

## **Getting From Here to There**

### ***Transmission of COVID-19 is hot topic of discussion***

Shelli Dankoff – Media Relations Supervisor

In mid-September, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) caused a bit of a hubbub when it posted new guidance on how the COVID-19 virus is transmitted, only to abruptly pull it back a couple of days later.

The questionable guidance said that aerosol transmission might be one of the "most common" ways the coronavirus is spreading. This change was notable because the CDC to that point had stopped short of saying that the virus was airborne, focusing instead on droplet or contact transmission with an infected person.

[New guidance released by the CDC](#) on October 5 now says "the principal mode by which people are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 is through exposure to respiratory droplets carrying infectious virus." The CDC further explains respiratory viruses such as COVID-19 are transmitted in multiple ways, including droplet, contact, and airborne transmission, adding that airborne particles "can remain suspended in the air over long distances (usually greater than 6 feet) and time (typically hours)." This new guidance expanded the potential distance the virus could potentially travel and time it could linger while adding the airborne transmission.

Doctors will tell you the reality is *all* viruses can be transmitted, and we shouldn't focus so much on how.

"I think the truth is we don't really know exactly how far it spreads, if it's infectious in the air, how infectious, and under what circumstances," said Stephen Hippler, MD, Chief Clinical Officer, OSF HealthCare.

One of the things that medical providers have been keeping an eye on is the spread of influenza activity in the southern hemisphere, places like Australia, New Zealand and South America. The seasons run opposite of what they are in the United States, so our summer was their winter. What they are finding is that because of masking and cleaning protocols, along with decreased travel in those areas because of COVID-19 restrictions, the amount of influenza being seen is significantly lower.

"What we've learned from the southern hemisphere - as opposed to what we were anticipating two months ago which would've been this winter would be really awful - is that if we continue doing a lot of things we are already doing, they affected not only the coronavirus, whether it's respiratory, aerosolized, droplet, or contact, it will impact RSV, influenza, adenoviruses, and bacteria-like pneumonia's," explained Mike Cruz, MD, Chief Operating Officer, OSF HealthCare and an emergency medicine trained physician.

Both Dr. Cruz and Dr. Hippler emphasize it is important to keep doing what we have been asked to do for months now and that will have the greatest impact on preventing the spread of COVID-19 or the flu – regardless the mode of transmission.

Said Dr. Hippler: "The best thing we can do is wear our masks, physically distance at least 6 feet from people, and wash our hands. Then no matter what it turns out to be, it'll be the best way to protect ourselves and others."