

Preparing for flu season in a time of COVID

MOUNTAIN MEDICINE

Annika Maly



As we continue to live with the COVID-19 pandemic, we are moving into our annual season of influenza epidemic. Influenza epidemics occur every year in Wallowa County, usually between December and March. Influenza and pneumonia rank among the most deadly illnesses in the United States. Influenza — the flu — is caused by a virus, with symptoms including coughing, fatigue and fever. While the flu is not typically fatal, it is highly contagious and can be deadly to children, seniors and other vulnerable populations in Wallowa County. Pneumonia, a serious condition in which the lungs fill with fluid, commonly results from a flu infection. Every year, several Wallowa County residents die from influenza or complications from influenza. Older individuals are especially at risk. The term “influenza-like illness” (ILI)

considers the flu along with other illnesses, such as pneumonia, that cause similar symptoms, notably fever, dry cough, nausea, body aches, and nausea. These are the same symptoms as COVID infections. We don’t know what this year’s flu season will look like with the addition of COVID-19. Increased numbers of both infections will put significant stress on our health care system. For example, if someone tests positive with the flu that has been in our clinic building, it takes at least an hour to clean before another person can enter. More concerning, influenza and COVID-19 viruses are different, and it is possible to get both infections. Fighting both the flu and COVID at the same time is very hard for our bodies. The most effective way for Wallowa County residents to avoid the flu is to get vaccinated before flu season every year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is recommending vaccination by the end of October. It takes about two weeks for the flu shot to become effective, which would prepare us for an early outbreak in November. The flu shot should provide immunity for the entire season and there is no recommendation to get a booster flu shot later in the season at this time. In addition to getting a flu shot, there are

many habits that can help prevent the flu and similar illnesses. Some of these health habits include: avoid close contact with someone who is sick, cover your mouth and nose and clean your hands. Please wear face coverings, maintain physical distance and stay home from work if you are sick. Creating an effective seasonal flu vaccine has many challenges. The flu virus changes every year, and the CDC and Food and Drug Administration do their best to pick the four most likely strains, two for flu A and two for flu B. Getting the flu shot isn’t a 100% guarantee that you won’t get the flu. It only targets the most common varieties, and if a less-common strain starts circulating, you’re not protected against it. But even if you do get the flu after getting the vaccine, research shows that it reduces the likelihood of severe symptoms by 40% to 60%, making it a good investment for your health. It is frustrating when we hear that the flu shot is “only” 40% to 60% effective, or hear stories of people getting the flu even when they have gotten the flu vaccine. People often say, “I never get the flu, so why would I get the shot?” With a flu shot, people who are young, fit and healthy can help protect people in these high-risk groups from the flu through something called “herd immunity.” The more people are vaccinated, the less

likely it is for the contagious disease to be transmitted to others. Even if you are someone that doesn’t get the flu, you can keep someone else from getting the flu if you are immunized. This means fewer days out of work and school, fewer healthcare visits, and fewer hospitalizations. In COVID times it may also mean less chance of our schools and businesses closing. Everyone older than 6 months of age is eligible for the flu vaccine with rare exceptions. There are many myths that circulate about the flu vaccine. There is no thimerosal in the single-dose vials for the flu vaccine that most clinics administer. People with egg allergies can receive any licensed, recommended, age-appropriate flu vaccine that is otherwise appropriate. People who have a history of severe egg allergy (those who have had any symptom other than hives after exposure to egg) should be vaccinated in a medical setting, supervised by a health care provider who is able to recognize and manage severe allergic reactions. Our hospital and clinics have a completely egg-free vaccine available. Please ask your primary care provider about the flu vaccine today. Annika Maly is a family physician at Winding Waters Clinic in Enterprise.

Local recycling effort indeed makes a big difference

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

Peter Ferré



Thank you, Wallowa County, for your belief and focus on reducing, reusing and recycling. The volume of materials being collected at the recycling center, (tin & aluminum cans, white & mixed paper, glass, cardboard and No. 1 & No. 2 plastics, (excluding things like clam shells, salad containers, cookie containers, etc.) is rising, and the quality of the materials being dropped off is improving, (thank you for taking the caps off all your glass and plastic containers). A few of the differences your recycling efforts are making are:

- Reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills.

- Conserving natural resources such as timber, water and minerals.
 - Increasing economic security by tapping a domestic source of materials.
 - Preventing pollution by reducing the need to collect new raw materials.
 - Saving energy.
 - Supporting American manufacturing and conserving valuable resources.
 - Helping create jobs in the recycling and manufacturing industries in the U.S.
- The Recycling Task Force created by the Wallowa County commissioners has evolved into an advocacy group called Friends of Wallowa County Recycling, and is committed to a long-term plan to improve and expand our recycling while helping us all reduce the amount of solid waste we generate. During the winter months we are having volunteers at the Recycle Center on Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays to sort materials, help recyclers, keep the center organized and help with processing all that we receive. We need your help with this and ask that you email us at wal-

lowacountyrecycling@gmail.com to let us know you if would be interested in helping. Everyone is welcome, and everyone can help make a difference even if it is just for a few hours. Recycling is critically important. A single recycled plastic bottle saves enough energy to run a 100-watt bulb for four hours, and it also creates 20% less air pollution and 50% less water pollution than would be created when making a new bottle. What is even more important than recycling the plastics we use is to use far less plastics. Currently at our recycling center, and many others around the country, we can only accept No. 1 and No. 2 plastics, (excluding clam shells, berry boxes, salad containers, etc.) All other plastics wind up in the ocean, or in an osprey’s nest, or in the digestive system of that beautiful steelhead, or sitting in our landfills for up to 1,000 years. We want to challenge all of us to reduce the amount of plastic we use. Buy drinks in aluminum cans or glass bottles, not plastic bottles. Skip items that

are not packaged in the materials accepted at the Recycling Center, buy a big block of cheese rather than the already sliced smaller packages, buy a few avocados and make your own guacamole, skip the plastic produce bags at the store, buy things in bulk, buy refillable items, shop for items packaged in tin, aluminum, paper, cardboard or glass, and skip the items packaged in plastic. Yes, it can be inconvenient, but the difference we can each make by demanding how manufacturers package their products, through what we spend our money on, can and will make a world of difference. Thank you again for the difference you are making and continue to encourage your friends and family members to become avid recyclers and plastic avoiders. Feel free to send us your questions, ideas, thoughts and/or interest in volunteering to wallowacountyrecycling@gmail.com. Peter Ferré is a member of the Wallowa County Recycling Task Force.

Oregon AG must address unjust convictions

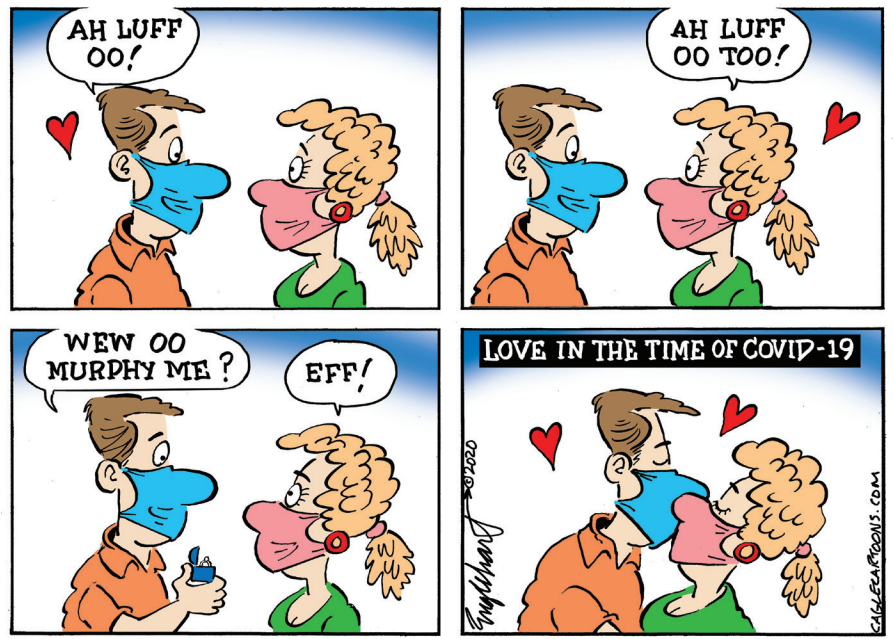
OTHER VIEWS

Earl Bain



During the six years I spent in prison and the five years I spent on the sex offender registry, one of the many things that played on my mind was that if my case had been heard just a few miles along the road in Idaho, I wouldn’t have been in prison at all. I was wrongfully convicted by a nonunanimous jury, despite being innocent of any crime. Only 10 of the 12 jurors believed the story the prosecution told, but that was enough. Unlike every other state in the Union, aside from Louisiana, at the time of my conviction in 2009, Oregon allowed me and others to be convicted of felonies if only 10 or 11 jurors voted “guilty.” Elsewhere, all 12 jurors had to be convinced to support a guilty verdict. If I had been tried in Idaho, a few minutes’ drive from where I lived in Malheur County, the split-jury verdict in my case would not have been enough to convict me. My experience has convinced me that justice demands that verdicts be unanimous. I am not alone in thinking that. Earlier this year, the U.S. Supreme Court settled the question of whether Oregon and Louisiana’s nonunanimous jury systems are fair by ruling that verdicts must be unanimous. The justices ruled that jurors in any new cases that come to trial in Oregon must reach a complete agreement to convict. The court found that nonunanimous verdicts violate the Constitution and that they are a relic of the past that was designed to silence minority voices on juries. Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote that the practice of allowing split-jury verdicts is inconsistent with the Constitution’s right to a jury trial and must end. He traced the right to a unanimous jury all the way back to medieval Europe, explaining that it “emerged as a vital common law right in 14th-century England, appeared in the early American state constitutions, and provided the backdrop against which the Sixth Amendment was drafted and ratified.” Oregon and Louisiana have been very much outliers in allowing nonunanimous verdicts for so long. This is good decision, but the Supreme

Court left open a question: What happens to those people who have already been convicted nonunanimously and are still in prison, or otherwise suffering the burden of an unjust felony conviction in their past? Following the Supreme Court’s ruling, the Oregon Department of Justice, which is responsible for handling the prosecution side of appeals of criminal cases, announced it would concede all cases that were decided nonunanimously and were still on direct appeal. That means a group of convictions is being overturned, but there are still many more cases that had already reached later stages of the appeals process when the DOJ announced its concessions. An arbitrary cut-off point does not change reality: People who have been wronged by nonunanimous verdicts still need help. If it were not for the pardon I received from Gov. Kate Brown, with the help of the Oregon Innocence Project, I would be one of the people still waiting for relief, since my direct appeal was dismissed in 2009. Even for people no longer in prison, the effects of a nonunanimous conviction can last for a lifetime. There’s no asterisk on a felony conviction to tell potential employers that your conviction would not stand under current law. Landlords can’t tell that your criminal history is based on a law the Supreme Court now calls “gravely mistaken.” Before my pardon, I still had to submit to the humiliation of being under supervision as a sex offender, including having to regularly take lie detector tests about my sexual thoughts and activity, even though I was convicted nonunanimously. Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum and the Department of Justice must do more. Rosenblum should consent to new trials for all Oregonians convicted by nonunanimous juries, regardless of when their appeals were heard. I know from bitter experience that the system can get it wrong. Why would we risk other people enduring wrongful conviction as I have? A wrong is a wrong, and it should be righted, whether it occurred a short time ago or decades past, especially when it impacts the lives of so many people convicted unfairly by a process rejected by 48 other states. Earl Bain was wrongfully convicted in Malheur County in 2009. He spent six years in prison. After the complaining witness in his case recanted her story, with the help of the Oregon Innocence Project he was pardoned on the grounds of innocence by Gov. Kate Brown in August this year.



Recapping the 2020 season at Alpine Meadows

TEE TIME

Rochelle Danielson



Alpine Meadows Golf Course officially ended its season Oct. 15, but its closure means only that the clubhouse is shut down, the greens crew has gone fishing and rental carts are stored away. It doesn’t mean the course, itself, is closed. You can still golf. Several of Wallowa County’s hardy golfers continue to play until the snow flies — they don’t let the absence of certain amenities such as tee box markers, or Rahn’s portable bathroom rentals stop them. Chuck Haines, who is not only an avid player, but a long-time AMGC volunteer, is one of the hardest. “It takes time to wean yourself off golf,” he says. “I continue to play in the fall until the weather gets bad and winter prevails. Eventually I adjust, substitute home projects to pass the time, but (in the spring I’m again anxious for another season of golf.” During the summer season Tuesdays at AMGC has always been designated Ladies Day. Near the end of September — unlike the men — it seems easier for women to put away their clubs and pursue warmer interests. Then again, there is

always the exception. AMGC member Donna McCadden, wanting to squeeze in a late-October game, called me. “It’s Tuesday, let’s go play some golf. It’s balmy out,” she says. “No, it’s brisk out there,” I say. “Be a sport,” she says. Mid-morning found us, goosebumps and all, teeing off No. 1. It proved to be an enjoyable nine holes which included finding golf balls hidden in the leaf-strewn fairway, red-raking a putting path on No. 7 green, and hitting shots over (instead of in) the creek ... all of this while breathing in the crisp, clean air of fall. Delightful. For those golfers who are having end-of-the-season blues, there should still be some lovely late-morning and afternoon golf days ahead, maybe up to Thanksgiving. Go play. Be respectful of the course and who knows, you might find a golf ball or two. Judy Ables, outgoing AMGC president, summed up the season. “For the 2020 Alpine Meadows golf season, a spring opening sounded ominous,” she said, “but even with all the fear and adversity COVID-19 pandemic inflicted on everyone, the club survived and has been incredibly fortunate thanks to the wonderful support of our members, our hard-working staff, our generous volunteers and committed board members.” Rochelle Danielson of Enterprise loves the game of golf and has golfed for many years at Alpine Meadows.