MEDIA ADVISORY

For Immediate Release 3-19-20, 3:00 PM
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Muskingum County Joint Unified Command Center – News Conference

My name is Dr. Jack Butterfield. I’m the Medical Director of the Zanesville-Muskingum county Health Department, and I’d like to give you an update from the Joint Command Center in our preparation for COVID-19.

We are getting reports from many sources about the Coronavirus pandemic. The federal government is giving us frequent updates on the national level. Governor DeWine and Director Dr. Amy Acton are providing daily press conferences informing us of what is happening here in Ohio. We are fortunate to have these two leaders taking such a proactive role in trying to limit the damage of this virus. These are very important sources of information on the pandemic.

We have learned that this virus spreads from person to person through being close to someone with the infection. Social distancing separates us from one another. Thus, it is difficult for this virus to spread via droplets if we are widely separated. This is the rationale behind social distancing. This and good hand-washing are the main ways that each of us can help stop the spread of this virus. Our Joint Command Center of community services want you to know what is happening, here, in Muskingum County, and how each of us can be part of the solution to this pandemic.

The first item to address is testing. All the main-stream media coverage and social media postings regarding testing has created a lot of confusion in our community. So, I want provide common sense as regards testing information and guidance. And this guidance is offered, bearing in mind that over 80% of infected persons will only have mild to moderate symptoms and will recover. Realize that at this time there is a resource shortage of testing supplies, nationwide. There are several situations to consider for testing.

First, for those persons with no symptoms, there is no reason to run a test. If there are no symptoms, there is likely no infection. This is common sense.
Second, there are those with severe symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath. This is the group that requires testing to know exactly what they have as the treatment for these people depends on whether or not they have COVID-19, pneumonia or some other process. The outcome of their illness does depend on the result of the test.

Third is the group in the middle - persons with mild to moderate symptoms. At this time, these patients do not need to be tested. This group makes up the largest portion – over 80% - and this group will most likely recover and only need to treat their symptoms. Knowing the result of the test for those people with mild and moderate symptoms does not in any way change their recovery. And, if you are sick, you should be separating yourself from your family by staying in a single room and using your own bathroom, anyway, things that you would be doing with the flu. So, again, knowing the result of a test, positive or negative, does not change what you should be doing to care for yourself: Stay at home to avoid exposing others, get rest and treat the symptoms with some of the commonly used medicines, frequent hand washing, clean surfaces, etc. If your symptoms worsen, call your health provider for further instructions. You may need to be tested then.

Finally, since testing supplies are limited, we are not testing people for returning to work. As testing resources become more available, we will have the capacity to expand these testing criteria. For now, the best strategy for returning to work is to be able to return to work after 3 days have passed since recovery (No fever), and 7 days have passed since the first symptoms first appeared. But these are the recommendations from the Ohio Department of Health. We are actively working to increase our testing supplies. This is anticipated to improve within a week.

Our community is rich with first responders and organizations that have formed a Joint Unified Command to guide our community through this difficult time. We are meeting daily to help meet the needs of and protect our community as well as prepare for the anticipated worsening of our local situation. Firemen, law enforcement and EMS first responders are still working to keep all of us safe. The Joint Command is working to keep them and us safe.

We do not yet have a COVID-19 patient in our county. We are preparing to meet needs of those patients as well as our community, when it does happen.
This pandemic is challenging all of us beyond anything we could have imagined in our lifetime. We must work together to fight this infection. We must do what is right for everyone, including the worried well, those that are currently ill with a respiratory infection, those that are seriously ill and hospitalized, the healthcare workers, community leaders and first responders. Without all of us working toward defeating this pandemic it will be a much harder battle to fight. To get the best possible outcome from this pandemic, we all have to be informed, follow what our public health experts are advising, and do what is right.

False information is dangerous. If you know anyone that is not getting accurate information, please share this video with them. Also, please see the websites listed in the comments under this video for the most up-to-date COVID-19 information. These include the Muskingum County Center for Seniors, the Zanesville-Muskingum County Health Department, The Ohio Department of Health, and The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Understand that this situation changes daily. I ask you to be informed. Rely on accurate information sources. Working with, and trusting each other is the best way to improve the outcome for Muskingum County.