

**KNOX COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING MINUTES**  
**January 27, 2021; from 5:00 PM to 6:10 PM**  
**Knox County Health Department**  
**Via Zoom Meeting**

**Present:**

Martha Buchanan, MD, Secretary  
Jack E. Gotcher, Jr., DDS, Chair  
Maria Hurt, DNP  
Glenn Jacobs, Knox County Mayor  
Ani Roma, Citizen Representative  
James Shamiyeh, MD  
Marcy Souza, DVM  
Lisa Wagoner, RN; representing Superintendent Bob Thomas, Knox County Schools  
Dianna Drake, PharmD

**Absent:** Patrick O'Brien, MD

**Others Attending:**

**KCHD:** Katharine Killen (Zoom Host), Kelsey Wilson, Michelle Moyers (recorder)

**Knox County:** David Sanders, Esq. representing Knox County Law Department

**UT-Knoxville:** Dr. Spencer Gregg

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Dr. Gotcher called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM

**II. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM**

Chair Dr. Gotcher requested Ms. Wilson take roll call to confirm establishment of the quorum. Nine Board members were in attendance and one member was absent. Quorum was met.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JAN. 13, 2021 MEETING**

Dr. Souza moved to approve the minutes with a second from Dr. Shamiyeh. The motion passed unanimously, via roll call vote, 9 to 0.

**IV. SET THE AGENDA**

Motion made by Dr. Souza and seconded by Ms. Roma to set the agenda. Dr. Buchanan offered a friendly amendment to add KCHD's 2019 Community Health Assessment (CHA) to the agenda before "Other Business." The motion passed unanimously, via roll call vote, 9 to 0.

**V. KNOX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT BENCHMARK PRESENTATION BY DR. BUCHANAN**

**Vaccine Update**

Dr. Buchanan shared an update on vaccine and shared the revised [vaccine dashboard](#) on KCHD's website. The dashboard provides a County-wide look at vaccination data. As of yesterday, when this data was pulled, more than 34,000 vaccinations had been reported in Knox County—that's 7.3% of the population. There is a breakdown between dose one and two. These include the vaccines given by public health, hospitals and pharmacies that have partnered with long-term care facilities.

At KCHD, as of yesterday, we had administered more than 6,600 first and second doses.

There is a demographic breakdown of Knox County vaccination numbers by age, race, ethnicity and sex. These numbers will be updated weekly. All of the data—with the exception of the internal number—is coming from the Tennessee Department of Health.

KCHD continues to vaccinate those in the first priority groups—including health care workers, first responders, and those 75 and older. A full list of those who qualify is available on the on the KCHD Vaccination Information Page. The phases of qualifications are outlined by the State.

KCHD and the hospitals are the primary vaccination hubs right now, but that will not be the case in the future. KCHD looks forward to when the vaccine supply is greater which will allow more places to administer the vaccine. It is important to remember that right now we are in the initial vaccination phase. Public Health is just one part of a larger system—which includes medical providers, hospitals, and pharmacies. In the coming weeks and months, we will continue into a transition phase where other groups will be added to the vaccine administration role. This will help speed up the process and increase access to larger groups of individuals.

For now and for the foreseeable future, the demand for vaccine continues to greatly outpace the supply. We have seen evidence of that during every vaccination opportunity we have announced. We continue to work with the County IT department to roll out a new online registration and scheduling system that will have a waitlist option. We have heard the desire for a waitlist from our community and are working to make it a reality. Our team has done a great deal of research to find a system that is robust to handle the expected volume, while also having features that can be used internally by our clinical team to increase efficiency at appointments.

#### **Local Situation**

Dr. Buchanan transitioned to providing an update on the local COVID-19 situation.

- We have 103 new confirmed cases since yesterday's report.
- 2,830 are active cases.
- 94 Knox County residents are currently hospitalized.
- We have 9 additional deaths to report today, raising our total to 455.

#### **Benchmark 1: Sustained reduction or stability in new cases for 14 days/YELLOW**

Over this time period, we saw daily new cases drop to approximately 179 per day—down from the previous reporting period, which was more than 200. We are optimistic about these numbers but are continuing to keep a close eye on them. Because of this, we are representing this benchmark as yellow.

#### **Benchmark 2: Community-wide sustained and increased diagnostic testing with consistent or decreased test result reporting turnaround time/YELLOW**

Regarding testing, we have seen it decrease a bit in our community. This is also a trend that is being seen at KCHD. On average at the health department, we are currently seeing less than 200 a day on the days we are testing. A few weeks ago, KCHD was seeing more than 400 per day. This is consistent with what we are seeing across the community. Regarding lab turnaround time, this number had continued to decrease and now sits at an average of 1.5 days for the community. Because of lower testing numbers, coupled with positive news about shorter lab turnaround time, we are representing this benchmark as a cautious yellow.

#### **Benchmark 3: Sustained or increased public health capability/NO COLOR**

This benchmark is being restructured to better reflect what our public health capacity looks like. As the bulk of response activities have shifted from case investigations and contact tracing to vaccine distribution, we are evaluating how we can best represent our capacity. While we restructure this benchmark, we are not assigning a traffic light color this week.

**Benchmark 4: Health care system capabilities remain with current and forecasted surge capacity/YELLOW**

During this time period, we have continued to see hospitalization numbers decrease. We will continue to monitor these numbers closely. After speaking with our hospital partners, they have recommended that the benchmark be represented as stable yellow.

**Benchmark 5: Sustained or decreased COVID-19 related death rate for identified positive or probable patients/RED**

During this time period, we have seen 65 deaths associated with COVID-19, which is consistent with what we reported out last week. The information available leads us to represent this benchmark as red.

**Supplemental Data:**

**Chart 1: New COVID-19 Daily Cases per 100,000 Population**

This chart shows new daily COVID cases per 100,000 population. As of Wednesday (January 27), our 14-day trendline shows 37 new cases per 100,000 population, and our seven-day trendline shows 32 new cases per 100,000, which is down from last week.

**Chart 2: COVID-19 Percent Positive Test**

This second chart shows the percent positive for COVID-19. This data is received from the Tennessee Department of Health. The seven-day average for percent positive in Knox County is 15.64% which is down from last week as well. For some context, at the beginning of the month, the seven-day average was around 23%.

Discussion from the Board regarding Dr. Buchanan's presentation focused on whether KCHD would reinstitute contact tracing given the changes to daily case counts and the new variants. Dr. Buchanan indicated that would be a discussion she would need to have with her team.

**VI. UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE MEDICAL CENTER AT KNOXVILLE DATA UPDATE BY DR. SHAMIYEH**

Dr. Shamiyeh presented data from the University of Tennessee Medical Center and regional data on COVID hospitalization, see attached PowerPoint.

Dr. Shamiyeh shared that looking at new cases by week and by month over the district, there is consistent decline week to week. However, 1,661 cases is still a lot of cases in a week but this is too consistent of a trend not to be real.

"Big 4" Comparison (Davidson, Hamilton, Knox, Shelby Counties) shows that we are seeing the same trend across the state. We did not see the post-December holiday spike.

Knox County New Cases Age Demographics is broken down by decade. In many of the decades we are seeing a drop while other decades remain flat.

Knox County's 7-day positivity rate is at 23.88%--we are probably seeing a slower drop. As we are on the improving side of this, we need to remember that we want this to be below 5% to feel like we have some degree of pandemic control.

Hospitalizations by week/month—this always seems to lag. The census probably tells us a better story.

THA Knoxville District Census-data shows a significant decrease since the initial spike at 615. This is what led to the yellow benchmark for healthcare systems capabilities. Some of the restrictions that have been put into place with non-essential procedure scheduling have been relaxed with each system reacting to their own situation. Dr. Shamiyeh noted that we do not need to get complacent, but the trend is in the right direction.

The THA Knoxville District Projection Comparison drives home how steady the decline has been over the last few weeks. If we do see another spike, we should see it coming to some extent.

Questions from the Board focused on possible epidemiological/biological reasons for the decrease in cases on both a local and national level.

**VII. QUESTIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (presentations sent previously)**

**University of Tennessee Knoxville/Knox County Schools (KCS)**

Dr. Gregg shared that UT students have been back a little less than two weeks and there has been an increase in active cases, but not on the level of what was seen in the fall. Saliva testing started this past week—the tentative numbers from the last three days of testing is at 0.4% positivity rate. Community saliva testing is now open to UT commuter students.

Questions to Dr. Gregg from the Board focused on the reporting of the saliva data.

Ms. Wagoner shared that KCS is surveying teachers regarding interest in receiving the vaccine. The results are not available yet.

**VIII. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION**

**A. COVID-19 FACE COVERING REGULATION, NO. 2020-1**

No action was taken on this regulation.

**B. COVID-19 RESTAURANT OCCUPANCY LIMITATION AND EARLY CLOSURE REGULATION, NO. 2020-7**

This regulation is set to expire on February 4, 2021. Chair Dr. Gotcher reminded the Board that one of the data points that was being utilized to guide whether to discontinue or modify regulations was a 5% positivity rate. Discussion from the Board focused on modifying the curfew time and how long to extend the regulation. Motion made by Dr. Souza and seconded by Dr. Shamiyeh to extend the regulation until February 18, 2021 and to modify the curfew to 11 PM from 10 PM. Mr. Sanders provided guidance to the Board on how to proceed if the Board desired to modify the curfew time and advised to rescind Regulation 2020-7 and replace it with a new regulation (2021-1). Dr. Souza amended her motion to reflect the guidance from Mr. Sanders. The Board voted 7-2 (confirmed by roll call) to adopt Regulation 2021-1 to go into effect on January 28, 2021 at 12:01 AM and will expire at 12:01 AM on February 18, 2021.

**C. COVID-19 SOCIAL GATHERING LIMITATION REGULATION, NO. 2020-8**

This regulation is set to expire on February 4, 2021. Motion made by Dr. Buchanan and seconded by Dr. Drake to extend Regulation 2020-8 to February 18, 2021. Dr. Shamiyeh noted that this continues to be a risk point and opting not continue to this regulation could be misconstrued. The motion passed, via roll call vote, 8-1.

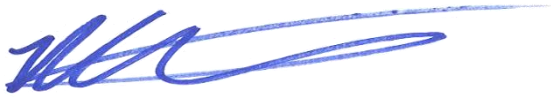
**IX. KNOX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT 2019 COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT**

Dr. Buchanan shared KCHD's 2019 [Community Health Assessment](#) (CHA). The CHA is KCHD's cornerstone publication. It is done every five years. The release was delayed due to the COVID-19 response. There really are no surprises in the report—mental health, obesity, substance misuse, cardiac health and diabetes continue to be challenges in our community. For the first time, the report focused more on the drivers of health—those things that influence our health. The Community Health Council will utilize the CHA to select 3-4 areas of focus and create a Community Health Improvement Plan.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no other business, Dr. Shamiyeh moved to adjourn the meeting with a second by Dr. Drake. Meeting was adjourned at 6:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Martha Buchanan, MD, Senior Director and Public Health Officer  
Knox County Health Department  
Secretary, Knox County Board of Health

**List of Attachments:**

- COVID-19 Update-January 27, 2021; PowerPoint Presentation by Dr. Shamiyeh