients also with the Eli Lilly monoclonal antibody treatment. We are up to now 93 patients who have received that treatment in our testing center. We heard last night about the first hospitalization that's come from those 93 patients. Remember, these are all patients with significant risk factors, so only 1 hospitalized out of 93 is a really good indication that maybe that's been an effective treatment. Remember, it's only for people who have tested positive, but haven't reached the point that they need to be hospitalized yet. We've expanded those criteria a little bit. I think we were going to put on the screen the expanded criteria. We are testing people at the limits of what the FDA authorizes and now we're going up to 6 days post positive test and that expands the criteria a little bit further. So, if you think you meet those criteria at all, you can self-refer. You can call your doctor and your doctor can refer you. We'd be happy to see you in our infusion center.

Let's see. I talked about visitation. Make sure I haven't missed anything before we go on. The last thing that I'd like to add really is that as I said earlier, we expected the worst after Thanksgiving. And we talked a lot about it, about masking, about social distancing, about hand hygiene throughout that buildup to Thanksgiving. And I think that people heard our message. We don't have clear indication of



why our numbers have been down a little bit over the last few days, but we certainly expected them to be up and the obvious indication is that people paid attention and did maintain their vigilance and keep careful distance, and minimize their family gatherings, and keep them safe. We are not out of the woods because we have the antibody infusions, because we have the beginnings of the vaccine roll out, because our numbers are down a little bit. None of those things are meaningful if we don't continue to do mask wearing, the social distancing, the minimization of our family gatherings through the Christmas and New Year's holidays. We should be doing exactly the same things we did at Thanksgiving so that we can have a similar outcome. The vaccine is very exciting and something we've been waiting for for a long time. But it will be several months before enough people in our community get the vaccine for us to feel like it's safe to relax those social distancing measures, to take off our masks. We are a long way from that. We've got to continue, even those of us who have been vaccinated. As one of those, I've been vaccinated. But there's no clear indication that I couldn't still be a carrier of the virus. And so, I need to wear my mask to be sure I protect people even though I may not get sick myself, I may be a carrier, I may be able to infect someone else. So, all the social distancing expectations are still the same and they will be for a while. Especially true here around the holidays.

So, with that I'll be happy to take questions.

Moderator: Ok, we'll see if any media members have one. Tasa, do you have any questions that you need to ask?

Tasa Richardson, Midland Health Public Relations Manager: None at this time.

Moderator: Ok, media members, remember you can use the raise your hand feature if you don't want to type it out in the chat.

Tasa: Erin, I do have a question that just came through. How do people qualified for Phase 1B gain access to the vaccine?

Mr. Meyers: There are a number of questions that are still being answered slowly by the state. The Phase 1B is post healthcare workers and really moves on to essential workers and those kinds of folks. In 1A, we have the nursing home clientele who are on a whole separate path that's being managed by the federal government with pharmaceutical distributors and we are a little bit out of the loop on exactly how that's happening because we don't have to do it. The 1B crowd, it's not really clear how much vaccine is coming and when for those folks. And I think you still have to just watch the news, talk to your provider. We'll give updates on our press conferences when we have information to share. I know there are, I think Whitney said this morning that she had counted over 30 providers signed up in the community who will get the vaccine and in a future distribution. So, there are a lot of places that it will be available, but as of now, we don't know when and in what quantity. So, we'll just have to stay tuned and watch for that information. It will be shared as soon as it's out.

Moderator: Ok, and the next question comes from Sammi Steele. She asks, "Has the hospital requested any of the Moderna vaccine as well or just Pfizer?"

Mr. Meyers: You don't request a specific vaccine. We put our request in and told the state how many we needed essentially to get our own work force done and then we'll continue to report to the state on what we've distributed, and we'll take whatever comes. But we are not on anybody's list to get



Moderna vaccine at this point nor to get any more Pfizer vaccine beyond the second dose that goes with the first allocation. We are hopeful of getting more, but our request is out there, and we'll just have to see how the state responds.

All set?

Moderator: I think that's it. Russell, thank you.

Mr. Meyers: Thank you.