

A message from an Oakland Doctor December 9, 2020

This message from an Oakland Kaiser Doctor was shared by John Bilorusky and his wife Janet, received on December 9, 2020. It is a long read but it is factual:

Hello friends... I'm saddened and disturbed by the lack of understanding around how important the stay at home order is. Today, in the Bay Area, doctors and nurses felt a sense of relief that the local counties stepped up to essentially ask people to stay home starting Sunday..

If you don't work in healthcare, you may not understand what is going on in our hospitals, but I think if you are a human being you should care.

Our hospitals in the Bay Area are filling up to levels exceeding our normal winter census. This means that today we are stretched thin. Our doctors are caring for a significant number of patients per doctor and the hospitals start to backup if we don't have people leaving beds that the next admissions need. Our ICUs, including new ICUs we opened in March and July, are nearly full and we have to resort to overflow areas to care for the next group of people needing vents.

The thing about Covid is- there is a lag. People who will need the hospital generally come to the hospital about 5-7 days after their symptoms begin as they worsen. About 1 in 5 will need to go to the ICU and be placed on a ventilator. People who stay in the ICU can stay up to months as they struggle to live. So day over day, the number of people in the hospital will continue to grow.

Our projections for the coming weeks show numbers exceeding the number of beds we have in the hospital. It will disrupt our normal process and hospital flow, our ERs will be backed up because beds are not available. Our patients having surgery will be impacted and may be asked to delay procedures. Our doctors will take care of an unsustainable load of patients. Most importantly, there may not be enough nurses to care for all the patients who will overwhelm the hospital.

We have backup plan after backup plan to put patients in areas that aren't usually for overnight stays. To double up patients in the rooms that aren't meant for two. To accommodate people with pop up areas, and reroute IT infrastructures so patients can get medications they need and orders written. This preparation has been months in process and we have plans to implement. But such large hospital censuses strain the system and impact how we deliver care. This has never happened before in the twenty years I've been in medicine. It feels scary.

We will rise to the challenge.

We will work hard.

We will work long hours to take care of you and your loved ones.

We will break a little. Maybe a lot.

But the only thing that can actually curb the numbers of patients in the hospital is your behavior. You **HAVE** to not get COVID. You have to stop your kids from spreading COVID. You have to prevent the spread to your grandparents and the kind cashiers at the grocery store and your neighbors.

This is not a drill. Unlike in a natural disaster, we can't farm out patients to nearby hospitals in counties not impacted. All of our California hospitals will be impacted over the next weeks. Please support us.

It would make me very happy if you share this post and help disseminate the voices of actual physicians and healthcare workers, whose words need to be amplified. We are your brothers, sisters, classmates, neighbors, friends, colleagues. We don't want to see you or your loved ones suffer. We hope we don't meet you next week, or on Christmas or New Years.

Have a quiet holiday. Order a lot of takeout to support your restaurants. Pick up your gifts at local stores. Buy some gift certificates to put money in pockets of local businesses. But please be safe. Thank you thank you.