

Regarding outside food delivery for HMC employees

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On April 1st, ABC news published the following article, "What we know and don't about asymptomatic transmission and coronavirus *There is a significant number of people who transmit that are asymptomatic*".

"... stories emerging about the rapid spread of COVID-19, public health experts warning the public to stay home, even if you feel healthy. You could be infected and not show signs or symptoms (asymptomatic carrier)."

"Asymptomatic transmission means you can be infected with the virus, have no symptoms and still be contagious," Dr. William Schaffner, professor of preventive medicine and infectious diseases at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, told ABC News."

"... there is still a significant number of people who transmit that are asymptomatic."

The following examples demonstrate the how and why the rate of growth in transmission is occurring.

- Dr. John Williams, chief of the division of pediatric infectious diseases at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Children's Hospital, pointed out that "asymptomatic infection is common in children, occurring in 10-30%" of cases.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Robert Redfield estimated asymptomatic transmission could be as high as 25%.
- Early data from pandemic hotspots seems to indicate that many people don't have symptoms on the day they were tested and in fact asymptomatic carriers who test positive for COVID-19 can be significantly higher than the 25% CDC quotes.
- Over 3,700 passengers on the Diamond Princess Cruise liner tested positive for COVID-19, more than 46% were **NOT** showing signs and symptoms at the time they were tested.
- In Iceland, about 50% of the people who tested positive for COVID-19 were asymptomatic, according to one study.
- In the United States, during the outbreak at a long-term care skilled nursing facility in King County, Washington, 23 residents tested positive, despite 13 being asymptomatic that day, according to the CDC.

This issue gets to the heart of why the COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult to contain. Even though many people feel fine, they are still capable of transmitting the virus to others.

"The virus has a long incubation period so symptoms might not appear until five to 14 days," Dr. Simone Wildes, an infectious disease specialist at South Shore Health, said. "Therefore, people can be spreading the disease without actually knowing they are sick."¹

Hospitals across the country are receiving strong accolades for their staff who are working tirelessly and at high personal risk of infection to provide for patients who have COVID-19 with their condition ranging from mild to critically ill. Television highlights the extraordinary burden nurses are having to take which has never been experienced before. Families are unable to visit their critically ill family member. Families are unable to be by the side of their loved one as they experience a journey to health or even worse to death alone. Nurses have always been compassionate and been at the bedside with patients that face death alone. As reflected in the news, nurses are now having to serve in the role of a family member for a larger number of patients as hospitals

¹ What we know and don't about asymptomatic transmission and coronavirus *There is a significant number of people who transmit that are asymptomatic*.
By **Dr. Angela N. Baldwin and Sony Salzman**; April 1, 2020

have had to close their doors for visitation even in times of death. Nurses provide the touch and voice of compassion, empathy and love during the most difficult and trying times for patients and families.

HMC is preparing and adjusting plans as we learn from the experience of others detailed in studies or reflected in the news. The stress level is high among staff: hospital nurses, nursing home nursing staff, housekeepers, paramedics, EMTs, laboratory, radiology, dietary, registration, respiratory therapy and all others. Staff fears unknowingly becoming infected with COVID-19 and unknowingly giving it to their family or becoming ill themselves. Hardin County has yet to see the worst of what is being depicted in the news. It's the anticipation of something bad yet to come. The real anxiety is knowing its coming but in an undefined time, so your mind and body stay in a constant state of preparedness for what's seen in the news. It's like your mind and body stay in the constant state of readiness for danger referred to as the "Fight or Flight Response". That heightened level of constant preparedness takes a toll on the staff. When staff understands their personal struggles and sacrifices are recognized and appreciated, it's food for the soul. It energizes their commitment to continue to perform at a heightened level of preparedness.

The news shares many stories of how appreciation and gratitude is expressed to healthcare workers on the front lines. All of which are admirable and appreciated by those on the front line. One way the community expresses appreciation is through feeding front line staff, which is very much appreciated. As more is learned about the COVID-19 virus, the more our daily routines must change to avoid possible infection. Many hospitals across the country have and are developing guidelines for groups or restaurants to provide food for staff. These guidelines are and have been developed based on good sound infection prevention practices. The last thing any community group wishing to express appreciation by providing food for staff would be to infect staff in the process. Early research indicates the likelihood of contracting the virus through the actual food is relatively small; however, the process before and after preparing food presents risk. An infected individual may not show signs and symptoms of a COVID-19 infection and in fact, 25% to 50% of infected individuals never do show signs and symptoms. An infected individual who does eventually show signs and symptoms may not do so for 2 to 14 days. An infected individual could unknowingly be handling products in or around the preparation and serving of food and never know he or she is infected and passing it to others. A study published in The New England Journal of Medicine states COVID-19 can live up to 4 hours on copper, 24 hours on cardboard and 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel.

Because of the risk of exposure for staff, guidelines have been developed which minimizes the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Food which is prepared by individuals or groups not in the restaurant business pose a higher risk of infecting surfaces with the virus. They are typically not informed or trained in handling and processing food; while restaurant staff are trained on food preparation and handling and the Department of Health is required to inspect to ensure compliance with FDA standards. Our own dietary staff are required to pass a health screening and wear gloves and masks the entire shift to minimize the risk of potentially spreading the virus. Twice per day our staff cleans all surfaces including transport carts for meals with an approved CDC chemical for killing COVID-19.

If you wish to express appreciation to staff through food we ask that you contact the **HMC Nutritional Services Manager Tina Day at 229-425-2487 or Vicky Carroll in the Administration office at 731-926-8206 or 8121** before bringing any food or preparing food for staff. We can then work with you to follow the guidelines required to ensure staff is not inadvertently exposed to someone with COVID-19 or become infected with COVID-19. The news reveals several other ways the community can show support for our front line staff which pose little to know risk of exposing anyone to an individual with COVID-19. Please remember to always practice social distancing, washing your hands, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow or a tissue, monitor yourself for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and contact the health department for direction if you have been exposed to someone who is positive for COVID-19.

Stop the spread, adopt the philosophy of "Don't Get It; Don't Give It" through practicing prevention strategies.
Is not about you; It's about those you may unknowingly infect.

Know we appreciate the community's support for our staff during this time. Your support, no matter how expressed, means more to the staff than you would ever imagine.