

Patchwork

Continued from A1

The states' fragmented war on COVID-19 has resulted in a resounding defeat. No corner of the planet has been ravaged like the United States. The nation makes up 4% of the world population, but has accounted for 20% of the nearly 2.5 million killed in the pandemic, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center and the U.S. Census Bureau.

The political equivalent of herding cats has continued with the arrival of two vaccines that could snuff out the virus. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two shots, given about a month apart.

States have been allocated a portion of the available vaccine equal to their percentage of the national population.

For Oregon, that comes out to about 1.3%.

With the initial shipments, state health agencies were sent a long list of recommendations on how to parcel out the shots. But in the end, the final priority list for the scarce vaccine was up to each of the 50 governors.

Ethicists call these "lifeboat" decisions — who, when and why someone could be chosen to live or die. An inoculation against a potentially deadly virus fits the bill.

Gov. Kate Brown promised Oregon would distribute the shots with equity.

The decisions are necessary, but the fragmentation of evaluating a comparative value of human lives through 50 different prisms, was going to be problematic from the start.

Governors and health officials are human beings who bring their own beliefs to decisions. Any choice will attach a social value to people or groups.

The start was the easiest part from an ethical standpoint.

The first shots were sent to protect doctors, nurses, and other health care workers. The pandemic took a toll on hospitals and medical centers, where severe illness and sometimes death affected the very people whose jobs were to save lives of others.

The long months of the pandemic had also shown society's weakest points. Nursing homes reported just 5% of all COVID-19 infections nationwide. But the often frail residents and close quarters mean these residents account for just over one-third of all deaths. Oregon is one of 10 states where more than half of all deaths are from these "congregate care" facilities, according to the New York Times.

Residents and staff of the homes were put next to medical workers at the top of the priority list.

At that point, the states' unanimity ends.

St. Charles

Continued from A1

The medical techs voted 94% in favor of authorizing the strike and sent a 10-day notice warning of the impending walkout, according to the statement.

St. Charles Health System described the move as "disappointing," in a press release, especially while it is coping with COVID-19 patients and large-scale community vaccination clinics.

"While this strike notice cannot slow our efforts to meet these critical community needs, it just adds new — and unnecessary — challenges when our community needs us most," said Aaron Adams, president of St. Charles Bend and Redmond.


The federation represents about 150 technical employees at the St. Charles campus in Bend.

The strike would only affect technical employees at the St. Charles Bend hospital campus. It would have no impact on the health care system's other hospitals or clinics in Redmond, Madras and Prineville.

"This is our last resort to improve the conditions at the hospital," said DeeDee Schumacher, an ultrasound technologist who has worked at St. Charles for 40 years. "We don't want to strike and would rather continue working in our community, so we hope the hospi-

COVID-19 | U.S. death toll passes 500,000

‘It’s very hard for me to imagine an American who doesn’t know someone who has died’



Evan Vucci/AP

During a speech at the White House on Monday, President Joe Biden reads the number of Americans who died from COVID-19. “Today, we mark a truly grim, heartbreaking milestone,” he said.

Still, at half a million, the toll recorded by Johns Hopkins University is already greater than the population of Miami or Kansas City, Missouri. It is roughly equal to the number of Americans killed in World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War combined. It is akin to a 9/11 every day for nearly six months.

“The people we lost were extraordinary,” President Joe Biden said Monday, urging Americans to remember the individual lives claimed by the virus, rather than be numbed by the enormity of the toll.

“Just like that,” he said, “so many of them took their final breath alone in America.”

The toll, accounting for 1 in 5 deaths reported worldwide, has far exceeded early projections, which assumed that federal and state governments would marshal a comprehensive and sustained response and individual Americans would heed warnings.

Some union officials said even with the vaccine, they might not go back to the classroom without wider vaccination of the public. The CDC announced last week that schools could safely reopen without vaccinating teachers.

Brown also had Oregon go its own way for age-related vaccinations. Eligibility was staggered, beginning with those 80 and older on Feb. 8, two weeks after the education group. The minimum age for eligibility would drop five years every week until everyone 65 and older was eligible March 1.

Vaccine shortages hit every state. But media reports of 65-year-old residents lucky enough to get an early appointment at mass inoculation sites like Disneyland and Dodger Stadium in California stoked resentment in Oregon.

“States are amending their criteria of who is eligible — sometimes adding millions of people — but without any additional supply,” Caplan said.

The differences between states were inexplicable to people who were eligible across the country, but not in their own hometowns.

“It erodes public trust,” Caplan said. “In the end, it comes down to ‘I’m just going to do whatever I have to do to

get a shot.”

Also souring the public mood were reports of well-connected people getting shots through dubious eligibility. In Oregon, Providence Health included its board of directors — which includes large donors — in the medical group at the top of the list.

“We all hate people who butt in line,” Brown said when told of the action.

Brown, 60, said on Friday that she had not been vaccinated. Under her current plan, there is no timeline for when she would become eligible.

Brown is expected to announce the next eligible groups Friday. The actual start date for those inoculations isn't likely to be before early spring.

Often overlooked was the sheer size of the national effort to eventually offer vaccination to the estimated 333 million Americans.

President Joe Biden made headlines with a promise to put 100 million shots into Americans' arms in his first 100 days in office. Since the current vaccines require two shots, the promise covers only 50 million people. At that pace, vaccination eligibility for some Americans will stretch into 2022.

Problems ahead include getting a vaccine that is safe for children. The current vaccines are only recommended for those 16 and over.

New vaccines could significantly shorten the timeline. The estimates also don't take into account Americans who decline to get vaccinated. Some estimates put the refusal rate at 30%.

Caplan says that is the issue that looms large in the future. “The focus now is on who is getting the vaccine,” he said. “At some point the question will be who is not getting the vaccine.”

States will have to navigate legal and ethical question on treatment of those who do not get vaccinated.

Israel has vaccinated almost half its population and is planning laws and rules for post-pandemic activity. Israelis who are vaccinated received a “Green Badge” — a certificate with a unique QR code, according to the Associated Press. When museums, concert halls, theaters and other public venues reopen, the “Green Badge” will be required to get inside.

Caplan said a similar system could be used in the United States for everything from football stadiums to neighborhood bars.

How far the prohibitions facing those who go unvaccinated is an ethical debate still over the horizon for now.

“Can you require vaccination for a job?” Kaplan said. “It’s problematic. But it is a question that’s coming.”

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COVID-19 by the numbers

COMPARING TOTAL POPULATION ...

World: 7.745 billion • **U.S.:** 333 million • **Oregon:** 4.3 million

... WITH COVID-19 NUMBERS

U.S. as percentage of world population.....	4.47%
U.S. as percentage of COVID-19 deaths	20.23%
Oregon as percentage of U.S. population	1.3%
Oregon as percentage of COVID-19 deaths	0.43%

Source: Bulletin research

choice,” Brown said at a press conference Jan. 22. “The harsh reality is we are managing a scarce resource right now.”

The blowback was immediate. Senior advocates, medical groups and even her own Governor's Commission on Senior Services weighed in against Brown's decision.

“There are 45 other states that are listening to the science and vaccinating vulnerable seniors,” commission members said in a Jan. 28 letter to the governor.

Adding to the timeline troubles was a Feb. 3 federal court order requiring Brown to immediately start vaccinating about 12,000 inmates at Oregon prisons. About 28% of inmates had been infected with COVID-19, compared to 3% of Oregon's overall popula-

tion. The delay in vaccination violated the U.S. Constitution ban against “cruel and unusual punishment.” The state did not appeal the ruling.

Caplan, the NYU ethicist, said governors who deviate sharply from federal guidelines risk cracking public consensus.

“Why are elderly in group homes vaccinated, but the elderly living on their own must wait?” Caplan asked rhetorically. “Why are teachers more important than the grocery store bagger or UPS guy?”

The governor's objectivity was called into question because she had received \$240,000 in contributions from the Oregon Education Association PAC in her 2018 race for governor, a relatively small portion of the \$18.5 million she raised for the race.

to let St. Charles set the schedule.”

Potter said the medical techs are prepared to remain on strike as many days as necessary “to secure the recognition, respect and fair treatment they deserve.”

St. Charles insists the on-again-off-again talks had been going in the right direction and the timing of the notice is not consistent with the latest agreements. As recently as Saturday, the two parties were in discus-

sion with a federal mediator to set new dates for bargaining, the hospital said in a statement.

Rebecca Berry, vice president of human resources for St. Charles Health System, blames the federation for dropping out of the bargaining.

“If (the Federation) believes that progress is not being made, it needs to look at its own decisions,” said Berry.

March 10 had already been scheduled for another bargaining session, said a St. Charles

spokesperson. A federal mediator was slated to be part of the talks.

St. Charles leaders say they are concerned that the federation is “bargaining in bad faith,” and they plan to file an unfair labor practice charge of bad-faith bargaining with the National Labor Relations

Board.

“We reiterate our disappointment in the Federation's decision,” said Berry. “St. Charles will take all necessary steps to ensure that care for our community continues in a safe and uninterrupted way.”

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OBITUARY



Dixie D Shaver
November 7, 1954 - February 12, 2021

Dixie grew up in Sisters, Or and graduated from Redmond High School.

She is survived by Royal Jacobsen, Gary Jacobsen, and Darla Bender, brothers and Sister and Larissa Shaver and Brandon Shaver, daughter and son.

There will be no memorial services. In lieu of flowers she would want contributions made to your favorite charity. Arrangements by City View Funeral Home, Salem, Oregon.

DEATH NOTICES

Richard Dale Johnson
of Sunriver, OR
March 29, 1939 -
February 17, 2021

Arrangements:
Baird Funeral Home of Bend is honored to serve the Johnson family. Please visit our website, www.bairdfh.com, to share condolences and sign our online guest book.

Services:
A Celebration of Life will take place at a later date.

Contributions may be made to:
Bend Humane Society (hsco.org) or Deschutes Land Trust (deschuteslandtrust.org)

Arthur “Kelly” Conrad
MD of Bend, OR
Oct 18, 1951 - Feb 15, 2021

Arrangements:
Niswonger-Reynolds Funeral Home is honored to serve the family. 541-382-2471 Please visit the online registry for the family at www.niswonger-reynolds.com

Services:
Celebration of Life for Dr. Conrad will be held at a later date.

Contributions may be made to:
Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation www.JDRF.org

OBITUARY DEADLINE

Call to ask about our deadlines.
Monday - Friday, 10am - 3pm.

No death notices or obituaries are published Mondays.
When submitting, please include your name, address and contact number.
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