

Coronavirus Update #9

Current Stats:

247 tested, 17 positive

All visitors, while supplies last, will be given a face mask when coming to the Insurance Fund building regardless of reason for visit, additionally, if you are tested for COVID-19 we will give you masks for all older children and adults in the household in order to limit exposure.

New Changes

* We received several hundred rapid tests to check for antibodies that either test for acute infection (IgM) or post infection or exposure (IgG). We have been using these tests during our initial evaluation of symptomatic patients along with the nasopharyngeal swab being sent to Quest. The current turnaround time on swabs is about 48 hours. We are also using the rapid test in some cases when performing the return to work, or release from quarantine, evaluation.

* Abbott Laboratories has developed reagents for our main in-house lab machine that enable us to test for the antibodies that are developed post infection or significant exposure, Immunoglobulin G (IgG). We were selected as one of the few labs to be given access to these reagents, and received our 1st batch of 2,500 tests kits yesterday. We have one of less than a handful of these analyzers in South Florida. The Abbott analyzer is expected to be highly accurate and have high sensitivity, the only other option for this test is the rapid test, most of which are produced in China.

* Immunoglobulin G (IgG) antibody testing is important because, for lack of a better term, it is the get back to work test. Now for most of us that's not the case because we never stopped working. What it can mean for 1st responders, healthcare workers and other essential workers is that you have the antibodies against the virus, and while that's not a guarantee that you won't get the virus, only because there's not been enough research to support that, that is generally how antibodies work. Maybe those that are suspected to be immune to the virus can be the front line of the front line health care workers or other 1st responders.

* We will begin offering this test to anyone that want's it beginning early next week. It is a quick blood draw and we are setting up a separate building (5th wheel donated for our use by one of our fine retirees) so that our medical assistant's will have a comfortable space to work from and you won't need to come inside the building. Since there is a special procedure to run these lab samples we will be batch running them once or twice per day depending on interest generated, but in most cases you will have your result by the end of the day. This test is not for symptomatic patients.

* Once our population has had the opportunity to be tested we hope to offer our capabilities to other 1st responder agencies in our local area, and then maybe other county agencies depending on interests. The reason for this is because we have one of the few machines in south Florida capable of providing this test, at the moment. Obviously anyone outside of our insurance would be required to compensate the Wellness Center, but the cost per test is relatively inexpensive.

Workers Compensation

It has been decided by county risk management that once an employee tests positive for the virus that they will take over care and treatment of that employee from the Wellness Center, and ultimately that employees return to work status.

Mental Health

Our in house mental health experts, Dr Jennifer Milone and Mary Birse continue to be available both in person and through Telehealth, feel free to make an appointment whether it's your first time or for a follow-up.

Firefighter Physicals:

Currently the front desk is contacting individuals a week out and cancelling physicals until we get the all clear to start them back up. If you have an April birthday you can expect to get yours postponed.

When will we begin doing physicals again? While that hasn't been discussed yet, we wouldn't be surprised if it was to be sometime in May.

As we await starting physicals again the providers would like to extend an invitation to you to **have your fasting labs done (we can draw your labs and do the above mentioned test all in the same trip with only one needle stick)**. Having your labs already done will be one less thing for the provider to review and they can be better prepared when you do come. As a reminder you do not even have to enter the building as we have a lab draw station setup outside, just stop by and check in with the front triage station.

As a reminder the Wellness Center hours will be 8am-7pm Monday thru Friday and 9am-4pm on Saturday. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause you.

Remember wash your hands frequently and practice social distancing, and for those of you on the trucks please use your PPE at all times and practice good hygiene!