

#### **1.4.21 Notes from the Governor's Briefing:**

##### COVID:

- Day 310
- Statewide rate without micro-clusters: 7.7%
- Statewide rate with micro-clusters: 8.34%
- Micro-cluster rate: 9.35%
- 134,360 tests conducted
- 170 fatalities
- 8,251 hospitalizations, up 288
- 1,357 ICU patients, up 13
- 843 intubations, up 28

##### Hospitalizations:

- Finger Lakes: 930 (0.08%)
- Western NY: 531 (0.04%)
- Southern Tier: 209 (0.03%)
- Mid Hudson: 942 (0.04%)
- NYC: 2,884 (0.03%)
- Central NY: 400 (0.05%)
- Mohawk Valley: 299 (0.06%)
- Long Island: 1,506 (0.05%)
- Capital Region: 468 (0.04%)
- North Country: 82 (0.02%)

##### Positivity Rate by Region:

- Finger Lakes: 10.22%
- Western NY: 8.43%
- Southern Tier: 5.77%
- Mid Hudson: 8.20%
- Central NY: 9.30%
- Mohawk Valley: 10.38%
- NYC: 6.24%
- Long Island: 9.31%
- Capital Region: 9.91%
- North Country: 9.02%
- Manhattan: 3.52%
- Staten Island: 7.15%
- Brooklyn: 5.90%
- Queens: 6.9%
- Bronx: 7.31%

- Spike in cases has been seen over Christmas & New Years statewide and nationwide
- Gov. said surge & flex to balance hospitals has been working well, but every region in the state has reached at least 30% hospital capacity

##### Vaccine:

- Gov. discussed "nationwide problem" of slow vaccine administration
- Three avenues of vaccination administration: nursing homes, hospitals, and "special efforts":
- Nursing home program is federally-run, pharmacies administer in nursing homes, about half of population has received so far
- Gov. said state will step in to speed up this program
- Over the next two weeks, the state will expedite the remaining 15% of nursing home population
- 194 total private and public hospitals in the state
- Gov. said vaccinations in public hospitals need to be managed by public officials
- Approximately 46% of total allocation of vaccine has been used by hospitals so far

- DOH issued a letter to hospitals yesterday requiring the allocation received be used by the end of this week
- Also requires future allocations be used within 7 days of receipt
- Hospitals can be fined up to \$100,000 or be denied future allocations
- Special efforts are state-run efforts to supplement federal measures
- Drive-thrus, public facilities, and retired personnel will be utilized, healthcare deserts will be the focus
- Eligibility is extended this week to all healthcare workers who come into contact with the public
- By Executive Order, providers can lose their license for fraudulently receiving or administering vaccine
- In addition, Gov. said he will propose a law with criminal penalties

#### Schools:

- Gov. said some counties are now over 9% positivity based on state numbers
- Schools can remain open if positivity in schools is lower than community rate
- Local school districts will make this decision

#### State of the State:

- Gov. said this will "start" next Monday

#### Q&A:

- On whether the state is complicating vaccinations for hospitals by fining for slow use of allotment and fining for misuse of allotment:
  - Gov. said expeditious administration is required, and hospitals should not have allocations if they cannot administer quickly enough
  - Fine is for accepting an allocation that a hospital cannot or will not administer quickly enough
  - Gov. stated criminal penalties require intent to defraud, would not include unintentional mistakes
- On why the state has not issued additional restrictions in Finger Lakes, Mohawk Valley regions:
  - Hospital capacity has not been problematic so far, but if the rate does not come down in these regions, hospital capacity will be diminished, those regions will completely shut down
- On the vaccine refusal rate:
  - Gov. said there is no breakdown of staff who have refused to accept vaccine, but some anecdotal evidence of this
  - Dr. Zucker said data so far on nursing homes is approximately 10% of residents, approximately 15% of staff in nursing homes have refused
- On Central NY hospital capacity, whether additional restrictions are being considered:
  - Gov. said number provided today is what the hospital could surge to in 7 days
  - Capacity includes current availability, plus surge capacity for staffed beds that could be reached within 7 days, also includes potential closures of ambulatory centers
- On Gov.'s comment of the "start" of the state of the state next Monday:
  - Gov. said there will be no audience, will be a different state of the state due to challenges of the previous and new year
- On how micro-clusters will be determined going forward, and a lack of changes to existing zones:
  - Gov. said zones will not be diminished until the numbers begin to come down in those regions
- On why hospitals are not utilizing their allocations fully:
  - Gov. said there are several causes for this, but some hospitals have used 99%, others have used a small percentage of their allocation
  - Gov. said all hospitals have the ability to store the vaccine, and are responsible for vaccinating their own staff
  - Gov. added hospitals are not required to participate in vaccinations
  - Gov. said most hospitals report a short timeframe (3 weeks) since receipt of vaccine as reason for why they have not utilized their allocations
  - Dr. Zucker added this is a high-priority issue, urgency is required

## New COVID Strain:

- NYSDOH has been testing for UK strain of COVID
- Wadsworth lab today confirmed a case in Saratoga
- The case was symptomatic, but he is doing well, is improving
- He did not travel, suggesting this strain is in the community already
- He is affiliated with jewelry store N. Fox Jewelers, 404 Broadway in Saratoga
- Three other COVID cases in jewelry store, those are being tested for new strain as well
- The store has been closed since Dec. 24, but state is asking those who have visited from Dec. 18 - Dec. 24 to get tested
- State will be contact tracing, Gov. asked for cooperation from the public
- This strain has also been identified in Florida, California, Colorado as well

## Q&A:

On whether Wadsworth can test efficacy of vaccine on this strain, and should it be assumed this is already widespread:

- Gov. said it has not been found to be resistant to the vaccine, but is more transmittable
- Gov. said it is probably more widespread than already known, but the test for this strain is more complex, takes Wadsworth lab 40 hours to conduct
- About 5,000 tests for this strain have been conducted in NYS already

On whether there are additional symptoms for this strain:

- Dr. Zucker said symptoms are similar in severity, just more transmittable

On whether this strain could be causing the increase in the Capital Region:

- Dr. Zucker said increase in NY and across the nation could be due to the new variant and the fact that it is more transmittable

On improvements in Erie county, and whether restrictions will be lifted:

- Gov. said that while Erie county has made progress, it has not been consistent
- Rhodes added flattening had occurred, but numbers are beginning to increase again over last 7-days
- Gov. said he believes restrictions do help, and if a decline continues, restrictions will be reduced

On whether the new strain can be more deadly in the sense that it is more infectious, can overwhelm hospital system:

- Gov. reiterated symptoms have not been reported to be more severe, and vaccine is expected to be effective on it as well
- Gov. noted it could lead to higher hospitalization rates, which is the concern