

42% of Oregon's adult ICU beds currently in use

State resumes sharing COVID-19 hospitalization data

By Dick Hughes
For the Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon hospitals have yet to fill up with COVID-19 patients.

The Oregon Health Authority reported Tuesday that 464 patients were hospitalized with COVID-19 or suspected symptoms, including 69 patients on ventilators to assist their breathing.

Those numbers are more than double what OHA reported last week. However, hospitals still have significant capacity.

Slightly more than 42% of adult ICU beds are now in use, as are 34%

of adult non-ICU beds, 56% of pediatric ICU beds and 67% of pediatric non-ICU beds.

Oregon hospitals normally operate with much higher occupancy rates, but many now have far fewer patients because the state banned elective surgeries and non-urgent medical and dental procedures that would involve personal protective equipment. As a result, a number of clinics and hospitals have laid off employees. During the first three weeks of March, nearly 4% of Oregon health care workers filed for unemployment.

OHA resumed sharing the COVID-19 hospitalization data on Monday after stopping last week due to what officials said were unspecified "data quality" issues.

"We spent time ensuring that the

incoming data and data sources were all reporting in a uniform and timely manner. We believe we'll be able to continue reporting the data," Philip Schmidt with the Oregon COVID-19 Joint Information Center said Monday. "As always, if we discover there's reason to improve it, we'll do so."

OHA also created a new dashboard to give residents and the press "a clearer picture of the data" and show the state's progress.

Lack of consistent data, including current hospitalizations, has frustrated some lawmakers.

"Presently, the quality of data being provided by OHA is such poor quality, or simply being hidden (by) OHA, that local decisionmakers have to operate in a vacuum to make life and death decisions impacting Ore-

gonians," Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas, who is a member of the Legislature's Special Committee on Coronavirus Response, said this weekend.

Among other developments on Monday:

- Oregon Rep. Greg Walden's office reported on where the state is sending personal protective equipment.

Among the distributions are: Baker County: 700 surgical masks, 650 N95 masks, 54 gowns, 96 face shields and 3,400 gloves.

Clatsop: 2,701 surgical masks, 14,141 N95 masks, 2,344 gowns, 170 face shields, 7,278 gloves.

Crook: 250 surgical masks, 4,520 N95 masks, 570 gowns, 96 face shields, 19,600 gloves.

Deschutes: 9,350 surgical masks,

24,570 N95 masks, 5,789 gowns, 1,296 face shields, 59,400 gloves.

Jefferson: 750 surgical masks, 6,420 N95 masks, 169 gowns, 144 face shields, 20,100 gloves.

Umatilla: 12,214 surgical masks, 11,959 N95 masks, 1,442 gowns, 807 face shields, 32,577 gloves.

Union: 1,250 surgical masks, 1,880 N95 masks, 136 gowns, 96 face shields, 8,200 gloves.

- Forty-five Oregon police officers, 10 correction deputies and nine others in law enforcement are in some form of quarantine.

- Bus service in the state's capital resumed Tuesday on a limited basis after being shut down last week. The Salem Area Mass Transit District will operate about one-fourth of the usual weekday service in Salem, Keizer and adjacent areas.

Survey shows younger Oregonians more worried about COVID-19 than older Oregonians

By Dick Hughes
For the Oregon Capital Bureau

Younger Oregonians are quite concerned about coronavirus compared with older Oregonians, according to new research.

The data released by DHM Research in Portland undercut the narrative prominent in national media that young people are blasé about COVID-19 and feeling invulnerable.

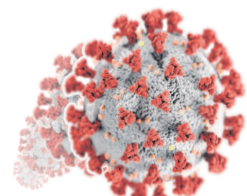
"If you look at these numbers, younger people are more concerned about being infected. They are more concerned about other people being infected," said John Horvick, DHM's director of client relations and political research. "They feel less prepared. They have a lot more concern about being able to pay their bills."

Most Oregonians were concerned that they or someone close to them would become infected with the coronavirus. Fifty-three percent of respondents ages 18-29 worried about personally contracting COVID-19, compared with 61% in the 30-44 age group; 55%, ages 45-64; and 40%, ages 65 and older.

DHM conducted the online survey with 507 Oregonians during March 24-30.

Oregonians' outlook for the short term remains dim. Seventy-six percent said problems associated with coronavirus would get worse during the next week. That number dropped to 51% who said the problems would be worse in a month, and only 14% who expected things to be worse in six months.

A "consequential minority" of Oregonians were unsure what is meant by such terms as social distancing (12%), quarantine (13%), self-isolation (16%) and shelter in place (24%), although the latter phrase has been replaced in Ore-



CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

gon and some other states with "stay home." The numbers varied by geography, education level and other factors.

"I'm not an epidemiologist, but if you have 10% of the folks who don't know what they've been asked to do, that seems like a problem," Horvick said. "It's a relatively high number of people who say they don't know what to do considering what we need folks to be doing."

Since 2011, DHM has been asking Oregonians how concerned they were about their personal financial situations. Late last year, 50% were somewhat or very worried. Now it's 63%, with the strongest concern among Oregonians having incomes below \$50,000.

"Given the great many people who have already lost their jobs due to coronavirus, the number of Oregonians experiencing financial distress will almost certainly increase," DHM said in releasing the survey data.

DHM also asked about the anxiety level of Oregonians, which Horvick said had been covered less in national polls. The survey indicated 19% of Oregonians have moderate-to-severe levels of anxiety.

That was in line with what the Pew Research Center has found nationally, and it ties in with what Oregon officials have been saying about the importance of mental health care along with physical care.

"This is a very — in a lot of ways — slow-evolving emergency or disaster, but it's incredibly impactful across the state.

So we want to make sure that the anxiety I know Oregonians are feeling is being addressed," said Andrew Phelps, director of the Oregon Office of Emergency Management.

Phelps encouraged Oregonians to check in on the behavioral health of themselves, family members, friends and neighbors, and to take a break from social media.

Nearly one-fourth of Oregonians have stopped paying attention to the news because of anxiety about the coronavirus, but nearly two-thirds are paying more attention, according to DHM.

Among other findings:

- 40% of Oregonians said they were not prepared to deal with a coronavirus infection in their household.

- 41% might need help paying for basics needs like food, medicine and utilities.

- 28% might need help picking up prescription drugs.

- 22% said the news coverage of coronavirus has been exaggerated; 24% said has been underestimated.

- 78% of Oregon Republicans approved of President Trump's response to the coronavirus; 12% of Democrats and 45% of non-affiliated and other party voters approved.

- 75% of Oregon Democrats approved of Gov. Kate Brown's job performance regarding coronavirus compared with 31% of Republicans and 52% of non-affiliated and other voters.

- 40% of respondents said Oregon was on the right track, a drop of 5 percentage points from late last year.

- 46% said local governments should go ahead with planned May ballot measures for schools, roads, public safety or other public services; 36% said the money measures should be taken off the ballot, and 17% didn't know.

Oregonians appear to be slowing the spread of the new coronavirus

By Dick Hughes
For the Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregonians appear to be slowing the spread of the new coronavirus, state officials announced April 1.

"The most recent data suggest that current social distancing measures could cut transmission rates between 50%-70% if Oregonians maintain these limitations on virus-spreading interactions into early May," the Oregon Health Authority said in a news release.

Newly released modeling by the Institute for Disease Modeling in Bellevue, Wash., indicated "strong evidence that measures currently in place in Oregon are reducing transmission." However, the researchers wrote, "Due to the delay between infection and diagnosis, there is considerable uncertainty in the impact of the most recent intervention, the March 23rd 'stay-at-home' order" issued by Gov. Kate Brown.

The researchers estimated that Oregon had slightly more current infections than previously known. Legislators and media representatives have asked OHA to disclose the number of current cases, not just the cumulative totals since January, as well as how many individuals have recovered.

The modeling goes through May 2. Under Oregon's current social distancing restrictions, the modeling suggests 200 to 1,200 people would be actively infected on May 2. The cumulative total since Jan. 24 would exceed 4,000 confirmed cases, more than five times the number reported so far.

If the state were to allow non-essential businesses to reopen but kept schools closed, as many as 3,500 Oregonians would be actively infected on May 2.

"We know coronavirus has brought painful disruption and distress for Oregonians. However, these numbers tell us that what we're doing can work," Dr. Dean Sidelinger, state health officer, said in the news release.

A survey conducted by DHM Research indicated that a majority of Oregonians expect the situation to worsen during the next month.

In a Tuesday evening conference call with constitu-

ents, Bend Sen. Tim Knopp said his best guess was that restaurants and stores might be able to open in mid-May.

With Oregon now in a very deep recession, Knopp said, he remained quite concerned about the effects on landlords and small businesses, including self-employed individuals and entrepreneurs.

Brown on Wednesday announced a 90-day moratorium on commercial evictions for non-payment. She previously banned residential evictions.

OHA said the state's emphasis continues to be on "strengthening the health care system's ability to meet the coming surge. State health officials are working with hospitals and other health care partners to mobilize the health care workforce and keep workers safe, expand bed capacity and secure more ventilators."

The modeling suggests Oregon hospitals will need fewer beds than have been freed up for COVID-19 cases.

As of Tuesday, 464 patients were hospitalized in Oregon with COVID-19. Sixty-nine patients were on ventilators. Statewide, there remain 303 available adult ICU hospital beds, 2,130 other adult hospital beds, 108 pediatric ICU beds, 192 other pediatric beds and 816 available ventilators.

Hospitals and clinics have been ordered to cancel elective surgeries and other procedures that require personal protective equipment. The resulting lack of revenue has caused layoffs of health-care workers to accelerate.

The latest data from the Oregon Employment Department show that 2,134 health-care or social assistance workers filed initial unemployment claims for the week of March 15. The previous week, 318 claims were filed.

Meanwhile, all seven members of Oregon's congressional delegation sent a letter to President Donald Trump on April 1 asking for mobilization of up to 1,250 members of the Oregon National Guard, a request that would provide federal funding if granted. The lawmakers wrote that Guard members already have been setting up mobile hospitals and tents.

Brown taps state insurance commissioner to lead Department of Consumer and Business Services

By Peter Wong
Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon's insurance commissioner for the past two years is the next director of the Department of Consumer and Business Services, its parent agency.

Gov. Kate Brown announced the appointment of Andrew Stolfi on Friday, April 3. His appointment is subject to Senate confirmation. His first day was Monday.

As administrator of the Division of Financial Regulation within the agency — and the state insurance commissioner — he led recent negotiations with insurance companies that resulted in a waiver of cost-shar-

ing with patients in Oregon who require testing for COVID-19.

He will continue as insurance commissioner.

In his broader role as agency director, Stolfi will oversee the Building Codes Division, Division of Financial Regulation, the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace, Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division, the ombudsman for injured workers, small business ombudsman, Workers' Compensation Division, Workers' Compensation Board and the Central Services Division.

"I believe strongly in our mission of consumer protection," Stolfi said.

Brown said in announc-

ing his appointment: "He understands the importance of supporting both Oregon's consumer needs and our business environment during these unprecedented times. His diverse professional background, coupled with a focus on consumer protection, will serve Oregonians well."

Stolfi came to Oregon two years ago from the International Association of Insurance Supervisors, based in Switzerland. He spent six years there, ending up as chief operating officer and chief counsel. Before then he was at the Illinois Department of Insurance for about three years, ending up as acting director, and also was in the office of legal counsel

for the governor.

He currently serves on the executive committee and as the vice chair of the Health Innovation Working Group and the Consumer Liaison Committee of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners.

He earned a bachelor's degree in biology in 1999 from the University of Vermont and his law degree in 2002 from the Chicago-Kent College of Law at the Illinois Institute of Technology.

He succeeds Lou Savage, who has been acting director since Cameron Smith left the job in November. Smith is now deputy secretary of state. Savage will be the acting administrator of Stolfi's former division in DCBS.

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