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Update 60 - COVID-19 – From Office of the Medical Director 19FEB2021 1100

To: All EMS Personnel in the EMS System for Metropolitan Oklahoma City & Tulsa

Key Content:

- **Educational Resource – The Osterholm Update – Episode 43**
- **Now for the Championship Fight! Vaccine A vs. Vaccine B – Stat News**
- **Vaccines Alone? Not A Good Strategy – The New York Times**
- **Vaccines Vs. Variants – The Winner... Still TBD! – State News**
- **Not Everyone at Once, Please – Human Volunteers for Infection? – UK Gov**
- **Big Picture of the Future? - Here's a Good Start - Nature**

The snow is receding, and the temperatures are warming to above freezing. We'll take the good weather news. I'm very proud of the great – and safe – work accomplished during these challenging winter days. Despite a number of additional obstacles of water-leak-induced hospital closures/diverts and multiple structure fires, you and your colleagues continued to provide the EMS care our citizens and communities needed. Bravo!

Now, as much as I'd like to continue good news, it's a time to start this Update with a bracing resource of realism. Fear not, I'll still share some good news where I can...

Educational Resource – The Osterholm Update – Episode 43

Another hour with Dr. Osterholm, learning from an experienced expert. While I had hoped his realism contained more optimistic news, it's important we continue to learn all we can about what comes next in this viral pandemic. SARS-CoV-2 variant of concern (VOC) B.1.1.7 is a "hurricane off our shores" in the semantics of Dr. Osterholm. I'd recommend a careful listen to his thoughts. The better prepared we are allows us to adjust our sails, borrowing from the podcast episode's title, "A Realist Adjusts the Sails."

Also included in this podcast, Dr. Osterholm weighs in on the benefits of continuing to have routine dental care during this pandemic. He advises to check with your dentist about COVID precautions being taken in the clinic, such as limiting appointments to avoid numbers of patients sitting in the waiting room for prolonged periods of time. I'll refer you to your dentist for formal dental advice, but I will share that I'm such a believer about the importance of dental care that I visit my dentist and dental hygienist every 3 months. There are well established links between dental health and cardiovascular health. So, takeaway point is continue to see your dentist and work towards optimal dental health. You might just save your heart along with your gums!

Here's the link to Dr. Osterholm's podcast: <https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/covid-19/podcasts-webinars/episode-43> These podcasts can also be found on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), and now on [YouTube](#) as well.

Now for the Championship Fight! Vaccine A vs. Vaccine B – Stat News

What a good challenge to have. Remember when we had NO COVID-19 vaccines? None of us were vaccine-protected? I hope you do because that was just a few weeks ago! Already on the horizon is what to do about people thinking one vaccine is “good” or “better” and another vaccine is “bad” or “sucks” when it comes to fighting COVID-19. Here’s a great article from *Stat News* on this very topic. Read it and you’ll be ahead of this curve when someone asks you about vaccine A vs. vaccine B: <https://www.statnews.com/2021/02/17/the-myth-of-good-and-bad-covid-vaccines-why-false-perceptions-overlook-facts-and-could-breed-resentment/>

Vaccines Alone? Not a Good Strategy – The New York Times

The closest of Update readers will find from time to time a resource that is several days aged. Well done for noticing. Such a resource has been subjected to the Dr. G “relevance test” – meaning the first time I read it, I think that it might merit inclusion, but I want to wait a bit, go back, re-read, maybe even wait longer, re-read and then if it still feels like important news, it probably is. Such is the case with a January 24th article from *The New York Times* that helps us keep vaccines in perspective. Are they important? Absolutely. Should you get vaccinated? In my opinion (shared by many public health and infectious disease experts), absolutely. Once vaccinated, is that all there is to stopping the pandemic? Absolutely.... not. Read this for more insight: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/01/24/us/covid-vaccine-rollout.html>

Vaccines Vs. Variants – The Winner... Still TBD! – State News

All is not grim, though all is not rosy. Although I am 100% in support of COVID-19 vaccination, we all must be careful we don’t succumb to post-vaccination obesity and joviality (aka getting fat and happy). This resource is both thought-provoking and concerning. Of note, as you read it, remember this is lab-based data, not real-life performance of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Thus, ultimate impact of the B.1.351 variant, or any of the variants for that matter, still TBD. I’ll keep masking, distancing, handwashing, etc. until quality research shows I can relax. Here it is: <https://www.statnews.com/2021/02/17/pfizer-biontech-vaccine-less-potent-against-coronavirus-variant/>

Not Everyone at Once, Please – Human Volunteers for Infection? – UK Gov

This one you have to read to believe. Brave souls, even in a carefully designed trial. I’ve always wanted to visit London, but I think I’ll pass on this method for taking a trip to the United Kingdom. Oh, I’m older than 30, too. Well, guess I’m out of consideration, anyway: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/worlds-first-coronavirus-human-challenge-study-receives-ethics-approval-in-the-uk>

Big Picture of the Future? - Here’s a Good Start - Nature

If you’re like me, I sometimes need a “big picture” review of what all has happened, is happening, or may likely happen. It’s easy to lose the forest for so many rapidly appearing trees, so to speak. Here’s a read over just a few minutes that sure helped me get a better grasp of what is ahead for us and COVID-19 (hint: might need to adjust that number): <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-00396-2>

And finally (for now), we are working on data for confirmed COVID-19 infections within our EMS system from 01/16/21-02/15/21. Understandably, this week’s winter “gift” to us has sidetracked some data coming in. Though I won’t report incomplete numbers, we do anticipate sharing an encouraging decline in Update 61. Stay tuned and stay safe!

Vigilance. Safety. Evidence-Based Service to Others.

Let’s be careful out there.

Dr. Goodloe

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