

SCRIPT – Print - Pandemic Preparation

OSF HealthCare trains for possible COVID-19 surges

As health care systems across the country grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, training medical staff during this unprecedented time has taken on an even greater urgency. Across the Ministry, OSF HealthCare is working diligently with its frontline Mission Partners to prepare for the worst and pray for the best, when it comes to caring for patients who may be impacted by this unrelenting virus.

“No one knows what we’re going to experience until we actually do it,” said Dr. Stephen Bartlett, Chief Medical Officer, OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. “The value of a drill is that we have the Mission Partners who are going to be seeing these patients be well prepared by going through the actual sequence of steps that they’re going to go through before they see the first patient. That allows them the first time they encounter a patient to do it smoothly, to be well prepared as if they’ve done it many times before.”

For each particular drill, a tent is set up outside hospitals that would allow Mission Partners to quickly assess the sick and determine if they should be released home or immediately admitted to an emergency room. By conducting drills, the tent expands our emergency departments and increases our triage capabilities.

“It’s extremely important and this is exactly how the military works, where they spend a lot of time training drills and the same thing with the police and firefighters,” said Dr. Stephen Bartlett, Chief Medical Officer, OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. “Many organizations have to train for the unexpected or uncommon event. And today’s drill prepared us for this particular pandemic. And there will be other issues we have to prepare for that the Ministry is always going to be well prepared for these unexpected events because we’re willing to do these drills and work together as a team to make these preparations.”

Conducting necessary drills during a time like this not only gives frontline Mission Partners vital experience, but it also gives the community confidence that OSF HealthCare will be ready in the event that a surge may occur.

By publicizing the fact that we had a drill is helpful for the community. We are under a shelter order. That means people are at home, they don’t have a lot of information other than what they are seeing on the Internet or TV and frankly by being home all the time and not having a lot of social contact, fear can build,” said Dr. Stephen Bartlett, Chief Medical Officer, OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. “By having these reports that the Ministry and OSF HealthCare is well prepared it gives them a reassurance that people are out there ready to help them should something happen.”

Dr. Bartlett has worked for health care systems across the system and says this is the best he’s seen when it comes to preparation.

What impresses me about OSF HealthCare is the extraordinary teamwork and collaboration from the top leadership to the align Mission Partners,” said Dr. Stephen Bartlett, Chief Medical Officer, OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. “People work together and all that is coming in the context of calm. People I see are completely calm, they think through the issues and that allows them to be well prepared as patients come forward.”