

MSSC NEWS

Doctors implored to step up vaccine education

The rapidly escalating surge in COVID-19 infections across the U.S. is once again overwhelming our hospitals, taxing overworked doctors and nurses, and worrying physicians who haven't yet recovered from the pandemic's debut in 2020.

The only exit strategy out of this vicious cycle is vaccination, said Garold Minns, MD, Sedgwick County's public health officer, who urged Sedgwick County commissioners this month to reinstate a countywide mask mandate. Physicians are key, he said. Minns is urging doctors to step up their involvement in educating and encouraging their patients to get the vaccine.

"We're the ones who are sup-

posed to believe in science and in doing the things to slow disease down," Minns said. "Please ask yourself, what have you done to help slow this down? What more can you do on the committees you sit on, the patients you talk to or the boards you're on? Don't look to the health officer to be the only one doing it. What can you do?"

Sedgwick County's positive test rate is trending back up toward 10% and hospital ICUs are full again with COVID patients. Earlier this month, hospital chief medical and clinical officers from Wichita and surrounding hospitals convened in a virtual roundtable to sum up how COVID-19 cases were again wreaking havoc with resources while creating statewide transport issues and exacerbating staffing challenges.

Hospital beds are at capacity in Wichita, and doctors are treating younger patients with even more severe symptoms than were seen in the first wave of the pandemic in 2020. Most COVID patients seeking hospital care are unvaccinated. Ascension Via Christi reported about 95% of its COVID-positive patients were unvaccinated while Wesley Healthcare reported 97%.

"We have, unfortunately, seen more deaths in this recent rise," said Sam Antonios, MD, chief clinical officer for



DR. MINNS

Family docs recognized

Nine MSSC physicians were recognized recently by the Wichita Business Journal for excellence in family medicine. Drs. Kimberly Allman, Caitlin Chiles, Regan DeHart, Jody Elson, Tana Goering, James Hesse, Russell Horn, Lindsay Landers and Claudia Wendell were profiled in a question-and-answer feature in the newspaper.

Allman credited her father, the late Dr. Stan Mosier, with her decision to choose a career in family medicine. "I remember many years of watching him give compassionate care to families," she said. "I wanted to carry on that legacy."

Hesse said the biggest challenge he faces in his career is "insurance companies' restrictions and guidelines on how to care properly for my patients."

Goering said her big challenge is "trying to balance my need to have my charts neat, accurate and helpful while not allowing it to take over every spare minute of my day."

MSSC cancels September membership meeting

Due to the increase in COVID-19 cases and new CDC masking recommendations, MSSC canceled its membership meeting scheduled for Sept. 14 at Wichita State University.

"We're disappointed but need to be cautious about gathering a large group of physicians together in one room," MSSC Executive Director Phillip Brownlee said. "We hope our COVID numbers come down soon and we can again meet safely in person."

PLEASE SEE COVID-19, PAGE 2



AUGUST
2021

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Physicians must be leaders in controlling spread of virus



Stephen J. Grindel, DO
August President's Message

The 2021 version of the coronavirus pandemic is now in full swing. Because we have not reached herd immunity, the variants are upon us and more are sure to come. Despite the efforts of the medical community and public health officials, only about half of adults in our community are fully vaccinated.

What is the next step to help encourage vaccination to prevent continued spread of the COVID-19 virus and the development of new variants? We all must continue talking with every patient and individual we come into contact with who has not been vaccinated. This includes physicians in all specialties and diverse locations of practices.

One of the most concerning statistics is the abysmal percentage of health care workers currently vaccinated. According to

media reports, between a quarter and a third of health care workers have not been vaccinated.

I laud Ascension for its bold move requiring vaccinations for all individuals working in its institutions. We must be leaders in controlling the spread of this pandemic, especially since we are the ones caring for the community. All medical institutions in our area should take the same stance.

The delta variant is far more infective than previous strains and is affecting younger individuals and children at a much higher rate. Children younger than 12 have no vaccine options at this time. The CDC has recommended that all children in highly infected areas should wear masks in indoor public venues. If we want to keep our children safe from this virus, we should also support such a recommendation.

My hope was that I would be the last MSSC president to deal with this pandemic. Due to the current surge of the delta and other variants, many of my successors and all Medical Society members may continue the fight for years to come.

COVID-19 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Ascension Via Christi. "That is concerning to our staff. We really want to urge the community to take steps so this doesn't continue. These deaths for the most part are now preventable."

The delta variant, a more contagious version of the original COVID-19 virus, now accounts for 80% to 90% of new COVID-19 infections, Antonios said. COVID-19 positive cases in Sedgwick County have skyrocketed to more than 1,000 this month, up from 131 in June, county health data shows.

Hospitals are feeling the strain. Earlier this month, as a snapshot, Wesley Healthcare reported 96 positive and suspected COVID-19 cases with 39 in the ICU and roughly 15 on vents.

"The data shows this has shifted to a younger age group, particularly the 34-55 age group," said Lowell Ebersole, DO, chief medical officer for Wesley. "They are comprising 31% of hospitalizations since May, as well as 30% mortality. In short, patients are unvaccinated, sicker and staying longer at our facility."

As COVID-19 cases rise, hospitals are seeing critical patients on hold in the emergency rooms for hours waiting on ICU beds, impacting the movement of both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients who need critical care. Hospitalists are stepping into the ERs to care for patients waiting on beds.

Data from Motient, software funded by KDHE that tracks hospital bed capacity throughout Kansas, began indicating a shortage of available beds throughout the state by the end of July. It has caused significant delays in placing patients with critical needs, including heart attacks and strokes, Motient founder Richard Watson, MD, said.

"We are now more critical than we were even at the height of the surge," Watson said. "It is significantly affecting our ability to transfer people who have very time-critical conditions."

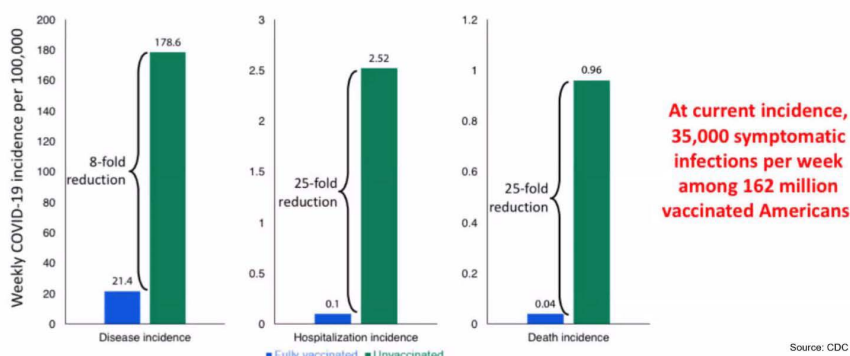
Minns is stuck between a rock and a hard place. He said he desperately wants to stem the

advance of the delta variant, but he also has no desire to see the entire city shut down again. By far, the best way to control that is through vaccination, but until that happens, Minns strongly recommends people mask up in public spaces.

"I know shutdowns hurt people. I know shutdowns lead to unemployment. I know all that, so I don't want to go there," Minns said. "But masks don't hurt anybody. They do not shut down businesses. They do not cause illness. It's an inconvenience and can be an annoyance. But I'd much rather be annoyed than a patient in the hospital. All you have to do is put it on. We need you, physicians, to help share this, and to encourage people to get vaccinated."

Hopefully, vaccine messaging will get easier with the FDA approval on Aug. 23 of the first COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine, known as the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, will now be marketed as Comirnaty for the prevention of COVID-19 disease in individuals 16 years of age and older, FDA officials said. The vaccine also continues to be available under emergency use authorization for people 12 and older, and for the administration of a third dose in certain immunocompromised individuals.

Greater risk of disease, hospitalization and death among unvaccinated vs. vaccinated people: National estimates



Data from COVID Tracker as of July 24, 2021. Average incidence 100 cases per 100,000 persons per week. Vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic illness = 88% (Gupta-Bennett et al. NEJM 2021), where risk is (1 - VE) or 12%. Vaccine effectiveness hospitalization (or death) = 96% (Dowse et al. PLoS 2021), where risk is (1 - VE) or 4%. Rate in unvaccinated = Community rate / (1 - VE) / Fully vaccinated coverage = (1 - VE) / Fully vaccinated coverage. Rate in fully vaccinated = (1 - VE) * Rate in unvaccinated. Fully vaccinated coverage proportions were from COVID Data Tracker as of July 24, 2021 (50% for US).

A STRIKING DIFFERENCE: A slide shared at a CMO/CCO roundtable this month shows an eight-fold reduction in COVID-19 disease incidence among vaccinated individuals, a 25-fold reduction in hospitalization and a 25-fold reduction in deaths. *Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

Ascension mandates COVID-19 vaccines; AMA supports

Ascension, the parent company of Ascension Via Christi, on July 27 announced it would require all of its associates to be vaccinated against COVID-19 by Nov. 12.

This includes everyone, whether or not they provide direct patient care, and whether they work in person or remotely. Ascension said the mandate includes associates employed by subsidiaries and partners; physicians and advanced practice providers (employed or independent); and volunteers and vendors entering Ascension facilities.

"Together, we will put this pandemic behind us so that we can continue to focus on meeting the needs of those who come to us for care," Ascension wrote in its announcement.

The timing is aligned with Ascension's annual influenza vaccination requirement and will follow a similar implementation process. Tens of thousands of Ascension associates already have been vaccinated, officials said.

The company joins other high-profile employers such as Tyson Foods, Microsoft, Google and Disney, which announced recently they also would mandate vaccines for most employees.

The American Medical Association is among more than 50 professional academies and associations calling for all health care and long-term care employers to require their employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

"Vaccination is the primary way to put the pandemic behind us and avoid the return of stringent public health measures," AMA officials said. "This is the logical fulfillment of the ethical commitment of all health care workers to put patients as well as residents of long-term care facilities first and take all steps necessary to ensure their health and well-being."

Other supporters include the American Academy of Family Physicians and the Association of American Medical Colleges.

At this time, HCA, the parent company of Wesley Healthcare, has not indicated it will follow suit. But CMO Lowell Ebersole, DO, has said that 99% of Wesley's medical staff is vaccinated.

Meanwhile, some local physicians are encouraging all health care workers to get vaccinated.

"We, the physicians of Infectious Disease Consultants, join with the growing number of organizations throughout the country in calling for the universal vaccination of all health care workers," the group wrote in a recent editorial column in The Wichita Eagle. "Vaccination of all eligible persons is the number one best strategy we have at this point to control and defeat this

pandemic. Health care organizations have an obligation to provide a safe work environment for their employees and patients, and health care workers have an obligation to protect their patients with whom care is entrusted."

The Cancer Center of Kansas reported it is requiring all their unvaccinated employees to get tested every week.

The call for vaccine mandates among health care workers is aligned with national statistics that show many medical workers remain unvaccinated.

The rate of vaccination is pretty much the inverse of the education level of staff, Forbes reported. Among practicing physicians, 96% have been vaccinated, according to an AMA study. The rate drops to less than 50% among nurses and even lower among aides, especially in nursing homes, according to Forbes.

"Health care workers are not a monolith," explained front-line physician Chloe Steinshouer, MD, ICU medical director at Wesley Medical Center, in a recent Facebook post about health care workers who haven't been vaccinated.

"Vaccine uptake is highest in the highest education groups (physicians, pharmacy and APPs) and trends down with level of education," Steinshouer said.

"Support staff outnumber direct patient care workers in a hospital and are vital to making the systems run, but they also have a significantly lower vaccination rate. Add in personal philosophy and bias (happens in health care workers just like everyone else) and your health care systems will mirror your community."



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In Brief >>>

New and noteworthy

Wichita doctor on White House panel

Chady Sarraf, MD, chief hospitalist with Sound Physicians, participated in a virtual panel discussion organized last month by the White House COVID Response Team. Nine physicians from across the country discussed ways to build vaccine confidence in the Arab-American community.

Sarraf, who is the U.S. president of the International Lebanese Medical Association, shared efforts by his group to reach out to the Arab community, both in the U.S. and overseas. Those efforts included translating public health information into Arabic, doing TV interviews and social media posts, working with the faith community and hosting webinars.

The ILMA also created a short video that went viral on common misinformation about the COVID-19 vaccine. "We had hundreds of thousands of views and shares," Sarraf said.

Despite these efforts, more education and outreach are needed to increase vaccination rates. "There is still a lot of work to do," Sarraf said.

MGMA conference next month

The Medical Group Management Association of Kansas is hosting its 2021 Fall Conference Sept. 14-16 at the Wichita Marriott, 9100 Corporate Hills Drive. Conference topics include business intelligence, organizational governance, human resources, credentialing and leadership. Register online at mgmaks.org.

COVID vaccine poster, palm cards

Sedgwick County Health Department developed a poster and palm cards on the benefits of COVID-19 vaccines. SCHD also ordered acrylic holders for palm cards for other COVID-related topics, including the different vaccines and the vaccination process. If you are interested in these materials, contact Valarie Florio at valarie.florio@sedgwick.gov.

Interim EMS medical director named

Sedgwick County has named Kevin Brinker, DO, as the Interim EMSS medical director on a part-time basis. Brinker previously worked with Sedgwick County EMS from 1985-99, first as an EMT, and then as a paramedic. He rose to the rank of captain (equivalent to the current shift commander position), before attending medical school.



Brinker graduated from Friends University in 1996 with a bachelor's in biology/chemistry and from Kentucky College of Osteopathic Medicine (formally Pikeville College School of Osteopathic Medicine) with a medical degree in 2005.

Brinker currently practices in the emergency departments at both NMC Health in Newton and Newman Regional Health in Emporia. He will serve in the interim role while Sedgwick County conducts a national search for a permanent director.

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ROSTER UPDATE

Keep your 2021 roster current with this information.

Key: [BC] Board Certified [F] Accredited Fellowship [R] Residency [AT] Additional Training [F*] Unaccredited Fellowship

CHANGES

Nisha Agasthya, MD

Wesley Medical Center - Pediatric Critical Care
OFF: 316-962-2000

Ascension Medical Group Via Christi - Founders Cir

The preferred prefix is now 274 for phone and fax numbers at Ascension Medical Group Via Christi - Founders Circle. The street address also has changed for these physicians:

Sean C. Kane, DO

Kylee Levin, MD

David J. Norris, MD

Patricia W. Powell, MD

Ascension Medical Group Via Christi - Founders Cir
OFF: 316-274-4931
FAX: 316-274-4937
1961 Founders Cir, 67206

Ryan S. Beard, MD

William Newton Cardiology (9/7/21)
OFF: 620-222-6264
FAX: 620-800-1011
1230 E 6th Ave S-2C
Winfield, KS 67156

J. Craig Benning, DO

[BC] Diagnostic Radiology
Kansas Imaging Consultants, PA

Jonathan A. Jensen, MD

[BC] Urology
Wichita Urology Group, PA

Robbie L. O'Brien-Leighton, MD

PO Box 267
Bentley, KS 67016

Simon P. Patton, MD

[BC] Female Pelvic Medicine & Reconstructive Surgery
Ascension Medical Group Via Christi OB/GYN

Jared M. Regehr, MD

Ascension Medical Group Via Christi St. Joseph Family Medicine
OFF: 316-689-5500
FAX: 316-665-6082

CORRECTIONS

Lindsey C. Peller, DO

Mid-Kansas Pediatric Associates, PA
OFF: 316-773-3100
FAX: 316-773-3777
6837 W 37th St N, 67205

Matthew B. Powell, MD, MPH

KUSM-Wichita Pediatric Intensivist
Limits practice to Pediatric Critical Care Medicine

RETIRED

Jon C. Anders, MD – 6/30/21

Bruce C. Elson, MD – 7/10/21

Talkad Raghuveer, MD – 3/31/21

Chivukula Subbarao, MD – 7/31/21

DROPPED

Parthu K. Avvaru, MD – Moving out of state

Nour Boulad, MD – Moving out of state

Tuan Quang Ha, MD – 7/26/21

Jeffrey K. Wingate, MD – Moved out of state

Eileen Wong, MD – Moved out of state

In Remembrance

MSSC extends its condolences to the family of Dr. Norris, MD.

Longtime Wichita physician Robert P. "Bob" Norris, MD, who was MSSC's eldest retiree, died July 15. He was 103.

Dr. Norris graduated from the University of Kansas School of Medicine in 1943. He was board certified in internal medicine in 1955. After returning home from military service, he and four other doctors joined the Wichita Clinic in 1948, where he practiced until his retirement in 1986, his family said.

Dr. Norris was MSSC president in 1965 and served on the Professional & Community Affairs Commission (1967-69), the Membership & Ethics Committee (1966-68), and Judicial & Business Commission (1964). Among other civic activities, he served as county chapter chairman of the American Red Cross.



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UPDATE

August 2021

Central Plains Health Care Partnership

From the executive director



SHELLEY DUNCAN

Project Access

We continue to fill our role in Sedgwick County as the only agency that connects people with low income and no health insurance with generous medical providers and health care systems that donate care to treat specialty health conditions. People come to us with myriad conditions, some serious, others life threatening, such as stage 4 cancer or a brain tumor. Someone who works in retail or a specialty profession such as a hairdresser – both which require standing all day – may need a knee replacement to maintain employment. I am humbled to say that Project Access, in collaboration with our partners, can help those enrolled in our program. As we soon approach our 22nd year of operations, we are approaching nearly 15,000 people served, and are nearing \$240 million in donated care. And we do

this with a staff of eight people. Every dollar that helps fund Project Access converts to nearly \$15 in donated health care. That is a compelling return on investment.

As we enter our 22nd year, we remain reliant upon the generous funding from the City of Wichita, Sedgwick County and United Way. One quarter of our budget relies on financial donations. Sadly, over the last two years, our funding has been reduced in large part due to COVID-19. To help us achieve our fundraising goal for 2021, Jill Docking is hosting a fundraiser at her house on Sept. 2 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. We would love to see you at this event, where you can learn more about Project Access from an actual patient who received life-saving care through our generous medical community. To register, please go to the Events tab on our website, www.cphcp.com.

Kansas Business Group on Health

KBGH is soon to complete its third year of affiliation with the Medical Society of Sedgwick County. During this time, we have been focused on creating our value proposition and ensuring we can be successful in our execution. We have had the opportunity to work with an organization called Catchafire, which matches volunteers (often from the private sector) with nonprofit organizations needing help with specific projects, such as strategic planning or brochure or website design. Due to the limited staffing at KBGH, we are very thankful to the DeBoer Foundation for allowing us access to this organization.

KBGH held the 43rd annual Healthcare Roundtable virtually on July 13. Attendees rated it a success on their evaluations. Several speakers from across the country provided a half day of engaging presentations on issues relevant to the current landscape of health care benefits, trends and upcoming changes in legislation.

KBGH continues to hold monthly training opportunities for its members and non-members free of charge. Human resource forums are held bimonthly. The second book club will be starting in late August with the book "Never Pay the First Bill: And Other Ways to Fight the Health Care System and Win" by Marshall Allen. The September offering is on "Bulletproofing Your Benefit Plan" presented by Jason Lacey, an attorney with Foulston Siefkin law firm. Anyone can attend. For more information, contact Shelley Duncan at shelleyduncan@cphcp.com or visit the KBGH website at ksbgh.org.

KBGH is conducting the second annual benchmarking survey, which provides comparative health care benefits data among employers. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete, and the more surveys received, the more data gets analyzed. Last year's survey report showed some very interesting comparisons between self-insured



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CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Why you matter

Project Access Patient Testimonial

Linda – Project Access patient

Linda, 60, was physically struggling at work. She was unsteady on her feet, moving slowly and limping from pain. Since Linda was unable to perform her job duties and was a fall risk, her employer had to let her go. Although Linda made \$10.25 an hour and worked 40 hours a week, the job did not offer health insurance. Unemployment benefits provided a way for Linda to pay her rent, but she was unsure how and where to find medical help. Eventually Linda found her way to GraceMed, where she was assessed and told she would need a knee replacement. Knowing Linda was uninsured, GraceMed referred her to Project Access, where an orthopaedic surgeon donated the surgery. The participating Project Access doctor literally got Linda back on her feet! Once Linda is released from physical therapy, her employer will hire her back.

The donated care, medication and durable medical costs totaled \$36,506 – a sum Linda says is unimaginable and beyond her financial means to pay. "I am grateful to the doctors and nurses, as I do not know what I would have done without the Project Access program and their staff," Linda said.



About Project Access

In 1999, Project Access began coordinating access to donated medical care for uninsured, low-income residents of Sedgwick County. Thanks to our founding funders – United Way of the Plains, the City of Wichita and Sedgwick County – Project Access is still able to serve the community today. This is who participates in Project Access:

- 640 physicians
- Eight hospital systems
- 14 dentists
- 85 pharmacies
- Other allied health care services, such as physical therapy and hospice care

Project Access and its community partners serve patients in many locations. Eligible uninsured patients are enrolled for limited periods of time to address immediate medical needs. Once enrolled, patients have access to a variety of specialists, as well as prescription medication, durable medical equipment and diabetic supplies. Since 1999:

- 14,645 patients served
- \$55,534,456 physician contributions
- \$182,389,984 hospital contributions
- \$125,184 dentist contributions
- \$5,705,190 purchased medications and durable medical equipment
- \$5,782,125 donated medications
- 36,945 tests utilized through the Coalition Test Project

Update on community programs

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

and fully insured employers. Plans for 2022 are underway and the annual Innovation Summit is planned for Jan. 26, 2022. It is currently planned to be an in-person event.

KBGH continues to work on the Path Forward project focusing on the improvement of behavioral health services, mental health and substance use treatment. One of the focus areas for this project is Mental Health Parity, which will become a much larger focus by the Department of Labor. Employers should ensure they are in compliance with this law if they offer behavioral health benefits. For more information and access to a self-assessment document, contact shelleyduncan@cphcp.com.

Health ICT

We continue to make progress toward our objectives on our CDC grants. In an effort to expand the availability of diabetes prevention and management programs across Kansas, we are working with two providers to help establish their own in-house, CDC-recognized Diabetes Prevention Program. Both of these providers expressed interest in starting a Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support program within their respective clinics. One of these providers is in the northwest corner of the state, while the other in the southeast corner, which will help to expand these programs around the state.

We have been working with the local Integrated Referral and Intake System through the Sedgwick County Health Department to integrate diabetes prevention and diabetes management programs into the system to help streamline referrals from primary care providers. We have been doing prep work in anticipation of completing two quality improvement projects around prediabetes and hypertension management at clinics in Wichita and northeast Kansas. We continue to support Great Plains Diabetes and assist in the planning of their annual conference, "Living Well with Diabetes," on Nov. 5. We are working with Konza and the Kansas Health Information Network to promote their patient portal feature that allows patients to report blood pressures taken outside of the physician's office back to their doctor.


 Executive Director


MSSC NEWS

MEDICAL SOCIETY of
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The MSSC News is published monthly by the Medical Society of Sedgwick County, Kansas. The Society does not necessarily endorse all the views expressed in this publication.

Managing Editor: Phillip Brownlee, Executive Director

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