

Numbers

- Cases are in the low hundreds of total cases
- Hospitalizations remain in the mid-teens each day with anywhere 3-6 in the ICU (none on ventilators currently)
- Total of 7 deaths in the first 16 days of the month
- 2 pivots we've made
 - 1st pivot is in testing. You can register to pick up home tests (antigen or LAMP tests) We still think there will still be an audience for PCR tests.
 - 2nd pivot is in vaccination. Basically, when sites were surveyed that we administer vaccines to, the vaccine program saw that vaccine uptake is going down everywhere, since we have a highly vaccinated state. Health care offices vaccine uptick has increased by 7% though.
- We're about 81% fully vaccinated for ages 5 and older in the state
- We're leaders in boosters, have a tremendous number of younger people that have chosen not to get boosted
- Unfortunately, there are some older Vermonters that have chosen not to get boosted

Hot Topics

- Will there be other boosters in our future?
 - Moderna and Pfizer are either submitting or planning to submit data to the FDA for a 4th booster
 - Part of their data is from Israel, and CDC MDWR data, where it shows a moderate decrease in susceptibility to serious illness after the 3rd shot in the omicron era. It also showed a significant decrease to be infected.
 - The advisory panel to the FDA, will weigh in on this data that has been submitted and respond to this request
- Omicron Variant BA2
 - China and some of those countries where they have had 0 COVID policies can't be compared what is going on in Europe and the Americas. They are seeing surges of BA2 in China. Had very little innate immunity to this virus and they have a poorer vaccine rate. They are seeing flare ups.
 - South Korea has had stricter policies and good vaccination rates, are also seeing flare ups
 - When you move to Europe that have vaccination rates in the 60% to 70% range, they are starting to see uptick in cases as well
 - It is still not believed that this is a more virial variant
 - There are other parts of Europe that are nervous about the refugee resettlement due to Ukraine.
 - We have seen BA2 in VT.
 - We get data from the CDC (2-week lag period) so the end of February is the most recent data. Saw the older omicron was 96% of sequencing, and only a few percentage for BA2.

- Most of us think that the reasonable vaccination rate in our country and the fact that there's a high percentage of people that have already had the virus, that we will not see a surge, but we will see a prolonged tail of the epidemic curve
- The big questions that we are asking that we will have to see play out to get answers to are: If you've had omicron before, can you still get BA2? And if you've been vaccinated, are you different than some one that hasn't been vaccinated?
- **Legislature**
 - Prior authorization to prescribe for opiates
 - There's also a bill to advance an opioid overdose prevention safe use site ~~Safe to create~~ a study group, not create one in VT
 - PCB in schools

Questions and Answers

Do you have a sense of how many 2nd boosters are being obtained/given "off label"?

I believe that our state sites are firm about saying no to those that are not immunocompromised, so we don't have good data there. So, it would have to be occurring in the pharmacies or health care system, but the pharmacies are good sticklers. No one is reporting in the health care system if they are giving out additional boosters.

If you have the opportunity, to ask everyone to advocate for rapid test/home tests for kids under 2 will you please do so? We see this group not being able to access these tests and think parents will come into the office for typical runny noses/congestion.

I agree with you and will keep that in mind when I'm at the right table. It's not an audience that can advocate well for themselves.

Is there any news for vaccine under 5 or boosters for kids 5-11?

Still no news and ask people to be patient. We may not have much news until May or maybe even later. Not hearing anything on the 5-11 boosters.

Is there any update on the wastewater monitoring plan?

Right now, there are 7 sites (not all up and running, but will be). The Agency of Natural Resources has been made aware that there is more money and that they can recruit new sites. Not sure if they are successfully recruiting new sites. The 7 sites do cover geographically the regions we want, it is just the more the merrier. Way this will work, is Burlington has a weekly assessment and report and it's important to look at trends and become comfortable with how trends look and if they predict cases down the road. I'm sure we'll start putting a report on our website when we start getting reliable data and help people understand what this data means. We are talking about viral cases per liter as opposed to cases per day, there must be some standardization of where the samples are obtained from and the frequency, etc. We are on a learning curve with regards to this.