

COVID-19 Report to Members ~ June 8, 2021

Reports are sent on Tuesdays, unless there's breaking news.

Quality & Patient Safety

CDC study shows benefits of vaccination

In the on-going study of healthcare workers and other essential employees, the CDC cited a **91% reduction in the risk of infection** as well as other benefits for those fully vaccinated.

The HEROES-RECOVER study involved tracking the positivity status of nearly 4,000 vaccinated participants who were more likely to be exposed to the virus, including first responders and healthcare workers, for 17 weeks. Using weekly testing, the investigators determined positivity as well as the amount of virus (viral load), the length of positivity (viral shedding), and the severity and duration of symptoms in those who did contract COVID-19.

The key finding was that the risk of infection (both symptomatic and asymptomatic) reduced by 91% for those fully vaccinated and by 81% for those partially vaccinated.

The severity of illness for those who did contract the virus was also milder, with the amount of detectable virus being 40% less. The virus was, on average, detectable for six fewer days in those fully vaccinated. Both the amount and duration of infection impact transmissibility as well as the severity of illness.

Predictors of severe COVID-19 in patients with diabetes

Diabetes is an independent risk factor for severe SARS-CoV-2 infections. The **retrospective review of hospital system data** conducted by researchers at the University of Maryland is the first published analysis of predictors for hospital admission and mortality after COVID-19 diagnosis in patients with diabetes. The authors compared clinical characteristics among patients requiring inpatient admission versus outpatients during March–June 2020, before SARS-CoV-2 vaccinations were available.

Among patients with diabetes, hospitalized patients were older than non-hospitalized patients (64 ± 14 years vs. 57 ± 14 years). Hospitalized patients also had higher odds of also having chronic kidney disease and higher A1C at the time of COVID-19 diagnosis versus their non-hospitalized counterparts. Increased risk of death was observed among patients of older age, higher body mass index (BMI), and higher A1C at time of COVID-19 diagnosis. Hospitalized patients were also more likely to die. DPP-4 inhibitor use prior to COVID-19 infection was not associated with decreased hospitalization rate.

Although this study has several limitations – including that during the study period, most testing was limited to the inpatient setting, which potentially inappropriately excluded outpatients with undetected SARS-CoV-2 infection – the implications of these data are clear. Hospitalization and death from COVID-19 among patients living with diabetes and other risk factors are of concern.

Vaccinations strongly reduce severe COVID-19 disease, including among those with pre-existing conditions. Per CDC, the **vaccines are recommended for and can be administered to most people with underlying medical conditions**, including diabetes.

FDA issues warning for test kits

On May 28, the FDA issued a **warning** to providers and the public to stop using the Lepu Medical Technology SARS-CoV-2 Antigen Rapid Test Kit and the Leccurate SARS-CoV-2 Antibody Rapid Test Kit. Although neither test has been authorized in the US, the FDA noted they are aware that some were distributed to pharmacies and are being marketed directly to consumers. The tests have a high risk of false results.

Resources & Equipment

New variant naming convention

To more easily communicate information about the variants that have and may become prevalent, the World Health Organization (WHO) last week simplified how variants will be referred to within non-scientific discussions. The table below, which uses the Greek alphabet, shows the list of current variants of concern. For additional details as well as the list of variants of interest, see the **WHO's announcement**.

WHO label	Pango Lineage	Earliest Documented Samples
Alpha	B.1.1.7	United Kingdom
Beta	B.1.351	South Africa
Gamma	P.1	Brazil
Delta	B.1.617.2	India

Virtual Meetings & Education

Webinar ~ Mandating hospital employee vaccines

Hospital and health system leaders are invited to join the Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association for a complimentary webinar to hear from staff of Houston Methodist, the first hospital system in the country to mandate COVID-19 vaccinations for employees. The webinar will feature lessons learned for implementing employee vaccine roll-outs, communication tactics, and human resource implications of mandating the vaccine.

A Shot in the Arm: Lessons Learned from the First Hospital System to Mandate COVID-19 Vaccines

Thursday, June 17 ~ 10:15a MTN / 9:15a PAC

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