

October 12, 2021



Hi Team –

We begin this week with a sense of hopeful optimism that we are seeing the beginning of the end of this fourth and hopefully final wave of COVID-19. Nationally over the past two weeks, new COVID cases, hospitalizations, and deaths have decreased – all indicators that this wave has plateaued in the U.S. and is now on a downward trajectory.

And as reported in the sidebar to the right, the region's R-factor has stabilized below 1.0 for the past two weeks, meaning the rate of virus transmission in Greater Cincinnati is slowing. Here at TriHealth, our COVID inpatient census has finally dipped below 100 patients for the first time since early September – a truly encouraging sign that the worst of this wave is receding! Despite our hospitals operating at near capacity for the past few weeks due in part to this surge, TriHealth has continued to remain open and ready to safely serve our patients and community, never turning a patient away – just as we have done at every turn throughout this 21-month pandemic. And that is all because of our incredible team of frontline caregivers and support staff who have selflessly responded to every challenge at every phase of this seemingly unending pandemic. A BIG thank you to all of our team members and physicians for stepping up once again during this fourth wave by taking on additional shifts and new roles allowing us to confidently care for all COVID and non-COVID patients alike, all during one of the most challenging labor markets in memory!

### COVID-19 Weekly Update

- 87 COVID-positive patients in TriHealth hospitals with 13 on ventilators in the ICU.
- 10.8% COVID positivity rate overall, with a 14.8% 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 0.87. Hamilton County R-factor now at 0.84. Target R-factor is below 1.0.

### COVID Vaccination Deadline Approaching

With fewer than 20 days until the October 31 vaccination deadline, our TriHealth Team continues to make encouraging progress toward our goal of a 100% vaccination rate. As of yesterday, more than 92% of team members and physicians – and 100% of leaders – have been vaccinated or have obtained an approved exemption or temporary deferment. My sincere thanks to all of our team members, physicians and volunteers who have already become fully vaccinated, and, in the process, are helping make TriHealth the safest possible care and work environment for all we serve and for all those who serve.

Though it is now too late to start and complete the two-dose regimen for Pfizer or Moderna vaccines before October 31, we do have supplies of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine for team members seeking the one-dose vaccine option. You can easily and conveniently schedule your vaccine appointment online by [clicking this link](#). Team members who still want the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine can receive those vaccines but will not be fully vaccinated nor in compliance with the requirement by October 31. Our deadline remains firm, and in these instances team members will need to complete their full two-dose regimen while on Leave of Absence. They can return to their TriHealth position immediately upon becoming fully vaccinated once they receive the second mRNA vaccine dose any time before the end of the calendar year.

Time is running short though, and we want and need all of our team members and physicians to be available to continue to serve our patients and each other. And the only way to do so is by being fully vaccinated. If you have



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not yet started your vaccination process, I urge you not to wait until the last moment as appointment slots are filling up quickly. You can schedule your appointment today! Remember, this is not just a TriHealth requirement. The federal government is now requiring ALL healthcare workers to be vaccinated, so every healthcare organization in the country is implementing similar vaccination requirements. And last month, a federal judge upheld St. Elizabeth's legal right to require the COVID vaccine, and we expect to see similar outcomes for those lawsuits filed in Ohio.

### **What Happens If You Are Unvaccinated?**

Since the start of this pandemic more than 21 months ago, we have always placed the safety of our patients and our fellow team members and physicians as our highest priority. Following the science and the guidance of the experts – including the FDA, CDC, ODH and our own TriHealth clinicians – we have been leaders in adopting proven safety practices and protocols to protect patients and caregivers alike. While we are beginning to see encouraging news about the trend of new COVID cases, now is not the time to lessen our determination in stopping this deadly virus once and for all.

With less than three weeks remaining until October 31, our leaders are continuing to meet one-on-one with those team members who have yet to start the vaccination process to assist in their discernment and decision process. They are also now developing work schedules for November and beyond to ensure safe and appropriate staffing levels throughout the system so that our ability to care for patients and serve this community is never compromised. So, in the name of patient and team member safety:

- Any team member or employed physician who is not fully vaccinated – or who has not already received an approved exemption or temporary deferment – will not be able to work after the October 31 deadline, and therefore will not be added to November work schedules.
- These team members and physicians – and we hope the number is small or even non-existent – will be placed on unpaid leave starting November 1, 2021 and will not be able to use or access PTO, nor will they be eligible for unemployment benefits.
- Since these team members will not be working or receiving a paycheck, they will need to make arrangements with HR to pay the team member premium or portion for medical plan insurance and other benefits normally deducted from paychecks through the HR Service Center.
- Team members and physicians who become fully vaccinated before the end of the calendar year will be able to return to work in good standing with all previous benefits and seniority.
- After December 31, 2021, any team member who is still not vaccinated or has not obtained an exemption or deferment – and again, we hope no team member will be in this situation – will be considered to have voluntarily resigned and will no longer be employed at TriHealth.

### **Flu Vaccine Update**

In recent weeks, well over a thousand team members and physicians have received their COVID vaccines, advancing us closer to our 100% vaccination rate goal. And on top of that more than 2,000 team members have already received their annual flu shot – all to help protect our patients and team members from the spread of these communicable diseases!



Our system's commitment to vaccinate our nearly 15,000 TriHealth team members, physicians and volunteers, as well as the thousands of patients and community members we serve, does not happen without the dedicated work of hundreds of frontline team members and clinicians. So, please join me in a special "shout out" to our exceptional TriHealth Vaccination Team who have stepped up in so many ways and received so many accolades throughout this pandemic!

I had the chance to experience their commitment to serve firsthand last week when I visited the Bethesda North Campus BNOI building for my annual flu shot – and I came away beyond impressed by the team and the entire operation and experience! If you have not already done so, I encourage you to schedule your flu shot appointment today. It is easy – just [click this link](#) to schedule. And please be sure to thank your TriHealth Vaccination Team for bringing The TriHealth Way to life in going above and beyond in service to our TriHealth team and our community!



### **In Remembrance of Harold Thomas**

Over the weekend, TriHealth – and all of Greater Cincinnati – lost a great and generous friend. Harold Thomas – who along with his wife, Eugenia, supported the construction of the Thomas Comprehensive Care Center at Bethesda North and the Thomas Heart & Vascular Center at the new Heart Hospital project currently underway – passed away on Saturday, October 9. I will discuss Harold's transformational philanthropy and many contributions to TriHealth patients, families, and caregivers more in next week's Update. In the meantime, please keep Eugenia and the entire Thomas family in your prayers.



### **Working Together for Our Community: One Team, TriHealth Strong**

Despite the countless hardships and previously unimaginable challenges of this prolonged COVID pandemic, it has been so inspiring to witness the many ways our team members and physicians have responded in living out our mission of service to our patients and community. And I hope – as has been the case for me – that this ongoing experience has drawn each of us closer to our "why" – the noble purpose that called each of us to work in healthcare. In some ways, we have all chosen to work and practice at TriHealth – whether at our patients' bedside or in support of our caregivers – to bring comfort, healing, reassurance, and hope to those we serve. Through the turbulent tides of the past 21 months, you have delivered – every day, in every interaction – on our promise to care for and serve our community – our family, friends, and neighbors – at their time of greatest need. I am so grateful to be a part of this extraordinary team and cannot express my thanks enough for all you do every day for our patients, community, and each other.

While some valued TriHealth team members and physicians may not fully agree with our vaccine requirement, I remain confident that what drew each of us to a career of service to others will hold us together and allow us to put these differences aside for the greater good of our patients and the community we serve. We want every single team member and physician to remain with TriHealth, knowing that we will emerge from this pandemic in the coming months and will need each and every one of you as we redouble our efforts to Get Healthcare Right for our community. We have been a model organization in so many ways throughout this pandemic. We will prevail in the battle against this fourth pandemic wave, and ultimately in the war against COVID-19, by placing the health and safety of our patients first, working together side-by-side as One Team, TriHealth Strong!