

Alex Schabauer, MD  
353 Fairmont Blvd.  
Rapid City, SD 57701

October 3, 2020

Dear Mayor Allender,

As a medical staff community in Rapid City we were recently asked by Laura Armstrong and our medical staff member Dr. Marvin Buehner to give a medical opinion on the public health question of wearing masks to prevent viral transmission. For the sake of clarification, we are the organizational structure of physicians within the framework of Monument Health Rapid City Hospital, who provide care for our community and maintain its quality. We are made up of all the medical specialties and independent practices as well as those employed through Monument Health.

The question posed was in the form of developing a resolution on improving the use of face masks/coverings in our community to help inform decision making for those of you in positions of community political leadership. The lengthy discussion we held incorporated a broad scope of the clinical concerns and implications for the community. The politics of this topic were reviewed as well, however, we clarified that our objective was to provide clear clinical advice for you and your council to consider from a local perspective.

The current state of knowledge of the CoVid 19 virus and its spread was reviewed and is well understood. There was agreement amongst the medical staff on the clear effectiveness of masks, face coverings and social distancing, as per the CDC guidelines, to reduce the spread of this disease. Our mutual goal is to keep our community physically and economically healthy through the pandemic until a vaccine is successfully utilized or the virus subsides. In addition to protecting all citizens, we are particularly concerned about the elderly, immunocompromised people of all ages and those with multiple medical problems, many of whom are health care workers and other essential workers. All of these people put themselves at risk every day. Most of our caregivers who have become ill with CoVid 19 became infected within the community, not from the patients whom they have cared for in healthcare settings. Other areas of our country have already taught us the lessons of significant community mortality rates. Often the more underappreciated issues surrounding the crisis are that the virus spreads through and increasingly incapacitates the medical community. Also, there are numerous patients with months-long illness and incomplete recovery who do not show up in the mortality rates.

The only debates in our medical staff meeting focused on how to deliver the message of this resolution, specifically as to the strategy, politics and timing, and not on the message itself. Our vote was not unanimous for this reason only. Another point worth mentioning is that there was general agreement in that this is not an isolated viral event, meaning the local and global medical communities understand more viral pandemics will develop in the future, and probably

with increasing frequency. How we learn to adapt informs how our society will continue to function in the decades to come.

The vote on this resolution occurred prior to the sad news of the infection of our President and First Lady and others in our government. That most recent information only serves to underscore that no one is actually able to predict, fully avoid or control this aggressive virus. Mitigation is the best we can hope for to remain a reasonably functional society through the course of this pandemic. Recent evidence confirms that wearing masks and making appropriate other mitigation efforts will reduce this virus below the infectious threshold of continuing the pandemic and also reduces the number of symptomatic patients while bolstering the proportion of asymptomatic cases. Our proposal has no discernable medical or financial risks to our community, and only benefit.

In making this resolution, we are not asking more of anyone than our entire medical community does every day. Please consider the intention of the resolution, which is an inexpensive and easy way to reduce the viral transmission in our city keeping our healthcare system and businesses functioning while the pandemic continues. Ultimately it is up to the city council to determine a meaningful policy to lead our community in these trying times. We are hopeful that our medical expertise will be helpful to our common goal of crafting timely and appropriate guidance for our citizens. We would be more than happy to help in any way we can in this process.

Sincerely,

Alex Schabauer, MD  
Chief of Staff  
Monument Health Rapid City Hospital

See attached Resolution below:

September 29, 2020

**Resolution in Support of a Mandatory Face Mask Ordinance  
in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic**

Whereas the American Medical Association strongly advocates for coronavirus masking in public places; and

Whereas the Centers for Disease Control recommends masks in public settings, especially when social distancing measures are difficult to maintain; and

Whereas a preponderance of medical literature concludes that jurisdictions requiring mask wearing in public places have reduced coronavirus transmission rates; and

Whereas our community has been subject to a significant rise in the incidence of coronavirus infection; now,

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Medical Staff of Monument Rapid Health Rapid City Hospital support and encourage the development and implementation of ordinance requiring the wearing of face masks in indoor public places, businesses, and mass gatherings for individuals without contraindications by the Rapid City Council and the mayor of Rapid City.