Twitter Thread by Jerry Quijano

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good morning! while we wait for @AusPublicHealth to begin their weekly update, here are some things you might've

APH Director Stephanie Hayden starts out talking about the new portal system that pre-registers people for the vaccine, tho the site was down earlier. Not sure if that's still the case.

She stress that vaccine supply is still very limited at the moment.

Says there is not enough vaccine for the entire community yet simply "because we don't have it."

.@MeaEscott says we can't vaccinate ourselves out of the current surge, and we can still take measures to protect ourselves.

Says "we're all frustrated by the number of vaccines available" but protective measures will have to continue until that supply grows.

First Q is about positivity rates in school-age children.

Escott: I'm concerned about positive rates in young people. The situation is different from earlier: Positivity rate is 4x as high as fall and now we have a new variant.

Says it "will be a struggle" to control outbreaks

Q: when might Travis County open a vaccination mega-site?

Hayden: Says they have larger sites they are using now that could administer 2,000 vaccines per day. Once supply is consistent, then we can plan greater distribution.

Q: what is the demand for infusion sites?

Dr. Jason Pickett: demand is far outstripping the supply on infusion. says there is work being done on a better referral system, focusing efforts on under-served populations and those disproportionately affected

missed the last Q
next Q is about the new variant of COVID-19:

Epidemiologist Janet Pichette says there has been no confirmation in Travis County. There has been a case in Houston, so it very well could be in other parts of the state but nothing confirmed

Escott says it not implausible that the new variant is somehwere in Travis County, especially with such rampant community spread.

Q: some non 1A or 1B groups are receiving the vaccine, will second dose be set aside?

Hayden says providers are required to provide that second dose. That's why they are trying to prioritize those 1A and 1B groups.

Q: what proof of underlying conditions will APH require for vaccine?

Dr. Jason Pickett says they cannot ask for that information, says that is a conversation for a physician. "We can't check their blood sugar for Diabetes" says it's up to individual.

Epidemiologist Janet Pichette says until your time comes when you qualify for a vaccine, everyone should be patient and continue using preventive measures.

Q: will the 25 beds at the alternate care site be enough?

Pickett: more beds will be added, we have 250 and can expand to 1000. initial rollout was expected at 100 beds, so we can quickly open 25 more, then 25 more as needed and see where we go from there.

Q: what has city done with UT-Austin as students prepare to come back?

Escott: UT has been great partners, says UT plans to continue proactive testing in Spring. giving UT same advice as local schools, "if you can go virtual, go virtual"

Q: why isn't APH doing large distribution sites like other Texas cities?

Hayden: information on site distribution will be available tomorrow.
I believe she said there were 20,000 signups for the 12k vaccines APH received this week. she said "20k accounts for 12k shots"

Q: about non 1A and 1B populations getting vaccine

Hayden: we are aware, those pods are closed pods for 1A and some 1B folks. with people spreading info, word got out.

Says to people who plan to just show up: We cannot provide you a vaccine if you don't have an appointment.

Hayden adds again that will not be the case going forward. People cannot just show up and receive the vaccine, says vaccines were administered out "of courtesy" to people who were in line.

But again, you shouldn't plan on this happening again according to Hayden

Dr. Jason Pickett says there are no patients currently at the field hospital at the city's convention center, but a few transfers are expected today.

Escott says numbers will be added to the daily dashboard

Q about Pflugerville testing site changing to appointment-only.

Hayden says the move was done in alignment with other sites, saying it works better for the patient and the testing personnel. says it was a busy site, and the changes were made to make it more efficient

Q: is proof of residency in Travis County necessary to get a vaccine?

Hayden: @TexasDSHS says people can get a vaccine anywhere in the state. It would probably be easier to do it in your own community, but no proof is necessary.

Q: People have pre-registered but might not qualify for a vaccine - will they be contacted by APH when vaccines become available?

Hayden: Yes. our goal is to register as many people as possible, then they will be contacted when there is availability.

Q: will other providers join the APH system?

Hayden says there have been conversations with other coutnies, Williamson and Bastrop if i recall, and they are looking into it.

Escott says other large systems, like HEB, could also be part of the system.

Q: any concern about people refusing the vaccine and not enough people being inoculated?

Pickett: there is concern about that, especially given the amount of misinformation around the vaccine. go to APH or CDC website for quality information on the vaccine

Last Q: do you expect ICU capacity to peak tomorrow?

Escott: projections show that is going to happen, so it could vary but there's not a lot of room left.

onto closing statements now

Hayden: we know there is excitement about the vaccine. We ask that you be patient with us. With more supply, the community will see more locations that they can reach out to.

Pichette: We are optimistic about the vaccine rolling out, but we still need to control the surge in our own community.

If you have COVID symptoms, please get tested.

Pickett: I understand there is a lot of concern about the vaccine and those are understandable. What i can say is that the negative effects of the virus itself are far worse than negative effects of vaccine that we've seen.

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