

The Miller Report

Mendocino Coast COVID-19 Update for the Week of July 13, 2020

by

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From William Miller, MD, our hospital's Chief of Staff:

Update on Outbreak at Sherwood Oaks

Last week, our local nursing facility, Sherwood Oaks, learned that one of their staff was positive for COVID. This person, who got the infection outside of work, was exposed through no fault of her own. Specifically, this was not an exposure due to irresponsible behavior. She was not symptomatic when she started work, but did become so during her shift and was immediately sent home. When she subsequently tested positive, Sherwood Oaks appropriately notified both the County and State Health Departments. All staff and residents of the facility were then tested with three residents and one additional staff member testing positive. This week, two more residents have tested positive, bringing the total number up to five residents.

“Following our previously developed plans on how to deal with an outbreak like this if it happened, we have sectioned off one part of our facility as an isolation area,” said Dr. John Cottle, medical director of Sherwood Oaks. “We have moved all of the positive residents into that area. We also have notified the families of all of our residents. With the help of the health department, we are again testing all our staff and residents. We will keep repeating testing on a regular basis until advised by the health department to do otherwise. We expect to know the results by the end of this week.”

Our hospital, Adventist Health – Mendocino Coast, is prepared to accept any residents from Sherwood Oaks who become ill and need acute hospital care. We are also expecting that we may see other local cases from other sources as cases begin to rise in Northern California. As part of the surge plan we developed when COVID first began, we converted a section of the hospital into a COVID ward. Early on, we were concerned that we might have to take care of the most critically ill patients here if other area hospitals became overwhelmed. Fortunately, while cases are rising, we do not expect the overwhelming wave previously predicted prior to shelter-in-place. Thus, we now expect to be able to transfer any seriously ill patients who may need critical care.

Today, Governor Newsom announced a statewide order to reclose all restaurants, bars, wineries and many other social venues throughout California. While studies show that at least two-thirds of people are wearing masks and taking steps to minimize risks, there still is a large percentage of the population who are not. Freedom does come with responsibility. I hope that

those people who are not taking mask wearing, hand washing and social distancing seriously, will think of how such actions not only help protect them, but also their loved ones and the rest of us in the community. It is true that a young person who gets COVID may not get very ill. Yet, in the meantime, they might spread it to a beloved older family member who could die. These choices not only affect ourselves, but all of those around you.

From Tabatha Miller, our Fort Bragg City Manager:

Accepting the “New Norm”

If you watch the news, receive press releases from the County or even check Facebook, you know that [Governor Newsom announced](#) the re-closure of a number of businesses Monday, including dine-in restaurants, wineries & tasting rooms, movie theaters, family entertainment centers and indoor & outdoor bars, pubs and breweries. While not surprising, to most of us this was still without warning. I say this because I attended a meeting at 1:00pm on Monday with officials from Mendocino County and the other cities in Mendocino County and no one had any warning it was going to happen or that it would be effective immediately. In response, Mendocino County Health Officer, Dr. Doohan, issued a [new Order](#) on July 13, 2020, effective at 11:59pm to be consistent with the new State requirements.

The same day, Los Angeles Unified and San Diego Unified School Districts announced that they will not reopen schools in August but will start online only instruction. Los Angeles Unified is the second largest school district in the United States. The debate on whether to get students back into schools is happening at all levels across the country. It also represents the struggle with getting back to “normal” so that we can mend our social and economic systems while fighting a pandemic.

I hear almost every day from business owners, tourists wanting to visit, employees, my family, neighbors, colleagues and elected officials who are frustrated with the ever-changing orders, guidance, and timelines. This frustration is something we all have in common, but it pales in comparison to sickness and death. At that 1:00 meeting on Monday, almost all of us lamented the lack of notice provided to those of us who must answer questions and enforce the changes in how businesses can operate. However, this is the new norm and the data and science are changing every day. As I heard a very smart woman say just today, “This is a pandemic. Every day the storyline changes.” It may not be what I want to hear, but at least I can see the truth in it. Being angry at the uncertainty isn’t getting me anywhere, so maybe I need to accept it.

I don’t mean to be a pessimist but I am also a realist. All around me, I see signs that governments, corporations, school districts, healthcare facilities and financial institutions are starting to look at the longer horizon. More corporations and small businesses have announced bankruptcies and reorganizations. In most cases, this is not a signal that the company is going out of business but rather reorganizing to restructure debt and survive. Banks are preparing for a wave of loan defaults and losses. I see it as a sign of accepting that this pandemic is going to be here for a while and we need to plan realistically and for the longer term. Most economists no longer predict that the recovery from the current recession will be V shaped, with a sharp drop followed by a sharp rebound. Instead, more than 70% of economists believe the recovery will look like the Nike swoosh – a sharp drop with a gradual recovery.

This isn’t going to just go away and it is not likely to pass us by. But that is something we can hold on to and plan around. Yes, it means accepting that I might have to wear a mask for a

while. That I won't see my youngest niece or nephew anywhere near as soon as I would like. It means I will worry about the City's and the community's financial health for a while. Just as I understand that the newest Health Orders, the rules and regulations of COVID life, will change. As I was wondering how long this pandemic would last, I looked up how long the Spanish flu lasted on Wikipedia this weekend – from February 1918 to April 1920. At first that depressed me, but then two things struck me; that pandemic had an end and like most people, I have survived tough periods lasting at least that long.