



Press Release

Date October 29, 2020

Media Contact: Gina Fabiano – gfabiano@nschd.org

For Immediate Release

Heading: Discovery period confirms no cases of transmission to patients found at Healdsburg District Hospital

Healdsburg, CA – Healdsburg District Hospital, in conjunction with the Sonoma County Public Health Department, facilitated an all staff COVID-19 testing event on Monday this week. In a meeting between the two groups held on Wednesday to discuss the results, of the 287 staff members who were tested, only one person tested positive. Additional findings confirm that at least one of the recent cases was contracted between colleagues who work closely and socialize on breaks together, however no cases of transmission to patients were found.

The first COVID-19 positive case in the county was confirmed in late February and the leadership and staff at Healdsburg District Hospital and their associated clinics were one of the first groups to institute stringent safety protocols by closing their doors to visitors, suspending surgeries and responding quickly and proactively to the daily changes in information. These protocols have successfully kept their staff and patients safe for nearly 9 months through infection cycles that have fluctuated during that period of time. While other neighboring health care facilities, restaurants and businesses reported staff outbreaks, Healdsburg District Hospital managed to maintain a sustained COVID-free infection rate within their staff, leadership and providers. However, the consistently high infection rate in the county — currently reported at 10.2 cases for every 100,000 residents and placing the county in the most restrictive tier since the Governor’s framework was first implemented on August 31st — make it extremely difficult to keep the virus at bay indefinitely.

The infected health care workers are a reminder of the dangerous situation northern Sonoma County community members are in. Extreme care and precautions must be maintained in order to fight the spread of this highly contagious virus.

“We had a very encouraging and productive meeting with the professional team at the county public health department,” said Chief Executive Office, Jim Schuessler. “We tested 287 employees, which includes nearly everyone who has been working in the last few weeks. There is a small number of employees who are out of town that we will pick up in subsequent tests upon their return. Part of what we have discovered from Monday’s testing is that we have only one new positive who was sent home and is in isolation. We are testing again tomorrow in the hopes of determining if there are any positives that we may have missed. We are reporting what we have learned through this process and are consulting with the health department on an ongoing basis and together, will make a decision on when we should conduct a third test. Our facility is taking every measure to keep patients safe and the fact that we have zero transmissions from staff to patients is evidence that our safety protocols are working.”



Healdsburg District Hospital has been working with the county public health department to establish a communication process so patients who may have been in contact with positive health care workers will receive a call from the health department asking them about symptoms and offering testing if they so desire.

In addition to the county's findings, an earlier positive employee test was identified from late September. "As part of the discovery phase, we now think that we may have had an employee testing positive as early as September 27th and we have added that to our tally," said Schuessler. "We thought we had 12 cases as of October 26th however this earlier case, and the addition of the new positive from Monday's testing, gives us a total of 14 cases during the period of September 27 to October 28."

Health care providers everywhere are putting their lives and health on the line every day. This is a very serious issue and Healdsburg District Hospital providers and staff are taking every measure to keep patients safe, however they cannot do it alone. Testing, masking and social distancing by everyone is required to stop the spread of this virus. Pop up testing around the county is available and encouraged. Visit www.socoemergency.org or call 707-565-4667 to make an appointment for a test at a location in your area.

###