

Hospitals:

Continued from Page A1

Absent was any reference on how to score or triage in concrete terms should hospitals face a critical shortage of resources.

“Oregon had crisis care guidelines in place for many years, but in September of 2020 OHA determined that it would no longer reference them because of the potential for their use to perpetuate discrimination and health inequities,” Rudy Owens, a spokesperson with the OHA, wrote in an email.

In response, hospitals in Eastern Oregon developed their own plans. Grande Ronde Hospital in Union County developed a standard for incidents in which resources become scarce, but has not yet had to use it. Instead, Grande Ronde has been operating well under generalized operational emergency guidelines, according to Mardi Ford, the hospital’s director of communications and marketing.

“We have had a strong commitment to emergency planning here for years and that has served us well,” Ford said in an email. “We are all really well trained now on operating under (our) Hospital Incident Command System.”

As well, Wallowa Memorial Hospital in Wallowa County wrote its own standard of crisis care guidelines in late 2020, when the previous statewide care guidelines were relinquished, according to Communications and Public Relations Director Brooke Pace. Those new guidelines take equity



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group, File

A thin plastic sheet separates the intensive care unit from the COVID-19 ward at Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande, on Aug. 30, 2021. The rate of infection in Eastern Oregon remains steady, and individual hospitals are left with the task of implementing their own crisis care standards.

and inclusion into consideration, according to Pace.

Pace, like Ford, noted the hospital has not had to implement those standards of care.

While not mandated, the new Oregon Health Authority guidance tells hospitals to ignore or diminish long-standing principles when it comes to rationing care, including maximizing life-years saved — years of quality life remaining if a patient receives care and recovers. Instead, the new document assesses only in terms of likelihood of surviving their current illness until hospital discharge — even if that patient is terminally ill.

Supporting documents to the new OHA document include an article by Dr. John R. Stone, a bioethicist with the Department of Medicine, School of Medicine at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska.

“Past and continued injustices

are strong reasons why potential life-years saved should not influence triage priorities for individuals who prospectively will likely survive more than a few months after hospitalization,” Stone contends in the paper.

Stone uses a scenario in which an elderly, disenfranchised patient who belongs to a group of historically oppressed individuals relinquishes care to a younger, more privileged individual who belongs to a group of oppressors, and would have more expected life-years after receiving care.

To be clear, the previous Oregon Crisis Care Guidance protocol made explicit that factors such as race and ethnicity are not acceptable criteria to consider in making triage decisions. Stone, in his article, addressed as much by saying he was not aware of any crisis care standard documents that would even consider making such criteria

a factor in medical decisions.

“To my knowledge, published triage models and related analyses explicitly or implicitly incorporate social justice and background concepts of respect for persons and their equal and substantial worth. My stress on the justice- respect-worth framework does not imply otherwise. I presume that all value these core moral precepts,” Stone wrote.

The new guidance from the Oregon Health Authority, published December 2020, reflects those principles but declines to give specifics regarding when exclusion of care might apply, save for small incidences in which patients brings their own ventilators to the hospital.

The document encourages hospitals to create their own rubrics for scoring patients. Commonly, these scores are based on patients’ ability to survive should health care to the patient be abruptly stopped — such as the “sequential organ failure assessment.” There is no mention of vaccination status within the guidelines, and the SOFA makes note of COVID-19 status but does not use it for scoring patients.

“We want to ensure there’s a foundation of health equity that informs these difficult decisions and that hospitals are using tools that are transparent and informed by input from their community,” wrote Owens, representing OHA. “Second, we plan to bring community leaders and providers together to continue to look at practical tools for clinicians and hospitals that incorporate these non-discrimination principles.”

Support:

Continued from Page A1

“We always try to gear it towards a kid,” said Hendricks, who has three boys and a fourth child on the way.

On a clear Saturday, Oct. 9, people wandered around the pumpkin patch through knee-high vines. Volunteers and family members handed out clippers for people to cut pumpkins off the vines and helped carry them back across the uneven ground. White, green and orange pumpkins were loaded into all-terrain vehicles and carted to the checkout.

The Rakestraws chatted with people in the field. Mikayla carried Parker around the grounds as her daughter Blakely bounced around. Youths from McLoughlin High School’s FFA program helped maneuver pumpkins.

Hendricks said the fundraisers also benefit her sons.

“It teaches them to give back and not be so greedy with money,” she said, “and to give to charities and to see the light of the people you give it to.”

Rakestraw said she sincerely appreciates the fundraiser, but added that such generosity is overwhelming. She said she and her husband are not very good at accepting help, and she doesn’t feel like she deserves it.

“I don’t know how to describe the feeling,” she said. “We’re very grateful, but also I feel bad that we are in need of help.”

Hendricks said the family plans to keep the patch open for a few more weekends to raise more money. The patch is at 84978 Edwards Road, Milton-Freewater.

East Oregonian reporter Ben Lonergan contributed to this feature.

Media:

Continued from Page A1

A national dilemma

Recent revelations from Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen and a Wall Street Journal investigation that sparked national outrage has reinvigorated discussions over how the platforms influence teenage mental health.

The revelations, uncovered through a trove of the company’s internal documents, show that leadership among the social media giants knew for years that platforms such as Instagram were having serious effects on the mental well-being of teens — especially young women. Yet the company chose not to disclose that information and has made meager efforts to stop it.

Oregon U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D, called Haugen’s Senate testimony “a great public service” in revealing how platforms like Facebook and Instagram use private information to manipulate young consumers, a practice he describes as “predatory.”

“These are impressive young people,” Wyden told the Hermiston Herald, adding that Facebook is “taking advantage of them.”

Wyden, a proponent of digital privacy legislation, is pushing forward the Algorithmic Accountability Act, which requires that companies audit “high-risk systems” such as artificial intelligence for decisions that contribute to harmful content. The act is meant to curb the spread of misinformation, bias or discrimination, and he said he believes it will attain bipartisan support.

But the activity in Washington, D.C., only hints at

what teens are experiencing in rural Eastern Oregon. Teens, counselors, school district officials and political figures around Umatilla County said although social media has impacted teenage mental health for years, the toll has worsened during the pandemic. All that has shifted is the question of who’s to blame.

Teens, counselors speak out

“I feel social media has made unrealistic standards for what people should look like or be like,” said Jara Montez, a 17-year-old senior at Umatilla High School.

Montez estimated she spends about seven or eight hours a day on social media. She checks the apps between classes. Like Lucas, she enjoys the connection she feels to her friends and family, but said she feels worse about herself while watching attractive people on TikTok and other platforms. Montez lamented that staying on social media is “just a thing that kids do nowadays.” Other students don’t typically talk about how the apps are affecting their mental health. She said she thinks she could quit if she wanted to, but it would be difficult. That’s where all her friends are.

“I would really love and enjoy life without social media,” she said.

Maddie Stuvland, a counselor at Pendleton High School who meets with the school’s junior and freshman class, said social media has increasingly become a regular part of daily discussions with the students she sees. She said her students often are surprised when she points out social media might be having a negative effect on their mental well-being.

“I think they’re a bit shocked,” she said. “They’re not aware that it’s affecting their mental health. There really isn’t anything out there that informs young girls or



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Jara Montez poses for a portrait during a passing period Monday, Oct. 11, 2021, at Umatilla High School in Umatilla. Montez, like other youths, uses social media to connect to friends, yet also feels some platforms hurt her quality of life.

young boys about the impact it has.”

They express feelings of inferiority when viewing platforms such as Instagram, where they compare themselves through what she calls “a highlight reel.” She said high usage of social media platforms are driving some students to stay up later which, in turn, impacts their mental health and education.

“You’re always posting things that you’re either accomplishing or things that you’re proud of and there are filters and you always have a smile on your face,” she said. “And it’s not realistic. They don’t see any of the hardship or difficulty.”

Stuvland said she sees more teens acknowledging the negative effects of social media today. But the platforms remain too good to be true, explaining that among many influencers and bloggers, “there’s not an image or post that’s not perfect.”

“The negative effects are outweighing the positive effects, at least in teens,” said Dee Lorence, a counselor at Umatilla High School, who said the apps are causing

her students to experience depression, anxiety and isolation. “Keeping it inside, or keeping it to ourselves, is not helping in any situation. If we’re concerned about something, we must find someone we know and trust and will give good advice.”

Nick Allen is a professor of clinical psychology and the director of the Center for Digital Health at the University of Oregon. For years, he studied the mental health of young people.

“When you look at mental health across the lifespan, you see that this period from 12 to 24, that’s the period where the vast majority of people are going to have mental health difficulties,” he said. “That’s when it emerges. It’s the most critical time in life for understanding prevention and early intervention for mental health problems.”

Recently, the way social media impacts teenage

mental health has entered the forefront of Allen’s research.

The arrival of social media enabled kids to enter entire worlds of largely uncensored information without parental oversight, he said. For some, those platforms promoted growth and gratification. They helped well-off teens gain friends and notoriety. They provided marginalized young people a way to connect with communities they never could before.

But for some vulnerable students, cyberbullying, anxiety, depression, fear of missing out — or FOMO — and an endless flood of information left them feeling overwhelmed, he said.

“It’s a real mix,” Allen said.

There are multiple factors that influence the impact social media has on mental health, none of which are new, Allen said. Using the apps during the day is typi-

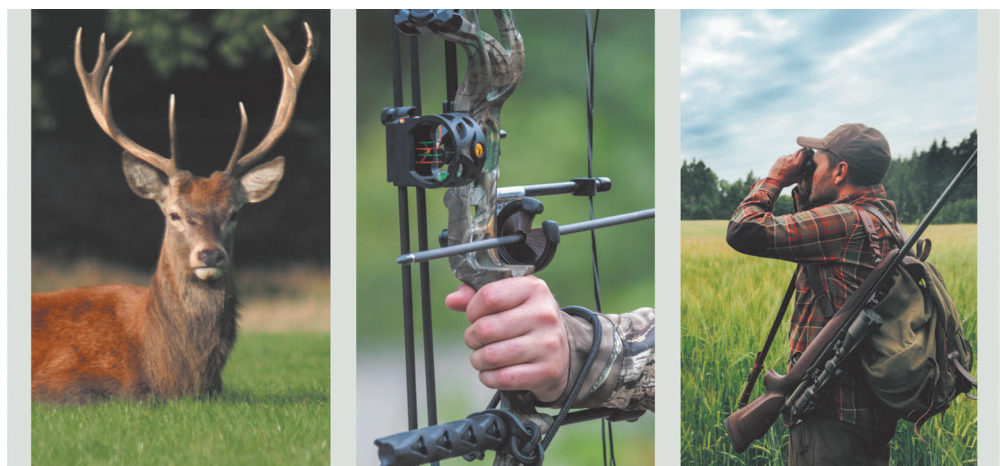
cally less harmful overall than at night, he said. Active usage like posting things is better than passive usage, or scrolling.

But what is lacking, he said, is any sort of disclaimer warning users about the risk. Much like the automobile industry, he said social media companies need to do a better job of making people aware of the possible harm that could come from extended use of the platforms.

“Over time, there’s been regulation, there’s been safety measures, and cars are much safer than they used to be,” he said. “I think social media is going to be a very similar story ... Initially, the companies don’t want to admit it. But when they do admit it and the government starts putting proper regulations and safety features, then we’ll be in a better place and we’ll be able to enjoy the benefits of social media and minimize the risk.”

Lucas, the 16-year-old student from Hermiston, said she wants to encourage more people to talk about their mental health and the effects social media have on it. A self-described mental health advocate, she said she believes little can be done to change the platforms themselves. But what she can help change, she said, is the relationships her peers have to social media.

“This is equally good and equally horrible,” Lucas said of social media. “The only way to solve the issues would be to get rid of the mean people, get rid of people who are bad, get rid of insecurity. But that’s impossible. I don’t think there are changes that can be made. This will be the way this is until there’s another cultural shift.”



BRAGGIN' RIGHTS
HUNTING PHOTO CONTEST

Choose your favorite local hunting photo
VOTING NOW OPEN
eastoregonian.com/braggin-rights

Oregon Department of Transportation

I-84 Frontage Road: Meacham Creek and UPRR Bridge Closure

The Oregon Department of Transportation is closing the Meacham Frontage Road Bridge for geological drilling operations.
Closure begins October 13.
Closure ends October 15.

TRAVEL IMPACTS: Frontage Road will be closed at the bridge. Detour signs will guide travelers around the closed section.

PURPOSE AND NEED: This reinforced concrete deck girder bridge was built in 1925. Extensive deterioration, increasing maintenance costs and potential safety concerns require a complete bridge replacement. ODOT is scheduled to begin construction in the spring of 2023. Engineers will use soil samples taken during drilling operations to determine appropriate materials, size and depth of new bridge footings.



We greatly appreciate your support and cooperation during this project.

For more information on other eastern Oregon highway construction projects, contact Tom Strandberg at (541) 963-1330, email: thomas.m.strandberg@odot.state.or.us.
For update road conditions check TripCheck.com or call 511, or (800) 977-6368.