COVID Update

- We are in the BA2 variant phase of the pandemic
- White House COVID task force team has noted a few other COVID variants (this does happen often, sometimes they become meaningful and sometimes they do not)
- We are still seeing the impact of BA2
- Calling it a wave, because when you look at the curve it is not a peak, but a gentle elevation
- Average cases a day is about ~250
- The so-called discordance between cases and serious outcomes (50 people in the hospital on 4/21)
- The ICU numbers remain around 2/3 people. A rare day when someone is ventilated.
- Still capacity in the health care system, which is not being challenged by large increase in cases.
- We have seen 5 deaths in April, 17 in March, and about 50 in January and February
- People who are identified as higher risk, are accessing therapeutics
- Using a lot of Paxlovid and that appears to be enough! We requested an extra 260 doses for this week, and we received it and asked for 260 doses next week. We have been distributing widely geographically to pharmacies
- Testing is still robust in VT. Don’t have eyes on it completely, but still rank in the top 3 states for testing.
- The vaccine rate is still very good (a couple thousand people a week getting boosted)

Legislature

- One of the biggest issues that revolves around Public Health is the bill for management of opioid disorder and preventing overdoses
  - A lot more prevention built into it, aspects of the treatment system that have been removed that we didn’t think were right, there is a lot on the recovery system when it comes to helping the recovery centers and recovery housing
- There will be a lot for us to work on collectively as a government and health community, because we all know the impact on adult and kid mental health that just doesn’t get taken care of because of a new vaccine/therapeutic. Many of these problems were preexisting and are now exacerbated, which is a big issue
- Health debt – lifestyle behaviors that people have embraced during the pandemic (misuse of substances, diet, lack of physical exercise), may cause chronic diseases

Questions and Answers

Numbers in NE are going up and not being seen as much in other parts of the country. Could this be because of more testing in NE or not reporting negative at home tests?
ML: that is a genuine possibility and a good theory. It is hard to validate and those that we met with in the White House had no insight either.

Anything new regarding influenza regarding disease or vaccination?
ML: the new thing is that there are new cases of influenza A being reported. Not huge numbers, but we know it has arrived. Haven’t heard the official word on how well the vaccine was
matched this year, but any given year 40%-60% is regarded as okay. Flu activity in VT right now is not a widespread metric by any means.

In the chat, it was stated that the vaccine was only 16% effective this year:
https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7110a1.htm#:~:text=Overall%2C%20vaccine%20effectiveness%20(VE),is%20considered%20not%20statistically%20significant

CDC HAN regarding Adenovirus and Children:
https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2022/han00462.asp

We got through our VCHIP network a couple questions that included had a respiratory vent in PE class and later died. Another teen in Chittenden county who was found to have blood clots in heart and lungs. In terms of hepatitis A cases states may be related to adenovirus?

ML: On the 1st case I have no insight. But we are getting a lot of reports of people’s asthma being worse, generally it is a bad respiratory season in general. The 2nd part, clearly that case is not one the medical examiner has completed all of the work yet, but we have yet to see a case in child/teen that the medical examiner has signed out as a COVID related death, but some of those takes months to put the puzzle together. The 3rd thing, there’s 5 cases in the U.S. all in Alabama of children who have hepatitis that was of unknown etiology that all had an adenovirus infection. That is not in itself the most unusual thing, but usually it was children that were immunocompromised that had the virus, but these are immunocompetent children. Which makes it strange. No one else in any other state has insight on this, it was all Alabama. Aware that the UK had similar cases. This is sort of an emerging infection.

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ML: There is going to be a new COLST form and there is a series of information sessions you can attend (all materials include the same material). More information and registration is here: https://vtethicsnetwork.org/register-now-clinician-information-sessions-for-new-2022-dnr-colst-form