

Washington County, Texas Joint Information Center (JIC) Video Update 5-15-2020

Video location: <https://youtu.be/g3mHzN4cMml>

Dr. William Robert Loesch, MD: "I'm getting a lot of questions still about, "How is the disease doing in our community? Are things getting better, worse or staying the same? Are we still seeing community spread, and is that going up?" It's a day by day thing. I know the last time we had a little visit like this, community spread looked like it was doing okay. The nursing home situation was really what was blowing out of proportion. I know also, that things are starting to re-open, which has to happen. I'll tell you, it ain't over yet folks. There is still community spread out there. This week and last week we've seen a few more cases out there, so it's definitely not going away. I don't expect it to go away anytime soon. The nursing home situation, the big nursing home that got hit, is doing better, they're stable. We haven't had a whole lot of deaths in the last few weeks. I think you're still going to see a couple more in there at least. There is some concern that another nursing home may have had a case, and we're working on that. The state is actually involved with that investigation right now, as well. We've had some group homes get hit and we've seen a few cases out in the community, so it's not over.

Which brings me again to the thing I've mentioned before. Masks. There's a lot of misinformation going around about masks. I thought I'd talk about that for a minute. I've already got a full time job, maybe 2, and if I had to go around and police Facebook over this stuff, I would never sleep. I've taken the bait a couple times and responded. Maybe I shouldn't have, but I'll tell you that I even put out a little Facebook blurb myself. These masks are going to be the only way we go back to the world we knew. I know there's people that are worried that maybe, wearing the masks will say that, "I'm scared of this virus." Well, you should be. This is not a fun virus. I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy. But, the only way we're going to keep this from spreading is if we wear masks. Now, if I wear a mask, it's not really protecting ME a lot. It will drop my chance of getting it down maybe 30%. But, if I wear it, I'm protecting other people. Because it really drastically, maybe 95%, reduces the amount of transmission to other people. Now, if there's multiples of us in a room and we're all wearing masks, the risk of us getting this virus is really low, maybe 1 or 2%. If none of us are wearing masks, and I've seen this. It runs like wildfire through businesses and through the nursing home. So, unless we start being really serious about wearing masks, we're going to have trouble. I know there's a lot of folks out there saying that masks cause carbon dioxide poisoning or hypoxia. It's ludicrous, the things I'm seeing on Facebook. So, just be very careful about what you believe on social media. Some people put out something that's not fact checked. That's not accurate, and it just snowballs out of control. I've also seen on Facebook people saying that Hydroxychloroquine and Zinc and Zithromax cure this disease. That's false. There's been 20 deaths, and all 20 of them, were on Hydroxychloroquine and Zithromax, so it's not a cure. Don't be in a false sense of security because you think that if I get this, I'll have this magic cure. It's not magic, it's not magic. It might help, but there's nothing that cures this yet. So the right thing, right now is to be safe.

Also, I'm still hearing a lot of questions about antibody testing. The last time I mentioned it, it wasn't ready for prime time. I'm still not certain it's ready for prime time. I've probably ordered the test now,

about a dozen times. I've had one positive. I had a lot of folks, a lot of folks come and say, " I'm pretty sure I had this virus already in January or February". Some even saying November or December. Every single person I've tested has been negative with one exception. I don't like one exception being the rule here. Everybody needs to assume right now that this thing, it may have been here in late January or February but it wasn't prevalent then. So, until antibody testing has been rigorously examined, it's not something I would recommend people really be looking for. There was an urgent care in College Station that was selling test for \$20. I've had a few folks that tested positive there. They came in to me and I retested them and they were negative. So, I'm not sure if those tests were accurate or not. On top of that is the IgM tests. There are two types of antibody tests. IgM, which looks more at the more recent infection versus IgG, which is long term immunity. IgM tests, tend to have a lot of false positives. So, I'm not really hanging my hat on these tests yet. Still, the right test to do is the nasal swab.

Which brings me to the other question I've had. There's a lot of folks saying that we're seeing a lot of people that test positive one day, and negative the next day and then positive again. It's all over the place. Part of that is just limitation from the test. To test right now, we take a nasal swab and we stick it pretty much to your brain back there. We put that swab about 4 or 5 inches into your nasal passages and get pretty much the back of your throat. Now, there is a bit of user dependency on this. If you don't get enough of a sample, enough mucus and snot so to speak, on that swab, then you don't get enough virus particles to test. What we do is, we actually take that swab and it goes to a lab. They actually amplify the virus to where they can detect something called PCR (polymerase chain reaction) testing. There's some limitations. I'll tell you that the testing is getting more accurate the longer we've been going. I've had fewer and fewer what I would consider false negatives, which we were plagued with early on. The thing is, we're also seeing patients, particularly nursing home that we're having to retest, you know once or twice to make sure they are cured. We're seeing positives persist for weeks and weeks. The question is whether this is because of the accuracy of the test or whether they're shedding virus particles that are not necessarily infective. It's still a work in progress. We're working on it and it's the best testing we have so far. Until we can get faster testing that we can get at Point of Care, like the Abbott test, which is by the way in our community but very restricting as to the amount we can do, we're going to keep having some issues with this.

I'll tell you, things are looking up from a medical standpoint. Things are starting to re-open and as they open, I just need everybody to act like nothing is back to normal. Because it's not going to be back to normal for a while. Minimize the trips you make out in public. Wear your mask. It's not going to hurt you and it's not an admission of guilt or a sign of fear. Wear your mask. Wash your hands. Stay socially distant. The hard times are not over. There are some people predicting that we may not even have hit the peak yet like we thought we had. I'm still seeing cases. I'm still seeing deaths. Just be safe and it's going to open up fully eventually."

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