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NEWS FROM THEDACARE®
For Immediate Release
September 22, 2021

THEDACARE PRESIDENT AND CEO IMPLORES COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO RECEIVE COVID-19 VACCINE *Facing Critical Situation, Precautions Must Be Taken*

NEENAH, Wis. – ThedaCare, as well as other health systems in the state, are seeing a rapid and substantial increase in patients, including COVID inpatient and intensive care. According to data tracked by Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, Wisconsin is now ranked as #2 in the nation for states with the largest seven-day COVID-19 case increase over the last week, with a 50% uptick in cases.

“Our teams have been closely monitoring data and models about current COVID rates in Northeast and Central Wisconsin, predicting and preparing for this next surge,” explained Imran A. Andrabi, MD, ThedaCare President and CEO. “That next surge is here. Our teams are currently strained caring for COVID and non-COVID patients. We must be available to care for those with COVID, and those suffering from serious medical situations such as heart attacks, stroke, trauma and providing cancer care treatments, and we cannot do that without the communities’ help to change course and get COVID infections under control.”

ThedaCare encourages people in the region to once again follow guidelines outlined by physicians, public health officials, the CDC, local hospitals and other health care experts, including:

- Get a COVID-19 vaccination if eligible. Vaccinations are safe and effective.
- Wear a mask in public
- Practice social distancing
- Avoid large gatherings, especially indoors
- Wash hands often with soap and water
- Avoid people who are sick, stay away from others if you are sick
- Get your flu shot early

From August 1 to September 21, 2021, the total number of COVID-19 hospitalizations increased six-fold in the Fox Valley region. In that same timeframe, there were five times the number of COVID-19 intensive care unit (ICU) hospitalizations. More than 90% of patients being treated in Fox Valley hospitals for COVID-19 are unvaccinated.

“As a collective community, we have the power to change what is currently taking place, and will likely happen again in the future if we do not act now,” said Dr. Andrabi. “Health systems cannot do this alone – it takes every hospital, public health entity, school system, businesses and all community members to respond to COVID-19 and to minimize the impact of this surge.”

Protecting One Another

As a country, there are currently 50 million children under the age of 12 who are unvaccinated because there is not an authorized vaccine for that age group at this time.

“The need is urgent, children now account for more than one in five new cases, and the highly contagious Delta variant has sent more children into hospitals and intensive care units (ICUs) in the past few weeks than at any other time in the pandemic,” said Dr. Andrabi. “It is also



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concerning because we are just starting the school year. We look forward to the time when more of our children are eligible to safely receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Today, we have adults who are approved for vaccines that can help protect our children. As a community, our purpose needs to be to help ourselves, our loved ones and our fellow community members.”

The increased number of patients currently in hospitals, which includes those infected with COVID-19 and those being treated for other health conditions, is leading to staffing challenges.

“During this time of workplace shortages nationally, ThedaCare, like nearly all health care systems, is not immune to these challenges,” said Dr. Andrabi. “Through the ability to quickly adjust plans to provide care and support the needs of patients and communities, ThedaCare has implemented several solutions to help with staffing levels.”

Throughout this time ThedaCare has, and continues to be committed to team members, with no layoffs or furloughs. Measures to address staffing levels include:

- Redeploying team members to areas of need.
- Accepting applications for all roles.
- Offering sign-on and referral bonuses for specific roles
<https://careers.thedacare.org/us/en>.
- Adding additional temporary staff through other resources and partners, including the Wisconsin Emergency Assistance Volunteer Registry.

Supporting Community Action

To help control the spread of COVID-19 cases in Northeast and Central Wisconsin, and continue ensuring the safest environment possible for patients, visitors and team members, ThedaCare will join other health care organizations in our state and across the country in requiring the COVID-19 vaccination for all team members. This includes all employed ThedaCare team members and providers, as well as independent affiliated providers, medical staff, contracted staff, volunteers, students and others who work or provide care at ThedaCare facilities.

“Throughout the pandemic, we have monitored and proactively adjusted our plans to create the safest environment possible for everyone in our facilities,” said Dr. Andrabi. “The decision to require the COVID-19 vaccine was made after careful consideration, with the focus of protecting our patients, visitors, caregivers and the overall communities we serve.”

President Biden recently announced that he asked the Department of Labor to issue an emergency rule requiring employees working in health care and skilled nursing facilities that receive Medicare or Medicaid reimbursement be required to be vaccinated.

Team members who have yet to receive the COVID-19 vaccine must meet the requirement by November 22, 2021. Once again, ThedaCare also requires team members to receive an annual influenza vaccination and is following a similar implementation process as years past.

ThedaCare only recommends vaccines that are deemed to be safe. Leaders have closely examined the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) process for overseeing the many different vaccine trials, as well as the work of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). It is required the FDA makes decisions that are guided by science and data regarding authorization or approval of COVID-19 vaccines, and ThedaCare is confident in the process.



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“The decision to require team members to receive the COVID-19 vaccine will help protect our communities against the pandemic, and allow patients to access the care they need today and, in the future,” said Dr. Andrabi. “We must come together as a community once again, take precautions and continue moving forward safely, together.”

About ThedaCare

For more than 110 years, ThedaCare® has been committed to improving the health and well-being of the communities it serves in Northeast and Central Wisconsin. The organization delivers care to more than 600,000 residents in 17 counties and employs approximately 7,000 health care professionals. ThedaCare has 180 points of care, including seven hospitals. As an organization committed to being a leader in Population Health, team members are dedicated to empowering people to live their unique best lives. ThedaCare also partners with communities to understand needs, finding solutions together, and encouraging health awareness and action. ThedaCare is the first in Wisconsin to be a Mayo Clinic Care Network Member, giving specialists the ability to consult with Mayo Clinic experts on a patient’s care. ThedaCare is a not-for-profit health system with a level II trauma center, comprehensive cancer treatment, stroke and cardiac programs, as well as primary care.

For more information, visit thedacare.org or follow ThedaCare on social media. Members of the media should call Cassandra Wallace, Public and Media Relations Consultant at 920.442.0328 or the ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah switchboard at 920.729.3100 and ask for the marketing person on call.

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