

RESILIENCE: Doctors urge residents to stay calm

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as contagious as seasonal flu. On average, a carrier of the flu infects 1.3 people; with COVID-19, the number is two to three.

“If we do nothing, it peaks very quickly and we’re overwhelmed,” he said.

A big spike in cases puts tremendous pressure on hospitals and health care workers — who must also still take care of patients with other serious ailments and injuries.

If we “flatten the curve” of spread through self-isolation, “then our system can handle it,” he said.

Complicating matters is the fact that COVID-19 can present similar symptoms to seasonal flu or a common cold — and people with no symptoms at all can still spread it.

Aggressive testing would help to sort out cases, but testing has not been readily available.

“This looks like a lot of things,” Dr. Miller said. “A cough and a fever is similar to a lot of illnesses. I don’t have tests.”

Dr. Miller believes that a combination of aggressive

testing and self-isolation is the most effective approach to fighting a virus that has no treatment or vaccine at this time — though health professionals are working feverishly on both.

“The best outcomes I’ve read are the communities who do both (testing and self-isolation),” he said.

While some jurisdictions — like Los Angeles, California — have essentially given up on testing as a means of heading off the disease, Dr. Miller believes that it is not too late for aggressive testing to have a beneficial impact.

Dr. Eric Wattenburg of Sisters, who owns and operates the Your Care clinic in Redmond, urges people in Sisters to stay calm in the face of rising concerns.

“Get outside, maintain some level of normalcy,” he said. “Don’t be afraid to come to the doctor’s office if you’re sick.”

He noted that his clinic has long had the means to separate patients from each other, and has a negative pressure room that circulates air outside the building.

He said that people being afraid to go to the doctor is problematic in and of itself.

He said that coronavirus symptoms — including a fever of about 101, a deep,

persistent lower-respiratory cough and shortness of breath — need to be addressed.

“Don’t be afraid to go to your doctor’s office or the hospital,” he said. “They’re ready for it. These people *should* be seen. Don’t sit at home until you’re so bad it’s critical.”

Dr. Wattenburg thinks that Central Oregonians are far better off than people crowded into major metropolitan areas and should be grateful for the built-in advantages of the environment.

“Here in Central Oregon, we’re doing all the right things,” he said.

Acknowledging the profound dislocation that drastic restrictions are having on the culture and economy of Sisters, Dr. Miller notes that it will remain important to keep them in place for some time.

“It’s longer than the two weeks that we have,” he said. “This may take longer than that.”

His own High Lakes Health Care Clinic is offering telemedicine services.

Patients may call Sisters’ High Lakes Health Care clinic at 541-549-9609 to make a telehealth appointment. The appointment will then take place through video conferencing. Patients need access to any type of video/audio

device that can connect to the Internet via Safari or Chrome (smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer with a webcam). At the time of the appointment, the patient will receive a voice call from their provider and then a link to join the video chat.

St. Charles Family Care is offering “E-visits” and phone visits for established patients so they can avoid coming into the clinic. E-visits allow established patients to enter information about their symptoms. The provider then reviews that information and can reply via MyChart with advice, a referral, or a prescription. E-visits are available to established patients of St. Charles Family Care clinics and they are free.

For more information visit www.stcharleshealthcare.org.

Dr. Miller saluted those who are donating supplies and sewing protective masks for medical professionals

and hospitals that are swiftly running out of supplies (*see Letters to the Editor, page 2*).

“I think it’s great — people rising to the occasion,” he said.

“We’re doing this for our neighbors, for each other.

And this community

is good at that.

— Dr. Kevin Miller

He sees Sisters rising to the occasion as it has done in the face of terrible winters and wildfires — neighbors helping neighbors, supporting each other economically, emotionally and spiritually.

“We’re doing this for our neighbors, for each other,” he said. “And this community is good at that.”

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