

March 8, 2022



Hi Team –

Over the past two weeks, we have witnessed unspeakable acts of violence as part of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, a sovereign nation. These aggressions have resulted in unnecessary bloodshed, injuries, displacement of families, and most tragically the deaths of thousands, including innocent civilians. As a values-based organization with more than 150 years of service to the poor and marginalized and as

Americans, we stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and condemn this senseless invasion. And we send our prayers for healing to Ukraine as well as to our TriHealth team members, physicians and volunteers whose loved ones have been impacted by these events. For those seeking ways to support humanitarian aid efforts to Ukraine, we suggest connecting locally with the Cincinnati chapter of the American Red Cross ([click here](#)) or Matthew 25: Ministries ([click here](#)).

COVID Update

The combination of vaccines, growing immunity, and powerful therapeutics is fueling the continued sharp declines in new COVID cases and hospitalizations again this week. The positivity rate across our tri-state region is now down to 3.4% – the lowest rate since last July – indicating that the spread of the virus has slowed dramatically. And at TriHealth, our COVID inpatient census is now below 40 patients for the first time in eight months.

In recent weeks, as case rates and hospitalizations in our region have continued to decline, TriHealth has been collaborating with our clinical experts and the region's other health systems to determine when and how best to phase out mask-wearing in non-clinical settings. Yesterday, it was reported that weekly COVID cases per 100,000 people were down below 50, which is the CDC threshold for rolling back this once important safety practice. So, I'm thrilled to share that TriHealth plans to join in a region-wide approach to relax our mask policy in a phased manner starting with non-patient care areas, possibly as soon as this week! While details are still being finalized, under this revised policy, masks would be optional in break rooms, meeting rooms and cafeterias within our hospitals and other patient care settings, as well as in non-clinical facilities such as Baldwin, Norwood, and Corporate Health. To ensure the continued safety of all our patients, masks will still be required for all team members, physicians, volunteers and visitors in our direct patient care areas until new CDC guidance is issued. This decision – made in consultation with our Infectious Disease, Infection Prevention and Safety experts and in alignment with the latest CDC guidance – is an important milestone and welcome next step as we emerge from this pandemic and transition to living in the endemic or more manageable state of COVID. Stay tuned in the coming days for complete details on updates to our mask policy.

COVID-19 Weekly Update

- 38 COVID-positive patients in TriHealth hospitals with 9 on ventilators in the ICU.
- 3.4% COVID positivity rate in the region, with a 6.7% positivity rate for symptomatic patients tested at TriHealth over past two weeks. Target positivity rate is under 5%!
- R-factor for 14-county region now at 0.84. Hamilton County R-factor now at 0.79. Target R-factor is below 1.0.

Getting Healthcare Right: New Clinical Advances at TriHealth

Understandably, much of our attention over the past two years has been rightly focused on preparing for and successfully managing through multiple waves of COVID infections and associated hospitalizations. But that does not mean our work to Get Healthcare Right by delivering on the Triple Aim Plus One – *better care, better health,*

and better value, plus an enhanced practice and work environment for team members and physicians – has ever stopped. In fact, throughout this two-year pandemic, we have continued both to invest in strengthening our high-value network of hospitals, ambulatory centers, physician practices and service lines and to advance our population health care and financing models. So, as COVID gradually recedes into its endemic phase – and we more fully return our focus and resources to our Journey to Get Healthcare Right – I am proud to share two groundbreaking clinical advances we’ve recently achieved.

First Successful LVAD Implantation Enhances TriHealth’s Heart Program

Last month, TriHealth performed its first implantation of a left ventricular assist device (LVAD) at Bethesda North Hospital. An LVAD is a mechanical pump implanted inside a patient’s chest to help a weakened heart pump blood. The introduction of this cutting-edge clinical technology is yet another important step in the development of TriHealth’s rapidly expanding Advanced Heart Failure program, based at our destination Heart Hospital on the Bethesda North campus. And it further establishes TriHealth as the most comprehensive and highest quality heart program anywhere, as proven by having the distinction as the region’s only cardiac surgery care program to attain a “3-Star” rating with the Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) for coronary bypass surgery, several years in a row. This places our cardiac surgery program in the top decile nationally for quality. Following years of planning and preparation, the LVAD program received its accreditation in December with surveyors repeatedly complementing our team for its “enthusiasm, readiness and high level of collaboration.” One surveyor even went as far as describing TriHealth as “One of the best initial surveys I’ve been on.”

Not only was the procedure a success in every possible way, but our first LVAD patient was discharged nearly a week earlier than expected – to the cheers of our team members lining the halls of Bethesda North’s lobby in celebration (pictured below)! A BIG shout out to our entire LVAD program team, with a special thank you to Dr. Kathryn O’Keefe, Surgical Director of the Mechanical Circulatory Support and LVAD Program (who spent much of last year completing LVAD fellowship training at the Cleveland Clinic) and Dr. Sateesh Kesari, Advanced Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiologist and LVAD Program Medical Director.



(Left: Team members cheering LVAD patient. **Right:** (L-R) Dr. Sateesh Kesari, LVAD patient and wife, Dr. Kathryn O’Keefe)

TriHealth Cancer Institute Launches Bone Marrow Transplant Program

Similarly, following years of planning and preparation, the TriHealth Cancer Institute (TCI) based at Good Samaritan Hospital will launch our system’s groundbreaking bone marrow transplant (BMTx) program to serve TriHealth’s patients. Over the past decade, TCI has grown to become the region’s largest and most comprehensive cancer program, serving more than 40% of all cancer patients across Greater Cincinnati! Until now, our patients requiring this advanced procedure needed to go outside our system to receive a bone marrow transplant often resulting in fragmented and uncoordinated care and patient dissatisfaction. Now, thanks to the launch of our BMTx program, we have a number of eligible patients who are being readied for our world-class TriHealth care. We anticipate our first transplant to occur next month.

The launch of a bone marrow transplant program will also make possible the introduction of new and rapidly evolving Cellular Therapies at TriHealth to treat blood malignancies as well as solid tumors, using immune effector cell technology and other immunotherapy programming approaches. This targeted approach equips a

patient's own immune system T cells with a receptor that binds to malignant cells, causes an immune attack and ultimately destroys the tumor cells. And the development of this program – which many believe is the future of cancer treatment – further establishes TriHealth as the region's most progressive and most preferred cancer care provider.

These major clinical advances are evidence of TriHealth's unwavering commitment – and marked progress – to improve the health and wellness of our patients and the larger community. And as a testament to our amazing team and culture, we have achieved these impressive clinical breakthroughs even as we have battled through two long years of COVID. In the coming weeks and months, as we are able to shift our focus away from COVID, I plan to regularly devote a portion of my Weekly Update to showcase the many important ways we are Getting Healthcare Right. Look for updates on our exciting new investments in Behavioral Health, Precision Medicine, Closing Health Inequities, Population Health, Primary Care Network expansion, and many more initiatives which are on tap aimed at Getting Healthcare Right.

Following two long years battling COVID, there is now real evidence that this pandemic is receding into a less lethal endemic or more manageable state. Because of YOU, TriHealth has consistently been a shining example of how to manage through the uncertainty and many challenges of a prolonged crisis, never losing sight of our mission of service to our community and to one another. Thank you for all you have done and all you continue to do in providing the best and safest care – One Team, TriHealth Strong – ALWAYS putting our patients and community first!