

TRANSCRIPT FROM MAY 26 2020 Penny Wheeler Covid19 Update

Hi. I'm Penny Wheeler. And I wish I could be with you more directly. But we'll do it virtually. I'm here as CEO of Allina Health. And I'm fortunate to be in my position.

I'm a-- I was-- came through this ranks as a physician in the organization. And now I'm able to lead the organization, of which I'm so proud. And additionally, it's the organization in which I was born, having been born at Abbott Northwestern Hospital. So that makes me doubly grateful and proud to be in this position.

We're navigating a difficult time together right now. And we're here to help you with that navigation for your health and health care needs during this time of COVID-19. It's disrupted our lives. There's no question about it. It's turned them upside down.

Everything we do looks differently than it did before. You've stayed at home for us and allowed us to have the time to prepare for what can be and what is an increasing illness burden in our community. And we're grateful for that.

We've used that time of you staying home and staying safe to double our intensive care unit space for those who are most severely ill with this and with other health conditions. We used it as a time to increase our medical surgical space by 50%. We've used it as a time to actually increase bringing care to you into your homes through our virtual care, which has increased 10,000-fold since this started. So we've used the time you've given us by staying at home and staying safe. We've used that time wisely to prepare for the illness burden in our community.

On behalf of myself and our 29,000 caregivers in Allina Health, I want to thank you because save for your efforts, we wouldn't have been able to prepare in the way we have or be ready for what is increasing in numbers in our community.

One of the key messages we have for you in this time of coexistence with the virus and with other health care needs is don't delay care needs. We have a commitment to safe care. We're helping to guide people to the right care resources, whether it's COVID or non-COVID, through our Get Care Now features. This includes things like virtual care, clinic, urgent care places of care, and emergency care.

Our safe care commitment includes several things to make sure that you get the care you need to avoid suffering and harm and that we do it for you always, always safely. That includes bringing care to you, as I mentioned, in home care with virtual visits, separating people who have the virus from those who do not and doing splits in our clinics and our hospitals, making sure we screen both patients and visitors and employees for safety, social distancing-- putting marks on the floor to make sure that we have the social distancing needed-- everyone wearing a mask-- so we make sure that we avoid any of that risk for the people we serve-- and the highest possible standards of cleanliness everywhere. That is what we need to ensure your safety, and also assure that you get the care that you need for health-related issues.

In addition, we offer curbside testing for anybody who is symptomatic with any of the symptoms related to the illness. And we're moving forward with scheduled and needed surgeries. I'm proud to report we've just caught up now on cancer-related surgeries that were delayed because of the shutting down of scheduled procedures.

Lastly, let me end with what I think is the greatest anecdote to any kind of stressful environment. And that's gratitude, gratitude for you. You've taken personal actions by staying at home and staying safe to reduce the spread. That's giving us the requisite time to prepare wisely for a disease burden in our community.

While we're learning to coexist with COVID, that presents many, many unknowns. We do know that there's some things that just will not change. The importance of safety practices, like physical distancing, wearing a mask, washing your hands, staying at home as much as possible-- that doesn't change. That decreases the risk of us having this illness increase in our community.

Our absolute gratitude for the renewed spirit of community-- that doesn't change. And we're seeing it in spades all across, whether it's sewing masks for people, whether it's delivering meals to health care workers, whether it's mowing their lawns or putting a sign out in your yard that says "we support you." Those things all matter. So thank you for that.

Your kind words and your messages mean the world, and way more than you ever know. I'm so grateful to be able to be part of this organization. And a lot of that gratitude comes from you and how you support us. We're here to support your care needs, always and safely. And we thank you in spades for supporting us.