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Update 63 - COVID-19 – From Office of the Medical Director 08MAR2021 0800

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

Key Content:

- **Educational Resource – The Osterholm Update – Episode 46**
- **The Variants of Concern Today – The New York Times**

I'm purposefully keeping this Update short for one VIP = Very Important Point: so that you will spend little time reading this and instead you will listen to the recommended podcast and read the recommended article. I respectfully ask that you gather your work "family" in the fire station or while in the ambulance cab between calls and listen to this podcast together. And then share it with your family at home. And please read this weekend's excellent article from *The New York Times*.

After learning, please, please, please... if you haven't decided to get vaccinated against COVID-19, go online TODAY, and learn more about these vaccines for YOUR protection. Here's two vaccine scheduling resources, one for metropolitan OKC and the other for metropolitan Tulsa:

<https://www.occhd.org/covid-19vaccine>

<https://www.tulsa-health.org/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-vaccine>

It's so tempting to think that this pandemic is waning, maybe even beyond waning to being essentially over, isn't it? I actually had a couple of shifts in the Emergency Department that to my best clinical knowledge, I didn't see one patient with active COVID-19! That hadn't happened in nearly a year. And that ended abruptly over the weekend with an otherwise very healthy young adult that had very UNhealthy oxygen desaturation with any physical activity due to worsening COVID-19. A reminder, both professionally and personally, we are not done yet.

And...truth being more powerful than fiction, literally while writing this Update, I received a call from a close relative that lives and works in a continual COVID hot spot. Just diagnosed COVID-19 positive. Day 3 mild symptoms, no dyspnea, no hypoxia as checked on a home pulse ox I recommended purchasing months ago as a "just in case" preparation. I cannot begin to share with you how grateful I am that they received the COVID-19 vaccine, the second dose being just a week ago. You might choose to say, "See, these vaccines don't do nothing! People still get COVID!" I'll respect your freedom of thought and speech, but I'll disagree with you. Instead, the heroic work of vaccine scientists throughout 2020 and the countless professionals doing other forms of heroic work in packaging, shipping, preparing, and administering those vaccines may well have saved a life I personally care about a lot. Mild symptoms are far different than death. These COVID-19 vaccines don't guarantee us freedom from infection or from ALL symptoms, but to date, once fully

vaccinated with 3 weeks after the dosing regimen, they have protected recipients from severe ICU-level illness and/or death.

Educational Resource – The Osterholm Update – Episode 46

I've been learning from Dr. Osterholm for over a year now. In fact, one of the more common facets of life today is recalling when each of us learned that the last year was not going to be anywhere near normal. When anyone asks me about that, my answer is very quick, very easy to recall, and VERY disconcerting to be honest. In the middle of last February, I attempted to escape from work (and winter) for just a bit to the Florida Keys with my better 99.5%. It was a predictably sunny day, warming already in the morning. I took time away from sun and water to participate in a webinar with my peer large, urban EMS system physicians to discuss insights of what was happening in the metropolitan Seattle, Washington area domestically and in Wuhan City, China and Milan, Italy internationally. That's how I met Dr. Michael Osterholm and understood that life as I knew was about to change big.

As those of you listening to his podcasts over this past year and learning along with me know, he speaks clearly and resolutely. I have to admit I was stunned at his predictions for illness and fatalities in the United States if measures to slow the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus were not soon enacted. He wasn't all "doom and gloom" in his comments, rather offering us his expertise to help us prepare us – you, me, our colleagues, our families...all of us - for the coming illness storm. Despite many that doubted him (and some still do), I listened carefully, factoring his considerable education and expertise in the areas of public health and infectious disease. Very, very little of his predictions have proven inaccurate since that time. We all, including him, wished his predictions were sadly pessimistic and not true, but as we've seen in countless patient encounters this past year and in our own sisters and brothers in EMS, too... his knowledge was and continues to be accurate. Therefore, while Spring seems to be greeting The Sooner State (and The Cowboy State for you OSU fans, too), it's best we continue to listen and prepare. This is the background I offer you when encouraging you to listen to The Osterholm Update, Episode 46, "Winnable Moments."

Here's the link to Dr. Osterholm's podcast: <https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/covid-19/podcasts-webinars/episode-46> These podcasts can also be found on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), and now on [YouTube](#) as well.

The Variants of Concern Today – The New York Times

Here's a great summary of where we are now with variants of concern (VOCs) in the United States. Particularly, after you listen to Dr. Osterholm's podcast, this information helps to put his predictions into context. Part of what I appreciate about this article is that it points out what we don't fully know how prevalent VOCs are because of the infrequency of viral genetic sequencing in our states, Oklahoma among the least in sequencing. Remember that absence of evidence does not equal evidence of absence.

Here's the article link: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/03/06/us/coronavirus-variant-sequencing.html>

Vigilance. Safety. Evidence-Based Service to Others.

Let's be careful out there.

Dr. Goodloe