

For nearly two years now, Americans have lived with SARS-CoV-2. We know it better than we once did. We know that it can set off both acute and chronic illness, that it spreads best indoors, that masks help block it, that our vaccines are powerful against it. We know that we can live with it—that we're going to have to live with it—but that it can and will carry a heavy toll. Still, this virus has the capacity to surprise us, especially if we're not paying attention. It is changing all the time, a tweak to the genetic code here and there; sometimes, those tweaks add up to new danger. In a matter of weeks, the Delta variant upended the relative peace of America's early summer and by July 4th this year, we were seeing volumes that surpassed the previous high numbers of positive cases and deaths that we experienced in December 2020 and January 2021. Recently, as I was preparing for a meeting with a group of leaders, I asked our team at Troy Regional to pull some data from July 1st to present day. We have tested over 3500 patients in that period with a 23% positivity rate. We have also administered over 650 doses of the Regeneron Monoclonal Antibody infusions in that time frame. To me and the clinical team here that represents 650 patients, community members, OUR family members, that tested positive for Covid-19 and that probably weren't admitted and didn't end up in the ICU on the ventilator. I would argue that is the best news yet! It is hard for me to fathom how we would have cared for those 650 patients had they needed admission.

I continue to promote getting the vaccine because it is proven to work effectively. Even the breakthrough cases we see occasionally are not nearly as severe as those who are unvaccinated, and that is exactly as you would expect. I am often asked about the vaccine and if it is so effective, why do you have to have 2 doses and maybe even a third? Vaccines work more like dimmer switches than on/off buttons, and as their protection fades out, there are three thresholds that we care about: protection against infection, against symptoms, and against severe disease. Protection against infection is always the first to erode—either because of new variants or because of waning immune responses over time. Protection against symptoms goes next, but protection against severe disease is the most durable. Even after this latest surge crests and subsides, the new pandemic reality will linger, through fall and winter and into the spring, as vaccination rates rise, and the virus continues to change.

I am so proud of the team here at Troy Regional for the incredible work that is done each day to test, treat and care for those who are affected by this Covid-19 virus. Our team works day after day to deliver the best care possible to those who need it most. Please keep our team in your prayers as we battle this dreaded disease and PLEASE do your part to stop the spread. Vaccines continue to be offered on Fridays from 1pm-4pm with no appointment required.

Stay Safe and Spread the word, not the virus.

Rick E. Smith, FACHE
Chief Executive Officer
Troy Regional Medical Center