



January 2022

RE: Stop the Spread

Dear Cowley County Citizens,

We need your help.

Emergency departments and clinics are overflowing. Inpatient and ICU beds are at capacity. Lab, radiology, and respiratory services are busier than ever. Now two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, the healthcare workers who remain are tough and our frontlines are still strong. But, we are weary.

We are also concerned, as healthcare professionals, community members, and parents. We've heard people refer to the pandemic as if it is in the past. We've heard many citizens dismiss the new Omicron variant as less threatening. We want you to know, people are still getting sick. People are still dying.

Furthermore, this situation puts a strain on our ability to care for those who have other urgent medical needs that are not COVID-related. Patients – not just COVID-positive patients – have waited incredibly long times in the emergency department waiting for a transfer, sometimes states away. It's affecting all who seek care at our hospitals and clinics.

Our mission is to be there for you when you need us most. Very soon, we may not be able to do this.

Though we will never refuse you care, we ask you to preserve our limited resources. If you are experiencing an emergency – such as difficulty breathing or chest pain – please seek treatment immediately. However, if you are asymptomatic or have mild symptoms, please visit one of the community testing locations or get a home testing kit. We also encourage you to call your primary care office first before going to the emergency room. Healthcare professionals can evaluate your symptoms and explain the best course of action.

We need you to know this is what we are facing. We need your immediate help to slow community spread of COVID-19. The precautions put in place early on in the pandemic still apply. Mask up. Wash your hands frequently. Avoid large crowds. Stay home when you're sick. These are all still proven methods to reduce COVID-19 transmission. Also, if you are able, get vaccinated.

Together we can end this.

And there's one more thing...

Be kind. Please stop and think before acting aggressively towards a caregiver – towards any worker for that matter. We understand stress is at an all-time high, but our healthcare heroes have worked tirelessly and selflessly. Kindness is free, and a sincere "thank you" could provide just the encouragement needed to get through another difficult day.

With care and compassion from these local healthcare providers,

*SCK Health network, William Newton Hospital network, Community Health Center in Cowley County, Dr. Bryan Dennett, MD, Carrie Parmely, APRN, City-Cowley County Health Department, Graves Drug, Health Center Pharmacy, and Winfield Pharmacy*