

“COVID-19 - RGV Partners in Health and Wellness Round Table”

Questions answered by Dr. McCormick and Dr. Fisher-Hoch, UTHealth

- 1. Masks not mandatory as per TXit seems there is mixed messages. What/how do we approach this?**

Answer: Masks should be mandatory in public spaces, particularly when near people or in any kind of building. Since they are not, it remains a matter of respect for others to wear them since they can help to prevent spread even from asymptomatic people who are shedding virus.

- 2. Read an article re: public toilets (aerosol spread) and contagion**

Answer: Unlikely, but be careful what you touch, and wash hands well with soap and water

- 3. You mentioned that this is a "winter" virus, but later that it can still be spread in warm weather. Can you clarify how those fit together?**

Answer: No, this is not a 'winter' virus. As far as we know it has no season. However, there are four other coronaviruses which are and which cause the common cold.

- 4. Can you address what appears to be a discrepancy between the six feet apart guidelines with the picture you showed of people sitting at three tables -with some people seeming to be six feet away from the affected person, but still getting infected?**

Answer: This was before the six feet rule came in and is the reason for it. This is what can happen in the restaurant if you have tables close together

- 5. If you have symptoms and have already been tested for COVID and the first test came out negative, can you get retested? And when?**

Answer: The test is only valid for the day it is taken, so if you have symptoms it is wise to get retested (if you can!)

- 6. Can we ask about reinfection? Will it be milder?**

Answer: We do not know the answer to this yet.

- 7. Based on your insights, when would you expect a vaccine to be made available to the public?**

Answer: Eighteen months to two years is the projection

8. Recently, the FDA stated there was no need to disinfect the groceries we shop for do you recommend we still do it?

Answer: Not high priority. If you leave unpacking for a couple of hours that is enough. You can wipe cans and plastic if you wish

9. What can local nonprofits do to educate their members and the community to keep everyone safe? What SHOULD happen, but is NOT happening to keep the community safe in the coming weeks and months?

Answer: This needs to be developed and the urgency of social distancing emphasized. It appears there are a number of people who don't understand, and for this reason the epidemic will persist.

10. I have my wedding coming up on August 7th, how safe do you think we would be to get together at that point?

Answer: I would be very wary of any large gathering before the end of the year. We were to attend a wedding reception in October which has already been canceled.

11. There is some information about the resurgence of COVID during flu season. What months should we expect to see that happen in the Valley?

Answer: We do not know, but we do expect further waves

12. Will Activities outside be less contagion than indoor functions since the distance can aid and air can circulate?

Answer: Generally yes, particularly with a strong breeze, but keep distance just the same

13. What about jogging, what is the risk of passing it to others on a path (virus lingering in air) and recommendation regarding wearing masks?

Answer: Wear a mask if you can. All exercise including jogging makes for heavy breathing which will expel more virus!

14. Although testing is of utmost importance. Is there possibility for UTRGV University to conduct a continuing education program for the public? Possibly understandable for different ages of community? Could that that be effective.

Answer: You will have to ask UTRGV

15. Are tests available? At the beginning there was a shortage of test kits.

Answer: There are more but not nearly enough

16. Is this considered a pathogen requiring droplet or airborne precautions in hospitals and nursing homes?

Answer: We think it is airborne

17. With droplet precautions the PPE should be in or outside the droplet precaution room?

Answer: PPE needs to be disposed of carefully. For instance, turning gloves and gowns inside out as you remove them and placing in disinfectant or for disposal.

18. Are kids still at low risk to develop symptoms?

Answer: We are concerned that there are rare cases of severe disease in kids resembling Kawasaki disease, which is an acute, and sometimes fatal immune response

19. I worry about the prison populations, and just how dangerous to the general community

These might be? (I mean the lack of protective gear, the concentration of so many people and the flow in and out of these facilities into the larger community. To restate: with the lack of protective gear, the concentrated population and zero testing, just how much of a risk do the jails and federal detention facilities pose to the larger community?)

Answer: Indeed, prisons are hotspots.

20. why is local testing limited to symptomatic people

Answer: Probably because of lack of tests. If we want to know where the virus is we need to test everyone.

21. A lot of public health officials say we need more testing. Who is responsible for this? How do we increase testing?

Answer: This has been difficult to figure out, which is the whole problem

22. With the reopening of certain retail businesses and places of work within the next few weeks, is there a possibility to see a spike in confirmed cases in the RGV?

Answer: There most certainly will be.