



ethnē health
a community clinic

March 14, 2020

Dear Clarkston community and those who love the Clarkston community,

We are writing on behalf of Ethne Health, a local faith-based community clinic in Clarkston. We have spoken to many people throughout the community about the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. We realize there is a lot of misinformation as well as incomplete information circulating. We are writing to express concern and offer counsel as local medical professionals who live in the community and want to see it flourish.

First and foremost, we do not want people to panic. Rather we hope by appropriately responding to this situation we can help protect our community and improve the health of everyone in Clarkston.

We have been taking care of patients in the hospitalized setting and the outpatient setting who have been suspected of having Coronavirus and understand deeply the fear that people have. We know this can be a very serious disease, especially for the elderly, but even for those that are not elderly. We know this is a disease that can be minimally symptomatic for some but also deadly for others. We know this virus can even be transmitted when people are minimally symptomatic. We also know there is much we are still learning about it.

This virus is spreading in the community in Georgia, and there are many more cases out there (thousands) that have not yet been diagnosed in Georgia. It is most likely already in Clarkston. The number of unreported cases throughout the United States is drastically more. In the next week we are going to begin to see a rapid increase in the number of known cases as testing is just beginning to increase. Currently, it is still very limited with long waits (several days) for the results. Our healthcare system in the United States was generally running at close to full capacity before this virus, so we will be severely straining the healthcare system, especially hospitals, in the next few months. Hospitals in Atlanta are preparing in earnest and trying to ramp up as quickly as possible.

We are going to see dramatic changes in our community in the next several months. Many of us are just beginning to prepare for this, and many of us are not prepared at all. Now is the time to do everything we possibly can to mitigate this situation. We must prepare for the mass closure of many businesses, schools, places of leisure, etc. as this situation will likely extend for at least the next 2 months. We must plan accordingly.

Right now we only know of a few strategies that have been effective in preventing the spread of this virus- and some of these measures are unnatural to us and our communities. Yet, if we don't follow these recommendations we will likely see widespread Coronavirus activity in our community:

1. We strongly recommend that all religious and non-religious congregations (churches, mosques, temples, etc.) NOT meet for at least the next 2 months.
2. We strongly recommend that any non-essential events and groups be postponed for at least the next 2 months- even small group meetings with as few as 10 people should be postponed; try to cook at home rather than going out to eat; if you decide to go out to eat, do takeout or just do delivery.
3. We strongly recommend that anyone with ANY symptoms (ie: cough or fever) should try to stay home, and only go out if absolutely necessary; If they must go out, they should wear a mask if able and follow proper respiratory etiquette (cough into elbow or shoulder); additionally they should use hand sanitizer frequently and avoid all people (staying a minimum of 6 feet away); because of how limited the testing is currently, the medical community is still working on the best way to get people with symptoms tested so it is best to assume possible cases are cases of Coronavirus.
4. If you do NOT have hand sanitizer, wash your hands with soap and warm/hot water for at least 20 seconds; and avoid touching your face as much as possible.
5. There are many communities in Clarkston, especially refugee communities, but also non-refugee communities, that have not yet grasped the gravity of the situation. We need to find ways to disseminate information quickly and effectively, especially considering the cultural and language barriers.
6. Those that are at higher risk - people with chronic illnesses (diabetes, lung disease, heart disease, age over 50 years old)- should STAY HOME as much as possible. We MUST support these people as much as possible with food, toiletries, services, or anything else we can provide to help.
7. Those that are lower risk should also minimize their contact with anyone who has a cough or fever, and in general, avoid all public gatherings.
8. Finally, we MUST make these changes immediately. To do so, we must get the message out to everyone in our community. We are already behind in our response as a community, as a state, and as a nation. The sooner we can start these changes, the quicker we can move forward.

To elaborate on these recommendations and to continue to provide information, we are going to have a video conference meeting (via Zoom) soon and will send out details as soon as it is set. We are going to be sending out more information about Ethne Health's response to the Coronavirus soon as well- please be on the lookout.

Although this is a trying time, we believe we can take steps together as a community to prevent unnecessary spread of the virus. To succeed, everyone will have to do their part. Everyone will have to buy in, but we believe our community is up to the challenge.

From the Ethne Health team,
Sean Lindsey, MD
Robbie Contino, MD
Andrew Kim, MD
Esther Kim, MD
Laurie Boden, MD
Sarah Neely, MD