July 22, 2020

An open letter to the people of Wisconsin,

Wearing a face mask, maintaining physical distancing and regular handwashing are the most effective ways to protect yourself, your family, your friends and your fellow Wisconsinites from becoming infected with COVID-19.\(^1,2\) It could still be more than a year before an effective vaccine is developed and new therapies are still being studied for their safety and effectiveness.\(^3\) The spread of COVID-19 and the duration of the pandemic did not end with the lockdowns. The reopening of our economy should not be confused as a return to normalcy—the pandemic is not behind us.

The continued increase in cases across the state demonstrates that we are still in the first wave of this pandemic. We urge all Wisconsinites to continue to follow the advice and precautions put forth by science, evidence and public health experts.\(^4\) Proper masking,\(^5\) distancing\(^6\) and handwashing,\(^7\) even at social events and family gatherings, are critical to slowing the spread of COVID-19 and preventing Wisconsin from becoming a hot spot like Texas, Arizona or Florida. Wearing a mask, even a cloth mask, significantly reduces a person’s risk for infection as masks have not been shown to cause harm in healthy individuals with no behavioral health concerns.\(^8,9,10\) Discounting the effectiveness of these simple measures risks an acceleration and continued duration of this pandemic.

We thank those of you who are doing your part to help slow the spread of this pandemic by wearing masks and practicing physical distancing. Continued collective action is necessary and critical to stop the spread of COVID-19, and we are calling on all individuals to do their part to promote our collective health and well-being. We are confident that together we can slow the spread and defeat the COVID-19 virus.

Sincerely,

Clyde “Bud” Chumbley, MD, MBA
CEO
Wisconsin Medical Society

John Schneider, MD, FAPA
President
Wisconsin Psychiatric Association

Ryan Thompson, MD, FACEP
President
Wisconsin Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians

Elizabeth Yun, MD
President
Wisconsin Society of Anesthesiologists

Sheldon Wasserman, MD, FACOG
Section Chair
Wisconsin Section-American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

Gina Dennik-Champion, MSN, RN, MSHA
Executive Director
Wisconsin Nurses Association

Dipesh Navsaria, MD, MSLIS, MPH, FAAP
President
Wisconsin Chapter of the Academy of Pediatrics

Christopher Pruett, MD
Board Chair
Wisconsin Academy of Ophthalmologists

Sabina Singh, MD
President
Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians

David Galbis-Reig, MD, DFASAM
President
Wisconsin Society of Addiction Medicine

Newrhee Kim, MD
President
Wisconsin Radiological Society

Eric Pifel, MD
President
Wisconsin Orthopaedic Society

Christopher Kinonen, MD
President
Wisconsin Society of Pathologists

Lisa Kirker
Chair
Wisconsin Association for Home Health Care, Inc.

Lisa Severson, CST, BAHM, MAHR
President
Association of Wisconsin Surgery Centers, Inc.

Donn Dexter, MD, FAAN,
President
Wisconsin Neurological Society

Dipesh Navsaria, MD, MSLIS, MPH, FAAP
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