

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: December 4th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Sorry about that. Good afternoon, everyone. Happy Friday. I'm joined by the guy to my left who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Pat Callahan; and the woman on my right, who is another familiar face and at this point does not need any introduction, Dr. Christina Tan, the State's Epidemiologist. Thank you both for being here. Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Jared Maples, Chief Counsel Parimal Garg.

I want to open today with this picture, because we couldn't scramble -- I'll speak for myself, I couldn't scramble in time on Wednesday. And more importantly, it says so much about the tremendous family that is the New Jersey State Police. In the center of this picture is New Jersey State Police Recruit Lucas Homeijer, a member of the 161st trooper class who tragically passed away earlier this week. At his right and our left is retired trooper Don Homeijer, his dad in on his left and our right is his brother, Jake. As Pat recalled for us, and I know he'll have something else to say, Luke was a young man drawn to service and who would have made a tremendous addition to the ranks of the New Jersey State Police. In his memory and honor, I have ordered that all flags across and up and down the State of New Jersey to be flown at half-staff today through Sunday, the day on which Luke will be laid to rest. And through you, Pat, to all the women and men of the New Jersey State Police, to Luke's Academy classmates and most certainly and importantly, to the Homeijer family, our prayers and thoughts are deep and remain with you all. Godspeed, Luke,

Before we move forward, at the other end of the spectrum, I want to briefly address the images on social -- I can't believe this -- on social media this morning from the New York Young Republican Club that allegedly snuck into Jersey City last night to hold a gala fundraiser after they couldn't find a venue in their own city due to the pandemic. So from the videos on social media and certainly this picture, there is no obvious attempt to enforce social distancing or face masks, even though wearing masks indoors in New Jersey is mandatory at organized gatherings when individuals are not eating or drinking. It is beyond the pale that anyone would willingly endanger people in another state, nevermind their own. It is also beyond the pale that a Member of Congress -- actually go back if you could -- would participate in this. No, I want you to go back to the group if you could, Mahen. That guy in the middle, the tall, handsome fellow in the gray suit, that is representative Matt Putz -- sorry, Matt Gaetz. And based on his past performances, it is obvious being a knucklehead is not beyond the pale for him. He was actually Sarah Palin's backup act for this event.

And if you go to the next kind of a scene, that's Matt again earlier this year, kind of a scene out of Dr. Strangelove. What a full -- he and they should be ashamed of themselves. He is not welcome -- I hope you're watching, Matt. You are not welcome in New Jersey and frankly, I don't ever want you back in this state. Now to be sure, and Pat knows this, Jersey City law enforcement is currently investigating this matter, and we will assist their investigation in any way necessary and take action as appropriate.

Next up, again from that gear to something that actually does matter, several New Jersey hospitals are pre-positioning to receive the first shipments of Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine. We anticipate that the first distribution will include a total of 76,000 doses and there will be shipments, I think we can assume, every week thereafter for the foreseeable future. This pre-positioning is important to ensure first that delivery and storage systems work, and second to assist the federal government in expediting shipments and delivery. We will be situated to begin providing vaccinations once the vaccine receives emergency use authorization from the FDA.

As we continue to prepare for the first tranche of vaccines in New Jersey, we are exploring every avenue to maximize efficacy and efficiency. To that effect, today I'm signing an Executive Order to change the inclusion into the New Jersey Immunization Information System from an opt-in to an opt-out program for any resident who chooses to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. This means that if you wish to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and believe me, if we tell you it's safe, we want you to do that, you don't have to first opt into the system to make sure that your two-dose regimen is properly tracked and managed. And 30 days after the current public health emergency ends, which I hope is sooner than later, individuals who are enrolled due to the COVID-19 vaccine will be afforded the opportunity to withdraw from the system.

Let me be perfectly clear, this order does not force anyone to receive the vaccine, although we are going to be strongly recommending it, assuming we put our good housekeeping stamp of approval on it, and you should assume that we will. We're doing this for a simple reason: to ensure that those who choose to receive a vaccine get the most effective course in the most streamlined manner possible, on the proper timetable and without logistical or bureaucratic hurdles in the way. This is most critically important for our healthcare workers, emergency responders, and essential workers who need the additional protection of an effective vaccine as they continue to confront this virus on the front lines and to be sure we are ready for this moment.

Before I go on, I just want to make sure folks have some historical context. I think this was during Governor McGreevey's term when it was determined on vaccines generally if you were born after 1998, you are automatically opted into this system, this recordkeeping. If you were born before 1998, you could opt in but that was not the default; the default was you were opted out. So what we're saying through this Executive Order is very specific to the COVID-19 vaccine. Everybody is in and you will have a chance at the end of the public health crisis within 30 days to opt out. We've got to have everybody's information. The federal government needs it, we need it, you all should want it and need it so that we can track these dosages and make sure that it's as safely and efficiently distributed as possible.

So as I say, we are ready for this moment. Judy Persichilli and her team, Tina to my right, ably representing them, have been working on plans for vaccine distribution since last March and the state's initial distribution plan was filed with the federal government in early October, and that plan has been further refined since. Nothing is being left to chance or improvisation, and we continue to work closely with our hospitals.

The light on the other side of this pandemic is real, it is now becoming visible and this is a game changer. To be clear, the mere presence of a vaccine in our state does not mean that we can flip a light switch and remove all restrictions or lift every advisory. COVID isn't going to simply vanish just because there are vaccine doses in a freezer waiting for distribution. This is going to be more like a dimmer, and the light will get brighter and brighter and brighter over time. And the over time here really is between now, maybe as early as next week, and April/May. This is not forever and always.

To get to full brightness will take, as I say, months and it will take millions of New Jerseyans getting vaccinated. We're going to do all that we can to ensure confidence in the vaccines that we ultimately approve for distribution in our state. But again, even though a vaccine is on the way, we're still going to have to commit to wearing our masks, social distancing and keeping vigilant. But an end can now be considered a when and not an if, and we can count it in months. We just have to hang on together, everybody, a little bit longer and that's because this virus is still moving throughout our state and residents are still falling ill.

To that point, as of last night's report, our hospitals were treating 3,315 patients. Of that, Matt, 3,073, I made sure I had that number today, were known COVID positive with the balance awaiting confirmation from their test results. Again, 3,315 total, 3,073 are confirmed COVID positive.

Of that total number, 615 were in intensive care units and of that group, 386 ventilators were in use. I think, Tina, that is the highest percentage of folks in intensive care in many months. Discharges yesterday, this is good news, 362 live patients left our hospital, however 385 were admitted. And these are not confirmed yet, but there were 49 in-hospital deaths just yesterday. And again, they're pending confirmation, bless them.

Today, we are recording an additional 5,673 cases, meaning a nine-month total of 356,662. We know that some of these newly identified positives will ultimately end up in the hospital. This is a point we have been trying to hammer home, folks. The fewer new cases, the fewer new hospitalizations. I have to say that this is math. This is a direct cause and effect. It's perhaps the biggest reason we need everybody, please, to keep up with the practices that allowed us to crush the curves in the first place. The fewer people in the hospital, the less pressure and less risk of infection on our hard-working and heroic healthcare workers and we need every single one of them.

We're not reporting it yet, Judy and I had a conversation with Pat earlier on this, but we're increasingly getting better data on the antigen test. These are PCR tests and I hope sooner than later, we'll be able to give you some sense of what that number looks like. But trust me, there are more cases than 5,673 when you add in the antigen tests.

The positivity rate for all of those PCR tests, and they were recorded on Monday, was 10.42%. That's based, by the way, on Monday there were 49,845 PCR tests done in the state of New Jersey. The statewide rate of transmission continues to be in a better place, it's 1.05. But I want to say this in a way we haven't said in a while and again, Tina, I'm practicing without a license here. How can you have a positivity rate that's as high as it is and a rate of transmission that is trending in the right direction? The rate of transmission relies upon a rolling average of the total number of positives, regardless of what the denominator may look like in terms of the total number of tests. And you've seen lately, the rolling average has been in a range of positives, and I mean raw numbers here, it's been plus or minus 4,000 over the past number of days.

I suspect, I don't know this, but when you factor in today's positives and we begin looking out a few days from now, that rate of transmission unfortunately is going to start to creep up again. We shall see. Getting that under one is a huge objective.

Today, with a heavy heart, we're confirming another 48 losses of lives from COVID-19. That cumulative total is 15,419, and then there's another 1,836 probable deaths. And as we do every day, let's remember a few of these blessed souls we have lost.

I want to begin today with this guy, Mark Douches, the lifelong Scotch Plains resident passed away on November 17. Mark was an IT security analyst with Quest Diagnostics, but more importantly, he led an active and noteworthy life within his community. A member of the choir and lay ministry at All Saints Episcopal Church, and a member of both the Cranford Democratic Club and the Westfield Community Players, serving both onstage and behind the scenes. He was also a loving family man who enjoyed getting away to spend time with those closest to him.

Mark leaves behind his wife of 34 years, Mary Ellen, with whom I had the great honor of speaking, I think on Wednesday. She, by the way, was also in the hospital, not COVID but she's doing better, thank God, as well as she can. He also leaves behind his son Steven and daughter-in-law Dana. Mark was looking forward to becoming a grandfather for the first time this coming February. He's also survived by his brother, Alan, sister-in-law Rose and niece Amelia, along with many other relatives and close friends. May God bless you, Mark, and watch over you. I'm sure your granddaughter will hear wonderful, extraordinary, loving stories about her grandfather.

Next up, down by where we live, we remember Dr. Anjali Verma of Colts Neck. Dr. Verma came to the United States from her native India, not too far from New Delhi, in 1981 and after finishing her residency and fellowship training, she settled in New Jersey to start a career that would see her rise to become a widely respected neonatologist and pediatrician. For more than a decade, Dr. Verma was the staff neonatologist at Central State Medical Center in Freehold, and even after she started her own pediatric office, she remained on staff for several other regional hospitals. When she put her days of seeing patients behind her, she opened a medical spa to help her clients feel more confident in their skin.

Throughout her career, Dr. Verma treated countless infants and children and supported an equal number of mothers. I want to thank my friend, Senator Vin Gopal, for bringing Dr. Verma's tragic loss of life and her extraordinary life that she lived to our attention. Dr. Verma is survived by her husband Pankaj, by the way they had just celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary, and she is survived by their two daughters, Adisha who's 31 and lives in Seattle and Avanti who's 34 and who lives in Connecticut. I spoke as a group call with Pankaj, Adisha and Avanti, and as you can imagine, they're taking this very tough. She also leaves behind three siblings, a brother here in the United States and two sisters back in India. We thank Dr. Verma for all she did over an enviable and extraordinary career. We thank her for choosing to make her career and raise her family in the great state of New Jersey. May God bless and watch over her and her family.

And finally for today, we recall this guy, look at that smile, Melvin Falcon Lopez, Melvin passed away on Thanksgiving Day. He was just 47 years old. For the past 15 years, he was a member of the team at the Motor Vehicle Commission, working as a bus inspector in North Jersey. This past summer when the MVC called for hands to help cut through the backlog of new drivers awaiting road tests, Melvin switched over to the road test unit, helping to eliminate that backlog. Away from the MVC, Melvin was passionate about music. He played bass in a rock band, El Crusei, The Crossing, and spent hours in recording studios and behind the desks DJing numerous events for family and friends who he considered family. But everything else aside, Melvin will be remembered for the singular focus he put on caring for his mother Raquel, with whom I had the great honor of speaking on Wednesday, and boy is she busted up, as you can only imagine. Melvin was her only child. Raquel just recently left the hospital herself following her own battle with COVID-19. Our prayers are with her for her continued recovery from the virus and as she mourns her blessed son, Melvin.

So on behalf of Chief Administrator Sue Fulton and the entire MVC family, I and we thank Melvin for his service to New Jersey's commuters and motorists. We thank him for being a cherished part of our family. May God bless him and look over his mother and all who he leaves behind.

Now, moving on, a couple of other quick updates. First, to reiterate the weekly unemployment report released yesterday by the Department of Labor, we saw an uptick in new unemployment claims of 1,350 over the previous week to a total of 13,542. We know this increase was driven largely by the reopening of existing claims by school food service workers and bus drivers due to the Thanksgiving break. But still more than 1.8 million New Jerseyans have filed for unemployment assistance since the start of the pandemic, and the Department of Labor has dispersed a total of more than \$19.5 billion to eligible workers and families.

These families also need Washington to step up and extend emergency federal benefits which are set to expire at the end of this year. This cannot be left to the last minute. Everyone needs to work together to get that job done right now.

But we must be prepared in case Washington fails to act. That is why this morning I signed legislation expanding eligibility for the 20 weeks of extended unemployment benefits that our Department of Labor provides for those who have exhausted their state and federal unemployment benefits. I thank Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez and Senator Joe Vitale for sponsoring this important bill. They lead,

alongside their mate, Legislative District 19 Speaker Craig Coughlin. We hope this will provide peace of mind while we continue to work with our Congressional delegation to push for the extension of the emergency federal benefits currently in place.

I also have to give a shout out to Citizen Chrissie Ventri. Chrissy, looking at her husband's unemployment reality, saw an anomaly or discrepancies between the federal and the state piece and brought this to the attention of the legislators in Legislative District 19 Yvonne, Joe and Craig, and they did something about it. I called Chrissy and spoke with her this morning. I thanked each of them on the one hand, but I called her and said, "You know what? I can't tell you this happens every day, where a citizen raises their hand and goes in and says, listen, this isn't right. This needs to be corrected, and that's a huge deal." And Chrissy said to me, "My dad always told me when I see something that's not right to raise my hand." And I said "Amen to that."

I know Labor Commissioner Rob Asaro Angelo and his team continue to work hard to improve the system for everyone who is relying on it, and our hats are off to them for their tremendous efforts over the past nine months. That doesn't mean if you haven't gotten your benefits yet and you're out there and you're frustrated, I don't blame you, he doesn't blame you and we will get to you and you'll get every penny of what's coming to you.

Switch gears, a reminder from the Economic Development Authority that the deadline for businesses with 100 or fewer employees to register and be made eligible for discounts of up to 70% of the purchase of personal protective equipment or PPE is next Thursday, December 10th. If you are the owner of a small business and have not yet registered for this discount program, I encourage you to visit that website, COVID-19.nj.gov/PPEAccess. The PPE discount programs is just one of the ways that the EDA has been stepping up to help tens of thousands of small businesses get through this pandemic.

One of those businesses is Morning Joy Counselling, a Gloucester County-based mental health practice run by that woman, Counsellor Melissa McLean. Melissa and her team of 13 therapists help residents of all ages, largely in Gloucester and Camden Counties, through any manner of emotional or mental challenges. Once the pandemic hit, Melissa knew Morning Joy would have to move to telehealth services to continue serving their clients, and a grant from the EDA helped make that transition possible. I had the opportunity to check in with Melissa on Wednesday to thank her for keeping Morning Joy in a place where it can keep serving its patients. Check them out, morningjoycounselling.com.

She also made a point to me and Tina, this is I thought an important mental health point. Their counsellors are used to dealing with folks who have you name it, some stressor, some affliction, opioid addiction, bipolar, whatever it might be. She made the point that what's made this period so tough on everybody is everybody, including the counsellors, are suffering from the mental health fall out of COVID-19. It's not just -- so there's a commonality. At one level, there's a spirit of we're all in this together. At another level, you've got the counsellor providing advice and therapy to a patient and they're each suffering from something similar from this pandemic.

We know that there are countless residents across our state who are facing real mental health challenges, whether they stem from the stress of the pandemic or are prior challenges the pandemic has only worsened. For anyone who needs help, help is also available on that screen. Call 1-866-202-HELP. That's 1-866-202-4357 or text NJ Hope to 51684 for free, confidential support from the New Jersey Mental Health Cares, a partnership between the Department of Human Services and the Mental Health Association of New Jersey. The toll-free line is open every day from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and is staffed by live, trained specialists. For deaf and hard of hearing residents, assistance in American Sign Language is available through a partnership with Access at St. Joseph's Health in Paterson. You can reach them via video phone at 973-870-0677. That's the number at the bottom there, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. And again, support is free. It's confidential and it's provided by live, trained specialists.

We again thank Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson and her team and all of the DHS partners in providing this crucial service. And I thank each and every one of you who continues to hold tight to the practices that we need to, to keep our communities healthy: social distancing, wearing a face mask and frankly, common sense. Keep it up, folks. The end of this pandemic is not upon us yet with the news of the first shipments of a vaccine, but it is getting closer with each day. Let's do all that we can to make sure our entire New Jersey family is intact when that end comes.

And that brings me to the end of my remarks. I'll now turn things over to the woman on my right, the State's Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan. Tina.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. Sunday marks the start of national influenza vaccination week, which is a reminder to residents to get their annual flu vaccine. Although flu vaccination is recommended before the end of October, receiving a flu vaccine now is still beneficial because the flu season can go until May, especially in New Jersey. Getting your flu vaccine is more important than ever as we face increases in COVID-19 cases throughout the state. Flu vaccination can reduce flu illness, hospitalizations and can help conserve potentially scarce healthcare resources during the pandemic. CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone six months of age and older. Currently, New Jersey is experiencing low flu activity. Ensuring high flu vaccination rates can help us keep activity low in our state. So if you have not been vaccinated yet, please ensure that you get your annual flu vaccination soon. Flu vaccines are safe and effective, and are offered in many locations including doctor's offices, clinics, health departments, urgent care centers and pharmacies.

Now for the department's daily report. As the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 3,315 hospitalizations of COVID-19 positive patients and persons under investigation last evening. There are 615 individuals in critical care, 63% of those critical care patients are on ventilators. There's one new report of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. There are a total of 63 cases in the state. One of these children is currently hospitalized but fortunately, in New Jersey, there are no deaths reported at this time.

The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths reported. In terms of deaths, the breakdown of deaths by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 54.3%, Black 17.9%, Hispanic 20.2%, Asian 5.4% and other 2.3%.

At the state's veteran homes, there's one new positive among residents at the Menlo Park home. There are a cumulative total of 408 cases among residents across these facilities. And at our state psychiatric hospitals, the numbers have remained the same, 263 cases among residents across the four hospitals.

So looking at the daily percent positivity as of Monday, November 30th statewide, again, the positivity is 10.4%. In the Northern region it's 10.2%, Central region 10.4%, and Southern region 11.6%. That concludes the daily report. As usual, stay safe, please continue to mask up, social distance, stay home when you're sick and download the COVID Alert New Jersey app.

Governor Phil Murphy: Tina, thank you. Again, one more case of the children's inflammation syndrome, did you say one child is in the hospital? Okay. Let's hope that child gets out of there sooner than later. And again, we've still had, I'm knocking on wood, no fatalities from this awful syndrome. Please God it stays that way.

Pat, again, heavy hearts with the Homeijer family. We've got some nasty weather, particularly for down south in our state tonight. Obviously, there's a lot going on with the compliance front. Over to you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor, good afternoon. Since Wednesday, we've had seven different Executive Order citations issued. Two of those were by Camden Police Department to the same establishment, La Fronteira Nightclub, two nights in a row in violation of the Executive Order. And Newark Police Department issued citations to five different citations since Wednesday.

To your point about the weather, it is going to be a nasty night for lack of a better word, Governor. Southeast counties and coastal areas are probably going to get the worst, upwards of two-plus inches of rain. Winds are going to be gusting too, hopefully that's cleared out by Saturday afternoon and night.

Your remarks about Luke Homeijer and that family, I know I thanked you privately but publicly on behalf of all the men and women of the State Police, especially the academy staff and the 161st State Police Class, I just wanted to thank you for that Executive Order, lowering the flags to half-staff. A phenomenal tribute to a phenomenal young man who didn't get to live out his dream. But I just wanted to thank you publicly for that, Governor. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Pat. It's my honor and I would say this and I mean it, the least we could do. I think we'll start over with Matt. Brendan's got the microphone. A couple of things. One is I don't think we're going to get into the Jersey City situation other than taking the shots that we've taken, which are richly deserved, by the way. I'm very happy to take some more, but it's under investigation so I think we're going to leave it at that. As we know more on that, believe me, and we'll support that investigation, the extent to which

they need help in Jersey City. And by the way, Jersey City, you know what? We're coming up on the first anniversary next week, as you and I will recall, painfully Jared, you were with us, of the awful shooting. This sort of stupidity is completely inconsistent with what we're about as a state in our best days and our toughest days. It's completely inconsistent with Jersey City, which is one of America's, nevermind New Jersey, one of America's great communities is about.

Having said that, we'll be virtual with you this weekend. We'll be back again, unless you hear otherwise Monday, Wednesday and Friday. There's a lot going on with vaccines, including with administration. I think we're on one o'clock on Monday, but I have to say that that might move around given that there's an enormous amount of intensity around getting this exactly right. One of the more complex processes this country will have ever undertaken, so bear with us on that front. But unless you hear otherwise, Monday at one o'clock. With that, Matt, good afternoon.

Q&A Session

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Good afternoon, Governor. Last night you were asked on Ask the Governor about Department of Labor not being able to get back to people about unemployment claims, and you said that it was the first time in a while that you've heard of that, about people not being able to get anybody on the phone. You know, we've continued to hear from people that they can't get anybody on the phone, up to months at some point I know that you've said that 96% of people that filed claims, that those have been processed. But you know, I'm just curious of a couple of things.

If one, do you continue to not hear that people can't get through? Two, is DOL aware that people can't get through? And if people still can't get through to a DOL agent, somebody that can solve their problem, is there something more that can be done?

And, you know, I know that the Commissioner I guess is still scheduled to come back on Wednesday. But could you say whether or not the Commissioner has tested positive or negative, and whether anybody else, I guess, on the senior staff has tested positive?

Governor Phil Murphy: On the first one, Matt, I want to make sure I say this. You were listening last night, there were at least two that got to me and Nancy said there were others behind them. Assuming they're okay with their own privacy issues, and they almost overwhelmingly are normally, we follow up on each one of those specifically. It was also raised that someone had said that her Senator, Senator Bucco, was unable to get any attention from Rob Angelo. I literally was texting the two of them during the show last night, connecting them.

My comments, were this. Up until probably May, maybe May into early June, so we're talking six months ago, there were systemic issues. You're not answering the phone, systems went down over the weekend. Something that was affecting broad classes of people, typically supply was exceeding demand. Literally for the past six months, and folks are not bashful about coming to me or Rob or anyone else with their unemployment challenges. It has been literally, almost if not literally 100% a particular issue to that person. It wasn't that they couldn't get their phone answered, it was a typical, not an only one, they might have been a gig worker which have some specific issues around that. Another one where we have a lot of I live in New Jersey, but I work in New York or Pennsylvania. And so there are bi-state issues. We just haven't had remotely the level of frustration that we had in the early spring.

I heard a couple of names last night, I immediately went to Rob, and not getting the phone answered is unacceptable. I can't tell you there's any fix that is -- what a fix is, or what fix is actually needed but I promise you Rob and his team are all over this. They'll stay all over it until we get through to a better place.

I was asked about Motor Vehicles. It's better than it was. We have a lot of them that are shut due to COVID, by the way, better than it was but not yet where it needs to be or where it has to be. I would say the same thing about unemployment insurance.

I haven't asked Judy's permission so I don't want to rat out anybody's personal health but it stayed exactly where it was. To the best of my knowledge, there was and there remains one positive case, Judy and the rest of the team on the eighth floor are, out of an abundance of caution, are quarantining and self-isolating. We

were on the phone with her an hour ago. She seems in great spirits and in great form, and I'll leave it there. Thank you. Sir, give us one sec.

Reporter: Governor I was sent a whole bunch. Hopefully you don't mind given the --

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll mind at a certain point depending on what the definition of a bunch is, so bear with me on that one.

Reporter: The state's predictive model shows 5,000 hospital beds needed by January 1st, but the IHME model from the University of Washington shows 9,500 beds are needed about the same time. Is your administration's prediction too optimistic?

Regarding outbreaks among healthcare workers, Hackensack Meridian says outbreaks at two facilities came from outside the hospital. How can the hospital systems be sure where cases are originating and where transmission is occurring? What is the danger right now of mass outbreaks among hospital workers?

Is the state keeping track of these outbreaks among hospital workers? Why isn't there a public dashboard similar to the outbreaks at schools and long-term care facilities?

Why is New Jersey's positivity rates so much higher than our neighboring states? New York is around 5%. Connecticut is about 6% while New Jersey is around 10%. Is this cause for concern?

Two more. Will nursing home and long-term care residents be included in the first priority phase for vaccines, the 1A group, as the CDC recommended, or does the state intend to stick with the initial plan that calls for them to be part of the 1B group?

And finally, how long after the vaccine is approved by the FDA will those first priority vaccines be administered here in New Jersey?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm going to go backwards to forwards, if that's okay. I believe they will start shipping within 24 hours after the emergency use authorization is approved.

Secondly, healthcare workers and long-term care workers are first up to bat, and I believe they're both in 1A.

Listen, New Jersey was lower than New York, and for a significant period than Connecticut so I can't give you a crisp -- we have the densest state in America so when it starts to go on fire. I think you said this, Tina, when you look at spot positivity, which is unacceptably high, it's 10.42%. The North, Central and South are almost literally identical. It's community spread throughout the state and I think our density is the is the big driver.

Whether it's Hackensack Meridian hospitals or the general notion of transparency, we're all in on that. I was on with their senior folks over the past couple of days. We want to see transparency. I want those to be on our dashboards and I want the healthcare providers, the hospital systems, to be very clear and upfront about what's going on in their hospitals. They continue to say that it was outside transmission in. I think people need to see more detail to have the confidence in that. I'm confident that they will show that.

Tina, it's fair to say you all look at a series of models. I would never say that we're being too optimistic. That's the last thing I'd probably be accused of over the past nine months. We're trying to be as realistic and as accurate as possible as it relates to everything, including with models. We're going to have thousands of people, we currently have hospitalizations, 3,315. Does that get up meaningfully from there, like a double or more? Yes. There are a number of different models that you look at and your colleagues look at and will continue to. Models are models.

I'll repeat what we said early on, and this was from Ron Klain and the Ebola experience. He reminded me, and he was a very good advisor to us, along with many others behind the scenes, that behavior can change the model. The model is dynamic. It is not static. We not only look at multiple models, but we also look at how behavior can impact each of those models. That gives me the opportunity to plead with everybody. If you stay away from each other, if you wear your face masks, if you continue to have small holiday celebrations with your own family or the bubble with whom you're inside of which you're living, and you don't travel. And if you don't feel well, you take yourself off the field, and at the appropriate point get tested, those are the basic things we've got.

Vaccines are coming, but as I said earlier, it's not a light switch. I think that's what I would say about modelling and Tina will correct me if she chooses to. It looks like she's not going to correct me. Thank you. Elise.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: The first question is from Tom Davis at Patch. Tom says, six New Jersey hospitals may be at the front of the vaccine line: Hackensack, Morristown, University, RWJ New Brunswick, Atlanta Care in Atlantic City and Cooper. Can you speak to that? And if those are the hospitals, how were they chosen?

And my own question is, today you mentioned the delivery of 76,000 doses, and more each week after? Is this a deviation from the 130,000 shipment we expected first? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Give me one second, Elise. Forgive me, I am being a dad for 10 seconds. My daughter is about to take a final exam, so keep her in your prayers. I'm not sure where the hospitals, how that got out there. I made a decision before coming over here I would refer to the first shipment number but I'm not going to comment on the hospitals. And by the way, just because you didn't get it next week doesn't mean you're not going to get it the week after. This is going to be in very short order, these will be coming at us measured first in tens, then hundreds of thousands and then millions.

No, I think that it is not. I think my numbers were for December in total and so the 76,000 is the first of what could be, I believe, three separate shipments from Pfizer in December alone. Never mind what we are likely to get from Moderna. I don't want to hang my hat on this because others are in the engine room working on this as we speak. I think we are looking at something in the 300,000 to 500,000 doses in the state by the end of December, if I had to give a number to point people toward. But the one that I am going to hang my hat on is that first wave of Pfizer, which is 76,000. Elise.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: When you say doses, do we then have to halve that number?

Governor Phil Murphy: You do. So 100,000 doses is for 50,000 people. And again, we've got to get everyone opted into the system, because we've got to make sure, among other things, that your first dose and your second dose which are either 21 or 28 days apart, are from the same source, by example. So mixing and crossing wires is something we have to avoid as well. Thank you for that. And again, we'll have a lot more, whenever it is Judy's with us, I think we are pointing to Wednesday, maybe the CDC guidelines, shorten that, I don't want to speak for Judy or the team, we may see her before then. But either way, I think we're going to talk about modelling in detail on Wednesday at latest, and I think we're going to have a lot more to say on vaccines, probably each of Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

With that, I'm going to mask up. I want to thank Tina, as always, for being with us. Pat, likewise. We're going to keep the, and keep the Homeijers in our deepest prayers. Jared, Parimal, Mahen, again, we'll be with you unless you're otherwise virtually this weekend and then Monday at one o'clock. And again on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday rhythm. If anything, that rhythm is going to increase in frequency as opposed to decrease. But for the moment, it's Monday, Wednesday and Friday. We've got a lot more coming at you on what those models look like.

Again, I think we've said this now for quite some time. We're in for a very rough couple of months. I would love everyone to sort of just internalize that. A couple of months, this is going to be rough. Our behavior can make it less rough and that's an important point. That happened. We saved our healthcare system in the spring. I'm not sure we're going to get to the point where the healthcare system is tilting, but I do know we'll have thousands of people in the hospital and many people will die, and our behavior can absolutely impact those numbers for the benefit, for the good. So folks, just stay at it. I know you're fatigued, you're frustrated. You're sick and tired of this. I can't blame you. We are but I will tell you we are getting there. This is not forever and for always.

Now think about this. Can you imagine, Tina, in March that we would be saying at some point this year that subject to the FDA's approval will have vaccines next week? It's extraordinary. This is the beginning, the front tip of what will be really good news, but it is just the beginning. We've got to bear down. Stay strong, folks. God bless you all. Have a safe weekend, particularly in the tough weather, especially down south tonight and into tomorrow. Take care.

Governor Phil Murphy

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