

Local City and County Mayors,

Aug 16th, 2021

The UT Department of Emergency Medicine and Memphis area Emergency Department Medical Directors must inform you of the current crisis in the Memphis/Shelby County area medical systems. Currently our system emergency departments are operating dangerously over capacity and housing dozens of admitted patients in each of our Emergency Departments. Projections for COVID patients are that hospitalized patients will double by the end of this month and increase six-fold by the end of September. That increase would produce more admitted COVID patients than the city has hospital beds for on any normal day. These are greater numbers than we have yet faced in the pandemic and do not account for non-Covid patient emergencies such as stroke, heart attack, and trauma.

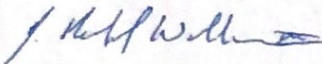
We must inform you that we may have to begin triaging care to patients in the next few days. To be clear, we may be unable to provide timely care to everyone and will have to make choices about delivering care to patients based on their probability of survival. We can't stress how grave a concern this is to us all. Currently, the city has no surge capacity to accommodate any additional disaster or unplanned events. In fact, we are concerned that without a masking mandate in place as well as a reduction in capacity at large events and an emphasis on social distancing, thousands may be unable to receive prompt care in the coming weeks. Additional unplanned volume in the form of influenza patients is only likely to add to the current crisis when flu season begins this fall.

It is our recommendation that the city and county and adjacent local counties served by the Memphis area medical system reinstitute a mask mandate immediately and that it continue until we can return the medical systems to normal operations and vaccination rates exceed 80% of the eligible population. Failure to provide mitigation strategies at this point will be catastrophic to the Midsouth and affect health care at every level. Patients will not receive timely emergent or urgent care for any medical, surgical, or obstetrical problem, as the system cannot sustain the current patient load with available resources, much less the projected increase.

This crisis is due to a lack of skilled personnel resources (nurses, techs, etc.) and there are already mitigation strategies being employed by the hospitals, such as managing elective and even urgent surgeries and extending nursing ratios with volunteers, but this is a temporary stop gap measure and will likely NOT keep up with the surge, even if a city-wide mask mandate goes into effect today. While a temporary respite will occur with these measures, those already exposed who will then develop symptoms and seek care will exceed our capacity before the situation improves permanently.

We regret having to bring such dire warnings before the city and county leaders, but feel it is our obligation to do so as immediate action is required.

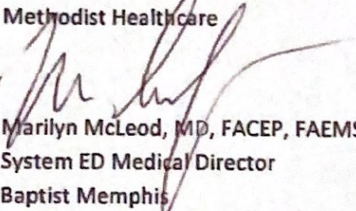
Most sincerely,



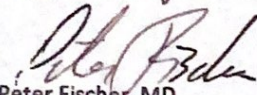
J. Richard Walker, III, MD, MS, FACEP
Interim Chair and Residency Program Director
UTHSC, Department of Emergency Medicine



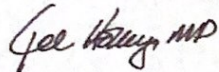
Will Burch, MD
Regional Medical Director, Sound Physicians
Methodist Healthcare



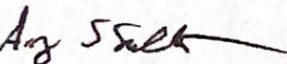
Marilyn McLeod, MD, FACEP, FAEMS
System ED Medical Director
Baptist Memphis



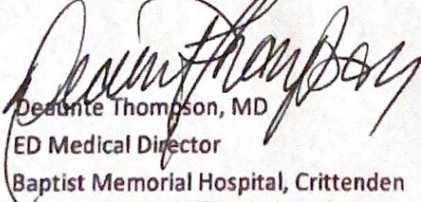
Peter Fischer, MD
Trauma Director
Regional One Health



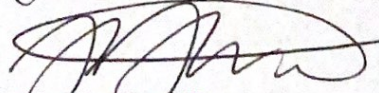
Joe Holley, MD, FACEP, FAEMS
EMS Medical Director
Memphis and Shelby County



Chief Angie Sullivan
Deputy Chief of EMS
Memphis Fire Department



Deante Thompson, MD
ED Medical Director
Baptist Memorial Hospital, Crittenden



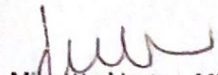
Joshua Justice, MD
ED Assistant Medical Director
Regional One Health



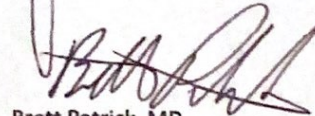
Scott E. Strome, MD
Robert Kaplan Executive Dean
UT Health Science Center, College of Medicine



Kito Lord, MD
Emergency Department Medical Director
Regional One Health



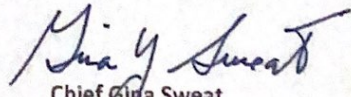
Mike Washington, MD, MBA, FACEP
Emergency Medicine



Brett Patrick, MD
Chair of Emergency Medicine
Methodist LeBonheur Healthcare



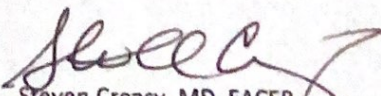
Dale Criner, MD, MBA
Emergency Medical Director



Chief Gina Y. Sweat
Director, Memphis Fire Services
Memphis Fire Department



David Hooker, MD, FACEP
System Medical Director
Baptist Memorial Hospital, Desoto



Steven Creasy, MD, FACEP
ED Medical Director, Collierville
Baptist Memorial, Collierville