

## Banner Health | 2-17 transcript

Our first question comes from Max Gorden at 3TV CBS5 here in Phoenix what has been the impact of the severe winter weather on COVID vaccine shipments? Are vaccination appointments being canceled or rescheduled?

Yes. So, as I said in my opening comments, the severe weather that many parts of the country are currently experiencing is impacting vaccine supplies over the next several days. We continue to work with all of our different states and counties to load balance those vaccines and supplies to best meet the needs of communities. If you are a patient with an upcoming appointment, we'll ask you to continue to watch for either a phone call, a text message, or an email, if there needs to be a change to your appointment.

Very specifically, I'll go through a couple of additional pieces of information. So, right now we have enough supply in Maricopa County, Pinal County, and Coconino County to cover appointments for the rest of the week. We are slightly short in Gila County and are working with our county partners to try to get vaccine and supplies to cover those appointments.

In the northern Colorado clinics, we do have enough vaccine to cover all appointments that are scheduled for the upcoming week. However, the weekend mask vaccination that was going to occur in that region has been canceled. Banner Health was working with many other entities to do that. That is being canceled and postponed. I want to remind everybody that event was for first dose appointments only.

In Pima County is where we have the most significant impact regarding potential need for additional vaccine. Right now, we do have enough vaccine for today and tomorrow. We do have a number of appointments upcoming on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and those are at risk if we do not get supply. Again, if you are a patient with a scheduled appointment, I ask you to be watching for your text and email or phone call from us. We will directly communicate with you if there is a need to adjust your appointment time.

Thank you, Dr. Bessel. Next question comes from Peter Samore at KTR News here in Phoenix. Now that coronavirus cases and deaths are declining in Arizona, do you still call on Governor Ducey to impose the mitigations you have been recommending such as a statewide mask mandate, no indoor dining, et cetera?

So, you know, it still is important to realize that we are in the midst of a pandemic. And while the decrease in all of those statistics of percent positivity, cases, hospitalizations, ICU, and ventilator usage are absolutely great and welcome, we still are in the midst of a pandemic. It is important for us

to stay true to science and follow appropriate mitigation, enforcement, and personal accountability.

At this time, it is still really important for everybody to wear a mask and to wear a mask appropriately. It's very important for everybody to shrink your circles.

Nicole Garcia with Fox 10 asks two questions. So I will ask you the first one, Dr. Bessel. Does the Banner pods distribute Pfizer or Moderna vaccines?

So, we do have a little bit of a mix of which type of vaccine is at which pod. We use both Pfizer and Moderna throughout our Banner health system. If you are interested in specifically understanding which vaccine is at which pod, in Maricopa county, you can go to the vaccine finder and that will help delineate for you where the different types of vaccine are, who has vaccine available, and who has vaccine appointments available for you.

So, the second question from Nicole, are you aware if the weather related deliver date delays affect just Moderna or both Moderna and Pfizer vaccines?

At this time, the weather delays are affecting both. And also, it's affecting not just a vaccine, but also the supplies that we need to be able to distribute and provide vaccine to patients. So we are currently also waiting for supplies such as needles and syringes that have been affected by whether.

Stephanie Innes from the Arizona Republic asks, why do you think the number of flu cases has been so low in Arizona this season, and is there still a risk that flu cases could spike?

So, at this point, it does not look like we will have any significant flu season to experience here in the state of Arizona whatsoever. We are well past the usual and customary part where we would have been starting to see an uptick on that. I believe the reason that we've had what is really a completely inconsequential influenza season here in the state of Arizona is multi-factorial.

If you think about what usually happens, our experience usually mimics the southern hemisphere experience which was also fairly inconsequential. In addition to that, influenza is not as contagious as COVID, and so all of those mitigations that we've been doing, the enforcement of mitigation and our personal accountability have had a very good impact on reducing influenza cases.

Max Gorden from 3TV CBS5 asks two questions. I'll ask the first one. What's the Banner protocol for communicating with families on COVID patient status when they can't be bedside?

I'm not sure I exactly understand what's being asked there. So let me answer it in this way, and there

can be a follow up if needed. So, during the pandemic and also during normal times, we have a process by which we communicate with family that is predicated on the patient giving us approval to go ahead and do that, or if the patient is unable, by following the appropriate protocol for who is decision maker for the patient who's unable to make decisions.

So we communicate all aspects of care per that protocol. That would include things like COVID status, but as well as all the other important pieces of information related to a patient's care and how they were doing in our hospitals.

So the second question for that, and you might have already answered that, but I'll ask this anyway. How are families notified when a patient's status changes?

Yeah. So I'll answer it similar to how I did the first part of that question. So, when a patient gives us permission to communicate with family, we follow that instruction, and part of our usual process is to go ahead and provide communication when there is a significant change in patient status. While we've been under visitor restrictions, we have a number of different ways that, of course, that we are doing that because we are not in person with family at this time.

If a patient is unable to make decisions on their own, we follow the process of who is the decision maker that has been either appointed by that individual or who will be the appointee per a protocol that we use in the state of Arizona, and we would also then notify, as per our usual and customary pathway, if and when a patient has a significant change in status.

Liliana Salgado from Univision Arizona here in Phoenix asks, we know death is the lingering effect of a case surge. Out of the current deaths, do we have an idea of how many were from those infected during the holiday surge?

So, let me answer it that way. So, I would say a couple of additional points around that. Post a surge like the state of Arizona just experienced, death is certainly a lagging indicator, a lagging event that occurs after the surge. And so we are continuing to see that death rate come on the decline as well. I would also just say that the timing of that does indicate that we had very significant surge both at the Thanksgiving holiday as well as the Christmas holiday, and so the death rates that the state of Arizona experienced appear to be very much, of course, related to the increased number of cases that we saw post both of those holidays.

My other point in this, though, is that death is absolutely a lagging indicator of a surge, but there are also many after effects of experiencing a surge like we did so significantly here in the state of

Arizona. Some of those include many patients, some of you who may be out there here today listening to this who have lingering, long term effects, post effects, of being infected with COVID. That could include whether you were in the hospital or not in the hospital.

In addition to that, lots of other pieces of our life have been affected by having such a significant surge. Our work life has been affected. Our social lives have been affected. Many other things come on the post of having such a significant surge. So our hearts go out to anybody who has had a family member or a friend suffer a death post the surge of the COVID-19 experience that we had here in the state of Arizona.

And also, we hope for everybody who's out there still recovering from your COVID-19 illness during the surge that you continue to recover well.

Our next question comes from Peter Samore from KTR News. When you talk of vaccine shortages, are you talking about Banner supplies only or beyond that?

So, the shortages that we are experiencing are beyond Banner. It's beyond the counties where Banner has direct delivery of vaccine through our pods and our clinic, and it's beyond the state. So, the weather is significantly impacting things, even more so than just the continued limited supply of vaccine and the supplies that go along with vaccine.

So, over the next couple of days, we expect to continue to be managing very tightly, almost on a day by day basis, because of the weather and the difficulty of getting supplies and vaccine to us. We do expect that, of course, to improve over the next couple of days.

And there was a follow up question to that that did come in, so you might have already answered this, Dr. Bessel, but I'm going to ask you. When you say the mass vaccination clinic up north will be canceled, are those doses from the county, state, or from Banner?

So, let me be clear about that. So when I said in the north, that's in northern Colorado where there was a mass vaccination event that was a collaborative between many entities, including a couple of the counties there. I don't know exactly where that shipment was coming from, but that shipment has been delayed of vaccine. And therefore, that entire event has been canceled. It will be rescheduled in the upcoming weeks when the supplies do arrive.