



Governor's Press Conference 4/26/2020

The Governor held a press conference this afternoon, April 26th, at Orlando Health with Orlando Health physicians who are currently serving on the Governor's Task Force to Reopen Florida.

The press conference focused on providing data to allay fears of taking steps to re-open. The Governor shared Central Florida data showing steady progress in flattening the curve in COVID19 cases. He, along with the physicians, highlighted steps the state has taken, hospital capacity, continuity of services, testing capacity, and practical concerns businesses should be aware of when considering reopening.

The Governor also addressed the unemployment system and shared that he hopes to have good news to announce by Monday.

- **Where we stand-**

- Success in Central FL Cases peaked at beginning of april and hospitalizations peaked right after
- Total of 116 hospitalizations in Orange County on April 7th. Currently 68 hospitalized.
- 60% of cases in 3 counties that make up 30% of the population of the state. 30 million other people in Florida 40% capacity statewide.
- Tampa Bay has had very low numbers.
- 340,000 tested. In South Florida: 1 per 45 ppl
- Rate of positivity percentage in testing is declining. Important data point because expanding testing will always naturally lead to increases in cases.
- April 3rd was highest number of cases - 1317 new cases out of 11,725 tests (positivity rate 10-15%). Yesterday reported 823 new cases out of 19,342 tests (positivity rate 4.5%). Was consistently 9-10% but has been 6%, 6%, 5% over last few days.

- **Expanded testing -**

- 7 drive through sites that have done 80k tests
- Capacity to test exceeds demand. Saw this in Jax, who expanded eligibility as demand was lower than expected. Any symptomatic, any first responders and health care workers, and any asymptomatic that have reason to believe they've been exposed.

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- Set up 6 walk-up sites for individuals who do not have access to vehicles- starting with public housing in Jacksonville. Walk-up sites did 4,700 tests this past week.
- Even though supply has exceeded demand we still hold robust testing as a priority.
- Contracted with 2 high throughput labs for quicker turnaround in results thanks to Federal actions to raise Medicaid/Medicare reimbursement to \$100 per test.
- Expanding state lab testing capacity. Currently have 3 state labs that are capable of a total of 900 test samples per day. Have ordered PCR testing machines to arrive on May 25th so state labs can do thousands of additional test samples per day by the summer.
- Ordered antibodies tests. Expect to have seroprevalence tests/antibody tests by May 1st. Have been stuck in China for two weeks. Will show important data on how long we've had it (CA found out an individual died from COVID19 in January before we knew it had spread) and true hospitalization/mortality rate. Also helps determine if workers test positive for antibodies they may be immune and cleared for work. We are still learning about antibodies.
- **Nursing Homes -**
 - Looked at data out of South Korea and knew the disease impacted elderly.
 - State took various actions to protect nursing homes. Set up response teams that have conducted thousands of visits.
 - 50 National Guard Strike Teams to address limitations with employee screenings
 - Nursing home deaths per 100,000: NJ 23, NY 18, MA 17.5, CT 10.5, LA 10, PA 6.6, FL only 3.2
 - FL model has worked well and we will continue to improve on it
 - Division of Emergency Management has delivered to nursing homes and long term care facilities: 7 million masks, 1 million gloves, 500k face shields, 160k gowns

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The Governor then opened up the discussion to the panel of Orlando Health physicians. They shared:

- They believe data shows there was a peak in the 1st or 2nd week of April.
- Governor: Is the curve flat in Central Florida? Answer: It's going down.
- Testing is more important for resource management. Knowing who is positive can allow better management and decontamination practices of PPE that can increase supply and life of PPE.

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- Treatment has been a mixture of traditional (ventilator) and data-driven therapeutic experiments. Like convalescent plasma- have contacted all people who tested positive to donate blood regardless of if they were hospitalized.
- They complimented the Governor for his knowledge of health data and health studies
- They stressed that they have been taking care of COVID19 patients while successfully providing continuity in other emergency care services. Still operated their Level 1 Trauma Center, cardiology wing, ICU all at same time.
- Orlando health is ready for 20x worse than what they currently have in capacity.
- Governor: 41% unused ICU beds in Miami-Dade, which has lion share of cases. 35 cases in Hillsborough county-wide. Question is in light of this data do we have capacity to open up into next phase safely.
- Length of time that we can't do elective surgeries increases the amount of emergency procedures we will end up doing as cases worsen and people do not seek care they need.
- Orlando Health formed its own Task Force to work with businesses on reopening planning and safety mitigation.
 - They found that employees are not properly trained on how to effectively use masks for mitigation. Merely wearing the mask or requiring it is not effective - must be trained.
 - Saw food workers touch their face mask then touch the food. Need to always wash hands after touching facemask and not touch anything else.

Q&A

Gov asks for questions on press conference material first then unemployment

Given the lower number of cases does the state have a deadline in mind for reopening?

- Not concerned with a date so much as being methodical using health experts and using the White House roadmap.
- There was hysteria and fear in mid-March. The data has shown the impact has not been nearly as significant as some predicted it would be in Florida. This is a good thing.
- Reopening the economy is not the same as flicking on a light switch because there has to be confidence your area is safe.

So no plan in place, no dates?

Going to make announcements soon. Working with roadmap. Rather be safe and methodical. No confidence = no economy.

Is the testing data you are presenting misleading? The DOH site says X, this data says Y?

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No. We separate out tests taken on same individuals after isolation to determine if they are now past the virus. We separate out unique tests so we have data on fresh tests.

- This helps determine the spread and see the trends as opposed to showing the same person testing positive on day 14, 15, and 16- which doesn't help show spread.
- DOH gets a huge data dump and we put those results up immediately. LabCorps doesn't parse through the data. So we provide that raw data immediately and then parse through it. We explain how we present the data related to fresh tests.

Governor: Ready to move to unemployment

- 267k payments have been sent out. Hope to have an even better announcement on Monday after weekend data is processed.
- Last year, a total of 300,000 payments were made all year and that was with restrictions that delayed the process (recertification, seeking work requirements, etc.)
- The state spent \$77 million on a system that was not designed for this. We had to go in and work 24/7 to re-engineer it. We rebuilt the system, made serious architectural changes, added 100 servers, added 2200 state employees from different departments. Changed leadership.
- Not just state side issues, we've had to work with Federal system which has to check SSN and other databases.
- Waived every hurdle I was legally allowed to such as seeking work and recertification every two weeks. We recognize we are in a new recession.
- Would have taken 6 months to develop an entirely new system so we had to work with what we had. This was a tsunami that the system wasn't prepared for. When all is said and done will show that we moved heaven and earth to make this happen as quickly as possible and the system will be better for it.
- A lot still in the hopper and hope to have announcement Monday.

Do we have any data on Federal disbursements?

100 million in CARES Act has gone out. Should be more once weekend data processes.

Do you anticipate further restrictions on businesses opening up? Temperature checking, etc.?

We want to put up more testing sites but testing has to be strategic. Can be negative one day and positive the next. Temperature checks are good but do not catch asymptomatic people.

Asks Drs. if they want to add-

Orlando Health Physicians:

- The key is *behavior modification*. Testing comes and goes and only captures the "right now." Masks and testing can provide a false sense of security.

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- Must stay vigilant, do not touch face, always wash hands, practice good hygiene, stay home with any symptoms.
- Symptoms are: fever, shortness of breath, dry cough, runny nose, congestion, disequilibrium, fatigue and weakness, loss of smell or taste, etc....

Governor: moving forward based on data. Repeated sustained interactions with nursing homes and businesses. Looking at available data from South Korea that speaks to spread.

In final comments, the Governor reiterated his hope for a good announcement on unemployment on Monday.