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Texas Medical Center Releases New COVID-19 Tracking Metrics and Goals

New metrics provide a fuller picture of how Houston is doing in the fight against COVID-19

Houston, TX – Today, Texas Medical Center (TMC) announced that it is sharing a new set of daily metrics and goals to better track how Houston is doing in its fight against COVID-19. These daily metrics, which have been established based on the guidance of experts at Texas Medical Center’s member institutions, include tracking of the reproduction rate (R(t)), daily new cases, and test positivity rates of TMC hospital systems.

“Daily tracking of COVID-19 data has provided Houston’s medical community with a wealth of knowledge. From months of data collection, we have come to a better understanding of how best to track Houston’s progress in managing the impact of COVID-19 in greater Houston,” said William McKeon, President and CEO of Texas Medical Center. “Fighting this virus is a true community effort. If we can work to get these metrics in the green and maintain that progress, we can be confident that we are limiting community spread to a contained number of traceable cases, protecting our most vulnerable residents, and creating the best environment for a successful economy moving forward.”

Since the beginning of the pandemic, TMC, in partnership with its member institutions, has released a daily dashboard outlining the virus’s overall impact on the region.

The newly established metrics work together to provide a more comprehensive picture of Houston’s public health status and include an established goal for each metric to meet. Daily data will be compared to the previous week’s average, providing a sense of trend in the data.

The metrics include:

- **R(t): Reproduction rate for Harris County:** Helps track how quickly the virus is spreading; a lower number shows that the steps we are taking (masking, social distancing, limited group gatherings, etc.) are slowing the spread of the virus
 - The goal for R(t) is below 1.0 for 14 days
- **Daily new cases for the Greater Houston MSA:** Houston needs to see a steady decline in the number of new cases to move from a strategy of managing the spread of the disease to keeping it contained; containment requires a low enough number of daily new cases to allow contact tracing
 - The goal for daily new cases is under 200 for 14 days
- **Test positivity rates for TMC hospital systems:** Even with more testing, a lower positivity rate (percentage of tests resulting in positive diagnosis) can indicate a slower spread

- The goal for positivity rate is under 5% for 14 days

In addition to tracking these new metrics, TMC will continue to track other relevant metrics and highlight data when it contributes to a fuller understanding of the public health situation. This data includes ICU bed capacity, daily new hospital admits, overall testing and positivity rates .

“Our early focus was on ICU bed capacity; no one wanted to be in a position of turning away someone who needed care. Ultimately, TMC member institutions were able to create significant capacity and the way the virus is progressing in Houston, ICU bed availability is less of an issue. This remains an important metric, though, and we will continue to track it and others to present a full picture of our status,” said McKeon.

The new dashboard can be found at [insert website] and is shared daily in both English and Spanish.

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About Texas Medical Center

Texas Medical Center (TMC)—the largest medical city in the world—is at the forefront of advancing life sciences. Home to the brightest minds in medicine, TMC nurtures cross-institutional collaboration, creativity, and innovation among its 106,000-plus employees. With a campus of more than 50 million square feet, TMC annually hosts 10 million patients, performs over 180,000 surgeries, conducts over 750,000 ER visits, performs close to 14,000 heart surgeries, and delivers over 25,000 babies. Beyond patient care, TMC is pushing the boundaries of clinical research across its extensive network of partner institutions on a daily basis, pioneering effective health policy solutions to address the complex health care issues of today, and cultivating cutting-edge digital health applications and medical devices. For more information, please visit www.tmc.edu.