



Contact: Susie Wallace
Director of Communications
E-mail: swallace@okoha.com
(405) 427-9537

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Oklahoma Hospital Chief Medical Officers Issue Joint Statement on COVID-19 Policies

The following statement is made on behalf of chief medical officers and chief clinical officers of Oklahoma hospitals and hospital systems.

As the physician leaders of hospitals and health care systems across the state of Oklahoma, we have an important safety message regarding COVID-19.

COVID-19 positive cases and hospitalizations have soared over the past several weeks, nationally and in Oklahoma. As the front-line professionals in this battle, we urge every Oklahoma resident to take the ***necessary steps now*** to prevent the spread of this deadly disease. This is not a political statement. We are doctors urging those we care for across the state to take action now.

Our hospitals will continue to require staff, patients and visitors to follow the strictest public safety protocols, including mask-wearing, screenings upon entry to our facilities, and limitation of visitors. We ask that each and every Oklahoman do the public version of these precautions: wear a mask, stay at least six feet apart, avoid crowds, and wash your hands frequently.

Since the first positive COVID-19 case in March, Oklahoma has seen a spike in positive cases after every major holiday. Subsequently, hospitalizations, and unfortunately, deaths follow. We have seen this trend even during summer months while the public enjoys outdoor spaces. As we move indoors in the colder months, enter cold and flu season, and as the holiday season approaches, we beg that Oklahomans follow these precautionary steps to stem community spread.

The decision to urge these safety measures is driven by data and guidance from health care experts, not politics. According to the Oklahoma State Department of Health, since Aug. 1, cities whose residents are wearing masks saw a 34% rise in cases, compared to a 109% percent increase in cities where residents aren't wearing masks.

Also, Oklahomans who have COVID-19 and need hospital care are twice as likely to live in non-masking cities. As reported by MyHealth Access Network on Nov. 12, 32% of hospital admissions come from masking cities while 68% of hospital admissions come from non-masking cities.

The only tools at our disposal now are wearing a mask, keeping a safe distance and washing our hands – and we must do all three to make an impact. These measures will prevent another catastrophic surge in hospital admissions and COVID-19 deaths, but we need every Oklahoman's help and compliance.

Please help get COVID-19 under control by doing what you can to prevent more illness and hospitalization. Support our dedicated and courageous health care staff as they continue the fight against COVID-19 for those patients who have the misfortune of becoming ill during the pandemic.

Together we can get this dangerous virus under control in Oklahoma.

Muhammad Amin, MD

Chief of Staff

AllianceHealth Midwest, Midwest City

Harry Fisher, DO

Chief of Staff

AllianceHealth Seminole

Timothy Young, MD

Chief Clinical Officer

Ascension St. John

Lance Yarbrough, MD

Vice Chief of Staff

Atoka County Medical Center

John Krueger MD, MPH

Chief Medical Officer/Chief Quality Officer

Undersecretary of Medical Staff/Quality

Chickasaw Nation Department of Health, Ada

Richard J. Helton, DO

Chief Medical Officer

Coal County General Hospital, Coalgate

Scott Michener, MD

Chief Medical Officer

Comanche County Memorial Hospital, Lawton

Bob Abernathy, DO
Chief of Staff
Cordell Memorial Hospital

Krystal Vonfeldt, DO
Chief of Staff
Duncan Regional Hospital

Beth Hites, DO
Chief of Staff
Eastern Oklahoma Medical Center, Poteau

Julie Schaufele, MD
Chief of Staff
Elkview General Hospital, Hobart

John Hensley MD
Chief of Staff
Fairview Regional Medical Center

Bruce Storms, MD
Chief of Staff
Grady Memorial Hospital and Five Oaks Medical Group, Chickasha

Craig Phelps, MD
Chief of Staff

Eric DeRocher, DO
Vice Chief of Staff
Great Plains Regional Medical Center, Elk City

Aaron Sizelove, DO
Chief of Staff
Harper County Community Hospital, Buffalo

Guy Sneed, DO
Chief Medical Officer
Hillcrest HealthCare System

Julie Watson, MD, MPH
INTEGRIS Health Chief Medical Officer
Chief Medical Officer, INTEGRIS Baptist Medical Center, Oklahoma City

Michael Jackson, MD, FACOG
Chief Medical Officer
INTEGRIS Bass Baptist Health Center, Enid

Gregory Root, DO
Chief Medical Officer
INTEGRIS Canadian Valley Hospital, Yukon

Kyle J. Schauf, MD
Chief Medical Officer
INTEGRIS Grove Hospital

Dena O’Leary, MD, MSCTS
Chief Medical Officer
INTEGRIS Health Edmond & Arcadia Trails

Justin Mitchell, DO
Chief Medical Officer
INTEGRIS Miami Hospital

Ralph O. Shadid, MD
Chief Medical Officer
INTEGRIS Southwest Medical Center, Oklahoma City

D. Nelson Fong, MD
Chief Medical Officer
Lakeside Women’s Hospital, Oklahoma City

Kamil Nemri, MD
Chief Medical Officer
Lindsay Municipal Hospital

John V. Tedesco, DO, FACOS, FAACS
Chief of Staff
McAlester Regional Health Center

David Saxton, MD
Chief Medical Officer
McBride Orthopedic Hospital

Pam Kimbrough, MD
Chief Medical Officer
Mercy Ardmore

Chad Michael Smith, MD
Chief Medical Officer
Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City

Wellie Adlaon, MD
Chief of Staff
Mercy Hospital Tishomingo

AJ Bisson, MD

Medical Director/Chief Medical Officer
Mercy Rehabilitation Hospital Oklahoma City

Danna K. Stuart, MD

Chief of Staff
Newman Memorial Hospital

Aaron L. Boyd, MD, MBA

Chief Medical Officer
Norman Regional Health System

Brett Cunningham, MD

Medical Director
Oakwood Springs, Oklahoma City

Kirt Bierig, DO

Chief of Staff
Okeene Municipal Hospital

Brook D Scott, MBA, MD

Medical Director
The Oklahoma Heart Hospitals, Oklahoma City

Thomas Gillock, MD

Medical Director
Oklahoma Surgical Hospital, Tulsa

Cameron Mantor, MD

Chief Medical Officer
Oklahoma Children's Hospital at OU Health, Oklahoma City

David Walsh, MD, FACEP

Chief Medical Officer
OU Health University of Oklahoma Medical Center, Oklahoma City

Muhammed Sanullah, MD

Chief Medical Officer
OU Health Edmond Medical Center

John White, MD

Medical Director
Parkside Psychiatric Hospital and Clinic, Tulsa

D. Bryan Dye, MD

Chief Medical Officer
Purcell Municipal Hospital.

Sonja Langley, MD

Chief of Staff
Roger Mills Memorial Hospital, Cheyenne

John Huff, MD

Chief Medical Officer
Select Specialty Hospital, Oklahoma City

Michael Lawrence, DO

Chief Medical Officer
Share Medical Center, Alva

Dr. David Hanley, MD

Chief of Staff
Southwest Medical Center, Lawton

Kersey Winfree, MD

Vice President Medical Affairs
SSM Health St. Anthony Hospitals

Cara D. Pence, MD, FACS

Chief of Staff
Stillwater Medical Center

J. Michael Pontious, MD

Chief Medical Officer
St. Mary's Regional Medical Center, Enid

Michael Johnson, MD, MBA, FAAP

Executive Vice President/Chief Medical Officer
The Children's Center Rehabilitation Hospital, Bethany

David Good, DO

Chief of Medical Staff
Wagoner Community Hospital

Brenda Stutzman, DO

Chief of Staff

Brian Bluth, MD

Vice-Chief of Staff
Weatherford Regional Hospital