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Update 61 - COVID-19 – From Office of the Medical Director 24FEB2021 1100

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

Welcome to the Good News Express. All aboard!



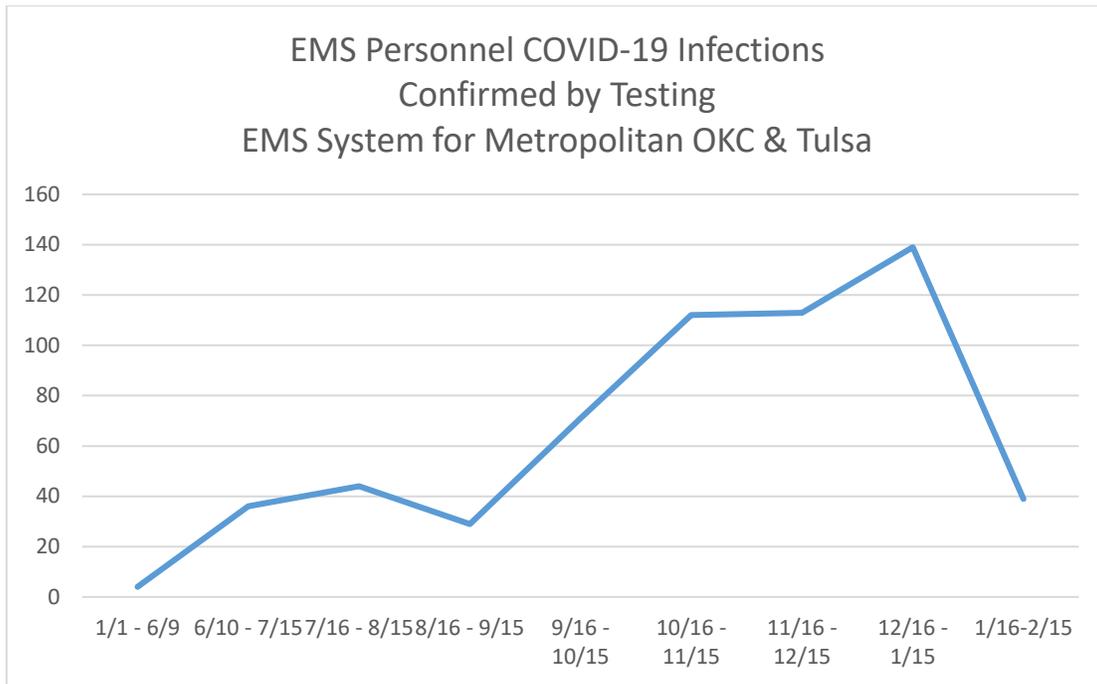
Key Content:

- **Where We Are – COVID Confirmed Cases in Our EMS System**
- **Vaccines are Better than “Good” to Be Honest! Avoiding Vaccine Alarmism – The New York Times**
- **Positive Protection from Across “The Pond” – The New York Times**
- **Protective Impacts of Masks – 101, 202, & 303 – National Academy of Sciences**
- **The 2020-2021 Influenza Season in the United States – CDC**

Where We Are – COVID Confirmed Cases in Our EMS System

Good news! The curve is definitely bent and in the healthy direction! Ongoing thanks to the OMD team and all those involved in helping us collect this important information every 30 days so we can all be smarter about at least some of the impact of this viral pandemic upon our EMS system.

As you take in the latest trajectory of these numbers, which are definitely people – our sisters and brothers in EMS - please keep in conscious thought the importance of continuing to get your COVID vaccinations until completed and of encouraging others to get theirs when they are eligible and able. Recall we have two pathways out of this pandemic: 1) smart infection control with “MEGG” PPE at work, and masks, distancing, and handwashing in our lives away from work; and 2) vaccinations, preferably for everyone that medically can receive them.



Here's the full results for our EMS system family since the pandemic's beginning. Keep in mind, as you see the data points, these are new infections in the time periods indicated, not cumulative infections:

Through 6/9/20	4 individuals
6/10/20 - 7/15/20	36 individuals
7/16/20 - 8/15/20	44 individuals
8/16/20 - 9/15/20	29 individuals
9/16/20 - 10/15/20	71 individuals
10/26/20 - 11/15/20	112 individuals
11/16/20 – 12/15/20	113 individuals
12/16/20 – 1/15/21	139 individuals
1/16/21-2/15/21	39 individuals

Overall, this represents a cumulative number of 587 individuals in our EMS system with confirmed COVID-19 infection (not suspected infection without positive test results) through the last reporting date of 2/15/21.

Vaccines are Better than “Good” to Be Honest! Avoiding Vaccine Alarmism – The New York Times

This is an important article of perspective. Sometimes we can get so technical and cautious that we miss the miracles happening all around us. Can you imagine effective vaccines being developed within a year a century ago? Absolutely not and notably sad for our ancestors having to navigate the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic, trying to stay alive so you and I could exist now! Please take a few minutes to read this so you can keep the advisements that “nothing is 100%” in perspective, because the good in the news is definitely there...

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/19/briefing/ted-cruz-texas-water-iran-nuclear.html>

Positive Protection from Across “The Pond” – The New York Times

There are very encouraging research results from the UK on the positive protective impacts of both the Pfizer BioNTech and AstraZeneca vaccines against COVID-19. The Moderna vaccine isn't yet approved in the UK, so that's why it is not included in these studies. This is another helpful read to keep us cognizant that hope doesn't just exist in theory; hope is

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contained in significant milligrams in every vaccination given worldwide. While of course we are most focused upon the citizens in the communities we serve, the answers in solving this pandemic are globally based. Every vaccination in every country helps us all more than we may realize...

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/22/world/europe/vaccine-studies-UK-hospital.html>

Protective Impacts of Masks – 101, 202, & 303 – National Academy of Sciences

You not only have my permission but advice to read this one in “rapid scanning” mode. It’s a lengthy, but very nicely composed manuscript on the scientifically derived benefits of widespread adoption of masking in public. It’s very well referenced (141 resources cited by the authors!) and organized. If you try to focus intently word by word it will get “quicksand lengthy.” Scan it for the general gist of the messages it seeks to convey and you’ll find it approachable. You’ll also be among the most informed on Planet Earth about masking benefits afterwards. While sometimes I wonder how much of a difference I can make as one person masking, this helps me see the positive in continuing to do what doesn’t still feel natural. See what you think...

<https://www.pnas.org/content/118/4/e2014564118>

The 2020-2021 Influenza Season in the United States – CDC

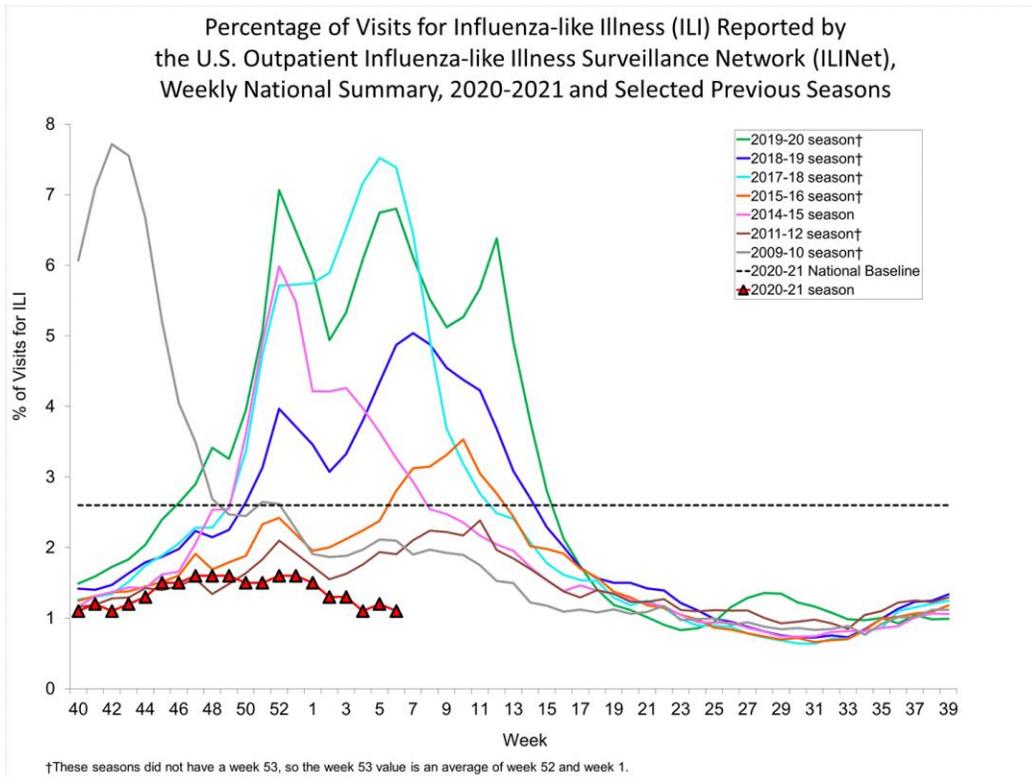
You might vaguely recall something in many Updates ago that the influenza season in the Southern Hemisphere in our summer (their winter) wasn’t bad at all. We hoped then that we could say the same in due time because the thought of a tough influenza season on top of this SARS-CoV-2 pandemic was just too much for us to have to endure. So, here’s the good news with data backing it up to say our hopes have been realized.

Now, are there people in the US with influenza? Surely. We’ve had some EMTs and Paramedics in our own EMS system test positive for influenza, mostly influenza A and very, very rarely influenza B. Not to diminish the aches, fevers, and other symptoms these folks have had, though the numbers in total are something we can all celebrate.

It’s not that influenza decided to give us a break; viruses don’t have sympathy or any other emotion for that matter. All the precautions we collectively have taken to try to keep COVID-19 away also did what? Exactly! Our actions also worked to keep influenza in check.

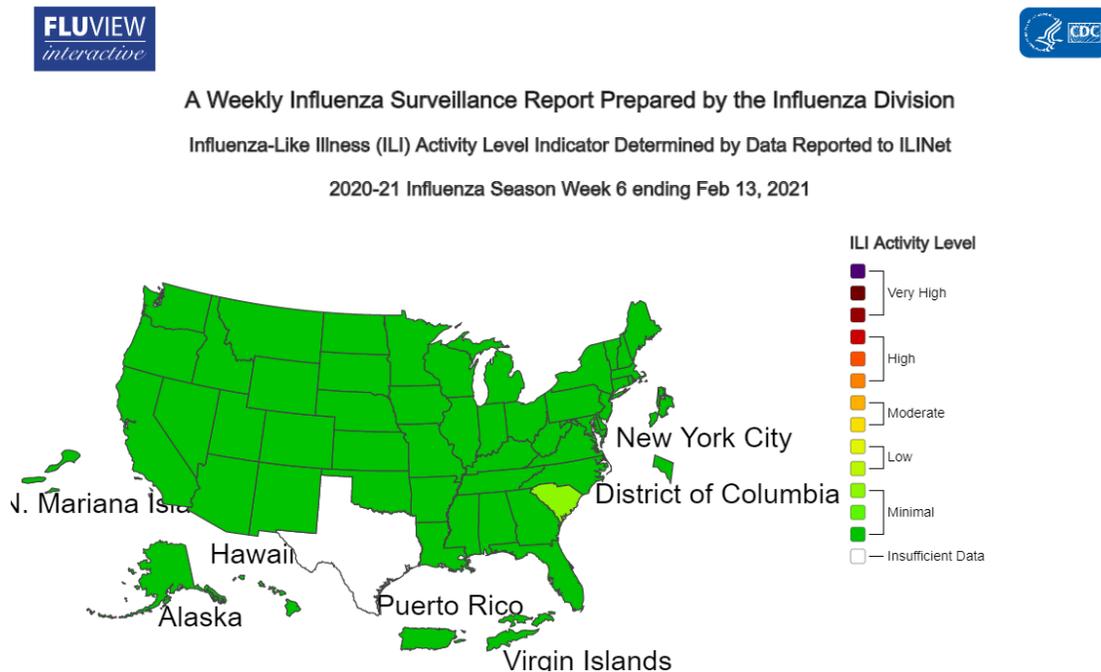
This is all spelled out in significant detail in the US Centers for Disease Control Weekly Influenza Report at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>

Taking just a few images from this latest report, from the week ending February 13, 2021 (recall these are always several days delayed gathering and analyzing data), we see first the following chart comparing recent influenza seasons:



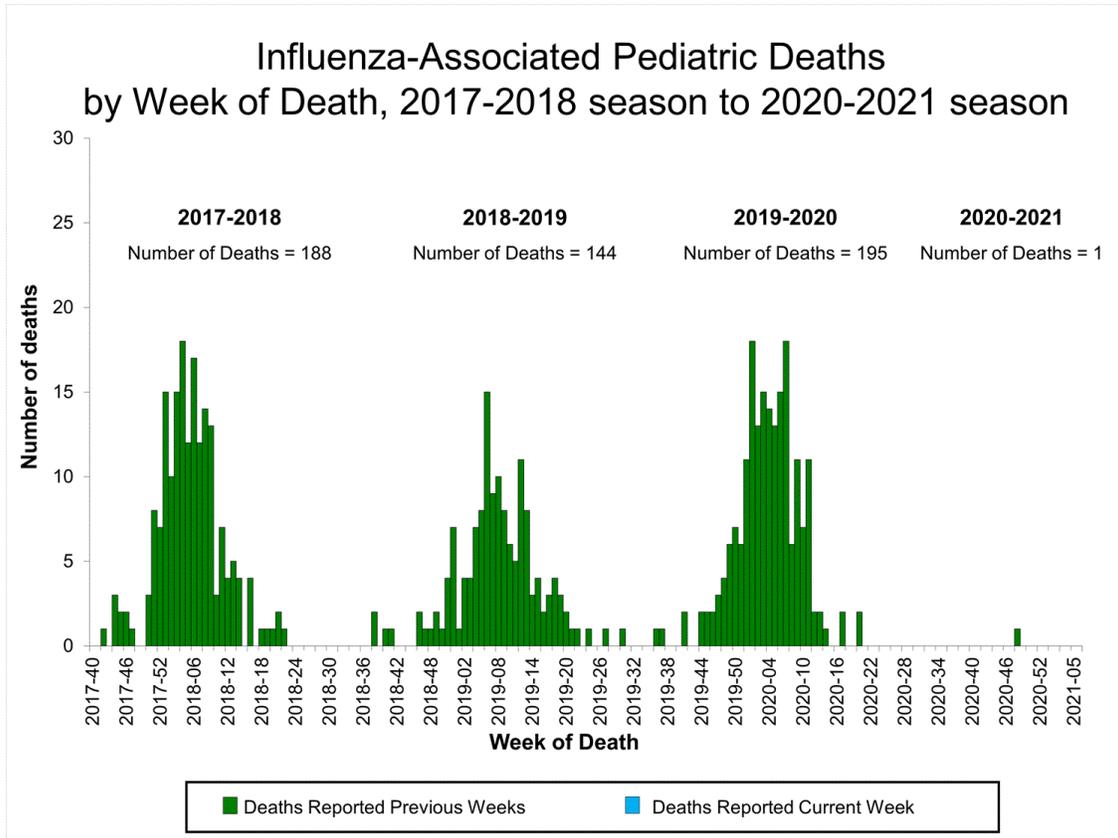
Those red triangles sure look good compared to every other influenza season, don't they? We have approximately 8 more weeks to know for certain that the strong trend will continue. The takeaway is keep up all the anti-COVID-19 practices while also being glad you got the influenza vaccine weeks ago because all of that is working to keep almost all of you flu-healthy as well! By the way, that straight dashed line running left to right? It's the "epidemic line threshold" so when looking at an influenza season, we can judge whether it was an epidemic (above the line) or not (below the line). We clearly are seeing 2020-2021 as non-epidemic in the US.

Another way of looking at influenza in the US is by using the following graph.



Takeaway: Green is good! (Not “greed” for you Gordon Gekko fans of the 1987 “Wall Street” movie. And for our younger colleagues, yes, we had movies back then, too. Only then we had to watch them at scheduled times... someone else’s scheduled times! Imagine the travesty that was.)

And finally (for now), look at the pediatric deaths from influenza for 2020-2021 so far... ONE! That’s a tragic one, though one is simply amazing compared to the prior seasons as shown...



See? The Good News Express, indeed.

Over a century ago, can you imagine what many (as in most, as in nearly everyone) in The Great Influenza pandemic were thinking about the future? It likely wasn’t very optimistic at all. And look what we’d tell them about the vast majority of the interim 102 years? No, it hasn’t been perfect or painless, but it most certainly has been filled with progress. We’ll get through this time. We’ll find a “new normal” and it will also be filled with progress. Keep the faith.

Vigilance. Safety. Evidence-Based Service to Others.

Let’s be careful out there.

Dr. Goodloe