

State’s first case out of hospital after 2 months

By GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press

PORTLAND — The first person in Oregon to be diagnosed with the coronavirus has been discharged from the hospital more than two months after being admitted, the hospital said Tuesday.

Hector Calderon spent many days in the intensive care unit, where he was sedated and intubated, before he recovered enough to be transferred to a skilled nursing facility on Monday, Kaiser Permanente Northwest said in a statement released Tuesday.

Calderon, who is a janitor at an elementary school in Lake Oswego, tested positive for COVID-19 in late February. He was listed as the state’s first confirmed coronavirus case on Feb. 28, prompting the school where he worked to close for several days.

In addition to being the state’s first confirmed case, he was the second patient in the U.S. determined to have contracted the virus through community spread and not from direct contact with another infected person or from travel to a country with an outbreak.

Calderon was also one



Hector Calderon, joined by his wife, waves to well-wishers as a Mariachi band plays as he's discharged from Kaiser Permanente Westside Medical Center in Hillsboro on Monday.

of the first patients in the nation to receive the drug Remdesivir, a drug that studies show shortens recovery time for hospitalized patients.

“Thank you so much for all your hard work and dedication and all your time for me,” a slightly breathless Calderon said in a video clip provided by Kaiser Permanente. “My family and I thank you for everything

and God bless you.”

Chad Cabe, an ICU charge nurse, visited Calderon every chance he got, and said he “gave him a pep talk and said a little prayer for his recovery – even when he was sedated and intubated.” For motivation, Cabe promised Calderon a mariachi band serenade when he was better.

The video from the hospital showed Calderon wav-

ing and holding his wife’s hand as medics rolled him down the hallway through a gauntlet of clapping and cheering doctors and nurses. Calderon is then loaded into an ambulance for transport to a skilled nursing facility as a mariachi band plays. He is holding a sign in his lap that reads, in Spanish, “Thank God for giving me a new life.”

Calderon’s long-term

‘THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK AND DEDICATION AND ALL YOUR TIME FOR ME. MY FAMILY AND I THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING AND GOD BLESS YOU.’

Hector Calderon | first person in Oregon to be diagnosed with the coronavirus who has recently been discharged from the hospital

prognosis is still unclear, doctors said. He needs to use oxygen when he exerts himself and he has been working to build back his strength, said Sahra Rahimtoola, one of his care providers.

“Our hope is that he will have a full recovery, but he still has some work to do and long-term prognosis is unknown since this is a new virus,” she said.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with

existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death. The vast majority of people recover.

The principal at Forest Hills Elementary School, where Calderon is a beloved staff member, celebrated his recovery in an email sent to parents and staff.

“We are so happy for Hector and his family and, so thankful to the heroic medical workers, and so grateful to be a part of this community,” wrote Principal Patrick Shuckerow.

Calderon’s family requested privacy while he recovers.

County: ‘This virus is in our community’

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Sources have told The Astorian that one of the positive cases in Pacific County, Washington, works at Walmart in Warrenton. Clatsop County, Pacific County and Walmart would not confirm the information.

“In the case we do have a confirmed case at any of our stores, we are working with those associates and offering guidance and time needed to receive medical care,” a Walmart spokesman said in an email. “Associates have been encouraged to prioritize their health and stay home if feeling sick. We also implemented a COVID-19 emergency leave policy for all associates who feel unable or uncomfortable coming to work.

“While we are not able to confirm any information related to these stores at this time, we have been working to ensure our stores are cleaned and sanitized regularly,” the spokesman said. “We are focused on serving our customers during this unprecedented time and we’ve implemented several measures intended to help bring peace of mind.”

Since the first positive case of the coronavirus was announced in late March, dozens of people who live and work on the North Coast have told The Astorian that the lack of information about the county’s positive cases has left them feeling unsafe.

Michael McNickle, the county’s public health director, said the county defers to businesses. He said he would not have publicly released that Bornstein Seafoods was the site of an outbreak without the company’s consent.

“The federal HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) laws still apply no matter what,” he said of the law designed to protect medical privacy. “So, we cannot reveal the patient’s information without their consent.”

‘Following CDC’

During a county Board of Commissioners work session Tuesday, McNickle said the Lower Columbia Hispanic Council reached out to him before filing a complaint against Bornstein Seafoods in April with the state Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

McNickle said he referred the Hispanic council to OSHA. The public health department, he said, did a walk-through of the seafood processor at the

Port of Astoria.

“And we found that they were actually — at least the time we were there — they were following CDC (federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) guidelines,” he said. “So, I really don’t have an explanation for what happened with OSHA until they release that information — if they do.”

Commissioner Lianne Thompson asked, “OK, so does this mean that we are fundamentally in the dark about what happened? And we’re just at a place of not knowing what anybody could do differently to keep it from happening again?”

McNickle said the issue is not exclusive to Bornstein Seafoods. He said the positive cases among workers — at least 13 have tested positive so far — could indicate the prevalence of the virus in the community.

“So, it’s probably not Bornstein’s issue, but some of these folks are actually coming in and getting it from the community activities that they probably shouldn’t have been doing when they’re supposed to be sheltering in place.

“I’m not fundamentally in the dark at all,” McNickle said. “I’m pretty clear about when we did our investigation with Bornstein, when we did a walk-through, that they were following CDC guidelines. So, if there’s something OSHA found that I’m not aware of, until they release that information, I don’t know.”

The Oregon Health Authority reported 2,916 cases and 115 deaths from the coronavirus as of Wednesday morning.

The health authority tracked 610 test results in Clatsop County, including 17 positive cases.

Community testing

McNickle believes people’s fears about the spread of the virus will ease after the county begins communitywide testing next week. The county hopes to conduct 300 tests a week. Up until recently, most testing on the North Coast was done by private hospitals and health care providers.

The county received 1,100 testing kits from the state last week. McNickle said Quest Diagnostics — the laboratory that will process the tests — will replace each test the county sends.

“So, anybody who wants a test can get one,” McNickle said. “So people who are concerned will be able to get a test and those who may have symptoms

can get a test.

“So, some of this is going to go by the wayside once we start doing this communitywide testing because then people will actually know what their status is — there won’t be the fear anymore,” he said.

Thompson also suggested providing more data to the public as a way of easing anxiety.

“What I’m hearing that would be helpful would be if we issued a report card of metrics — what metrics we are aiming for and what’s our progress towards meeting those metrics? What’s our score right now? If people had data ... and parameters and they understood our logic, I think that would go a long way to easing the consternation,” she said.

County Manager Don Bohn said Gov. Kate Brown’s criteria for reopening the economy has been evolving, but that county staff has been working on a dashboard with data and metrics they hope to make available soon.

Bohn said the state’s approval of the county’s phase one reopening plan will be based on whether the

percentage of emergency room visits for the virus is less than the historic average for the flu and if there has been a 14-day decline in hospital admissions.

“When you have an outbreak and you go from zero to something, then obviously you’re not going to meet the downward trend that they’re looking for, but I’m not sure that that would be in and of itself a factor for not opening up,” he said.

“I think it’s more the nuance of how has the community responded? Is there capacity still in terms of hospitals, surge capacity, PPE, testing capacity? And so, I think all those metrics will kind of go in together to paint a more nuanced picture of where a community is ... at least that’s what I hope,” he said.

Bohn said the county needs to reinforce its messaging for people to take precautions against the virus.

“We have to really just continually twist people’s arm and get them to understand that it’s not over,” he said. “This virus is in our community.”

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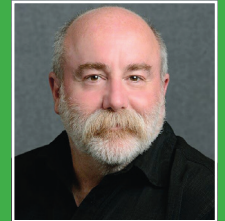
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