

Washington County, Texas Joint Information Center (JIC) Video Update 4-29-2020

Video location: <https://youtu.be/QDB5CpG0ZBI>

Dr. William Loesch, MD: "So I thought I just give a little update on things that are going on since last week since we last got to talk about this. Hearing a lot of questions out there about the increase in number of cases in the county. Especially when the people are saying, 'well aren't we supposed to be seeing a downturn in cases, aren't we supposed to be opening things back up?' Let me tell you this first, in the last week, since Monday, we've had one new case in this county that is not from the nursing facility that got hit and so as far as community spread is concerned, are there cases out there? Yes, but we're seeing the well start to dry up a little bit, so I think everything everybody's been doing so far has been working. The nursing home in town got hit really hard. Right now from the numbers I had as of this morning they're making up about 75 percent of our cases in the county and it's really unfortunate because it had a very vulnerable portion of our society here. Patients that are elderly and have a lot of medical problems already. The good news is it looks like it is contained and it wasn't just the residents there they got hit but approximately 30 staff members as well got hit and so we've taken steps for all of those positive staff members that do come and go from the facility they're being watched closely, they're being kept quarantine, they're no longer going in the facility now they're positive.

An update on the facility - last week with the help of Senator Lois Kolkhorst we actually get a lot of help in the facility and now we have plenty of help. We've got lots of nursing staff, they brought an extra nurse practitioner physician that are helping with maintain patience in the facility. the staff and residents are being cared for very well. Right now the number of cases the facility have stopped for the most part we've tested everybody now in there so we know who has it who doesn't. They've worked on infection control processes - it seems to be isolated least - I think we're actually a good place finally with the facility. People are still asking me 'so what are the next few weeks going to look like?' you know, it looks like we're going to start to be able to open up things. You know, we're seeing a downturn in the number of cases in the community at least from community spread. We've got the nursing home but at least we know where the cases are there. For the nursing home the next 2 weeks are going to be difficult. Like I said it hit a very vulnerable population we're watching these patients very closely. The hospital here is aware of the situation, the hospital college station is helping with the slack as needed. The goal is to try to keep everybody that can stay there - there, so we don't spread this more into the community. Now that being said, there's gonna come a time where some patients are going to be transported out. I think what's going to happen is... unfortunately I think we're going to see a few more deaths. I think you've got, like I said, a very vulnerable part of the population that's been hit in that facility we're going to have some more people that succumb to the virus. I also need to see a lot more recoveries.

For the community what does it mean? For the next 2 weeks, I think you're going to start to be able to see some businesses reopen at least in a limited capacity. There's only a few ways we can do that. Like I mentioned last time we've got to wear masks, we've got to wash your hands, We've got to socially

distance. Those things I'm gonna say that every time I talk about this. The only way we're going to get this virus beaten is to be smart about it.

Now there's a lot of fear out there, I'm seeing in my practice, people not wanting to come into the doctor and I'd like to allay some fears about that. Life does have to go on. You may get sick from corona virus. There's a small percentage chance, maybe you know 3 percent tops, that you could die from corona virus. The thing is are you going to take the risk that very small percentage chance you could get sick and die, when you have a known disease like high blood pressure, diabetes, etc. and we're going to let that get worse and it could very well get you sicker or die from that. We're seeing people I think ignoring some major illnesses they shouldn't be. I've seen some of the worst infections and anxiety, depression, blood pressure - blood sugar problems for the last few weeks because people been so afraid to seek care until it's really too late. So one thing I am going to encourage people is, if you feel like you have something going on, reach out to your doctor. We're safe, I think, moving forward for people to start going back to the doctor for checkups and for things, so long as you're being careful. If you have any symptoms that are worrisome, you need to report that to your provider before you come in. They're going to be screening you. Our clinic has made every effort we can to keep sick patients isolated completely away from others. And like I said, at the same time we're seeing very few cases in the community right now. It actually is coming down. Now things can change in a moment's notice, but right now, I think things are looking up.

One other question I've gotten a lot about recently is, 'why are so few people recovered on the list? we have 140 some odd cases on the list and only 18 or 19 are actually listed as recovered.' There's more than that recovered, a lot of this is bureaucracy. Washington County does not have a dedicated health department. In fact, our health department is me. I'm one person, it's a volunteer position, we don't have any staff in a health department that actually are able to go and track down all these cases. All of our health department needs, [resources] come from the state of Texas and DSHS Region 7, which covers multiple different counties and those resources are very taxed right now. I am encouraging a lot of my physician colleagues to reach out to patients that should be recovered and find out if they've recovered so we can list them, but it's time intensive, it takes phone calls, it takes staff. We're making every effort to get more of those numbers updated as they come up but again it takes time to do these things. I'm hoping that in the next few days as we're seeing the cases decline we'll have a little bit more time to go and make these phone calls and get the lists updated but the list look bad when you see 140 cases and 13 deaths in our county you sit there and go wow, or 15 deaths actually, now. If you see those numbers you go, 'wow this looks terrible,' in reality, the numbers don't look good, but - they're explainable. And so the big thing right now is, I don't want anybody to panic, the numbers are actually looking better in the community we'd be safe we need to be smart. We do need to start opening things up at least carefully and slowly."

<https://bit.ly/covidwctx>

<https://www.facebook.com/WashingtonCountyOEM/>