

# The Long-Term Impact of COVID-19 on Colorado's Health Care Workforce and the Broader System

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# Today's Discussion



- Situational Awareness:  
Where are we today?
- Current Challenges
- Short, Medium and Long-Term Strategies

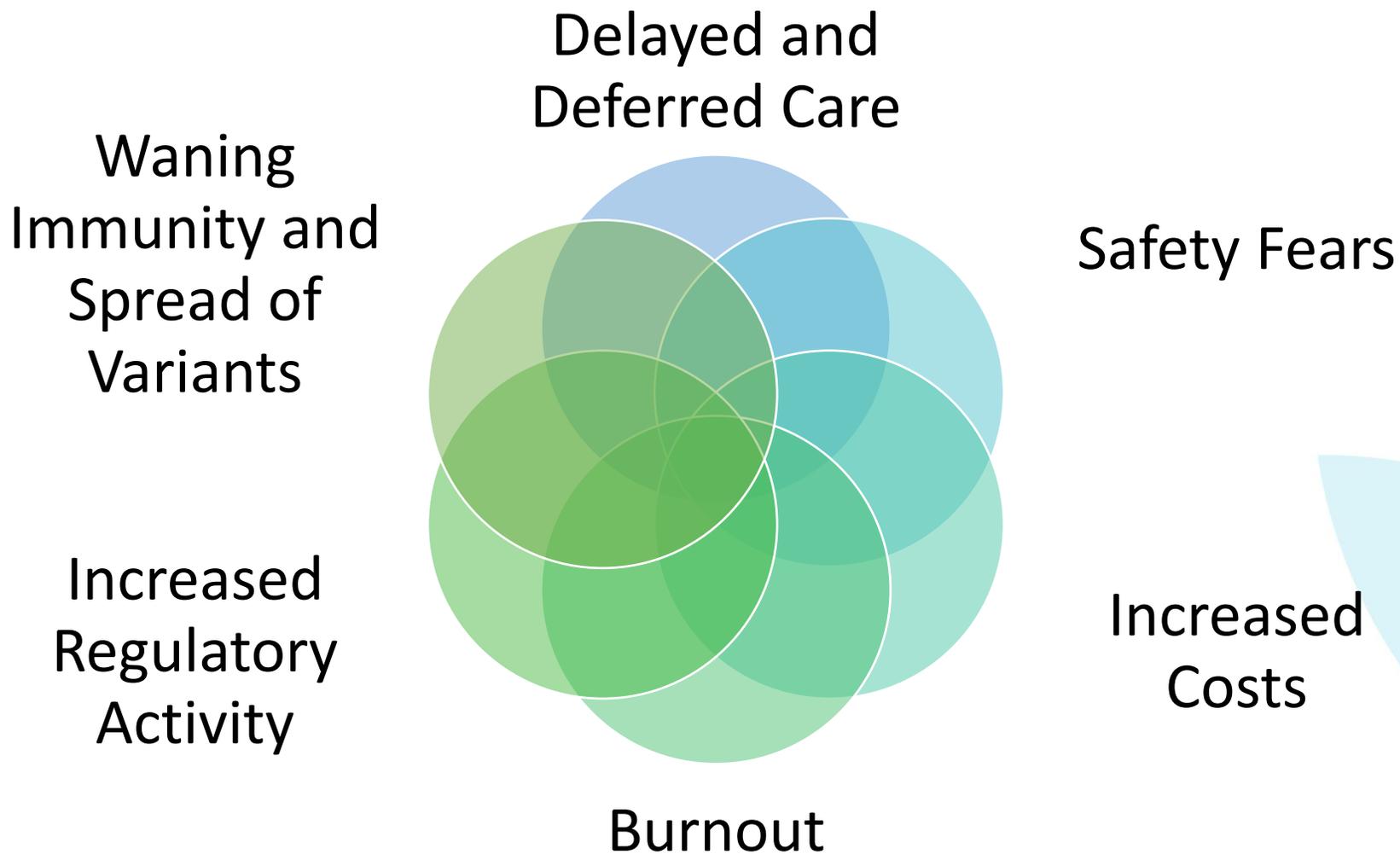


# Situational Awareness

	One Day Ago	One Week Ago	One Month Ago
Number of patients currently hospitalized for confirmed COVID-19	1,021	976	921
Patients currently hospitalized as COVID-19 persons under investigation	80	69	100
Number of patients discharged/transferred within past the 24 hours	64	146	114
Number of facilities anticipating staff shortages (within the next week)	35%	35%	21%
Number of facilities anticipating shortages of personal protective equipment (within the next week)	1%	1%	1%
Facilities anticipating ICU bed shortages in the next week	28%	24%	15%
Critical care ventilators in use	45%	45%	44%

- 1/3 of Hospitals anticipating staffing shortages
- Metro hospitals forced to go on ED Divert
- 1/4 of hospitals anticipating ICU bed shortages
- Nearly half of all critical care ventilators in use at the moment
- Flu season typically runs October to late spring

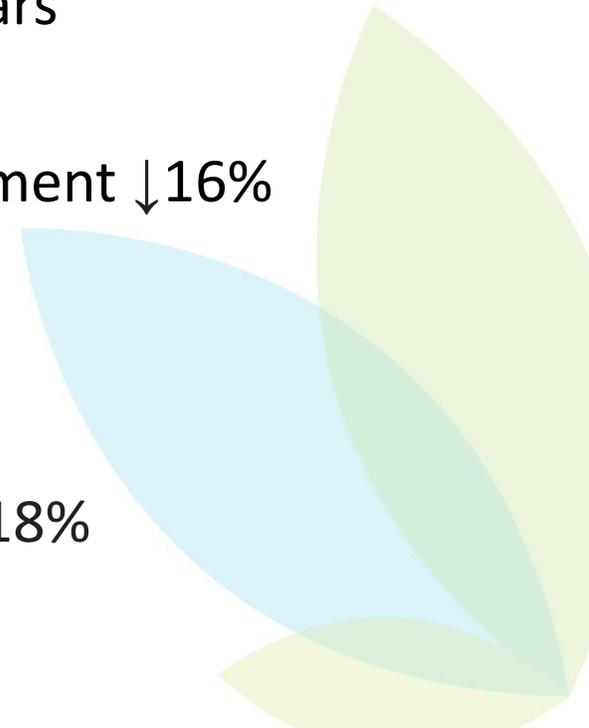
# Some of the Current Challenges



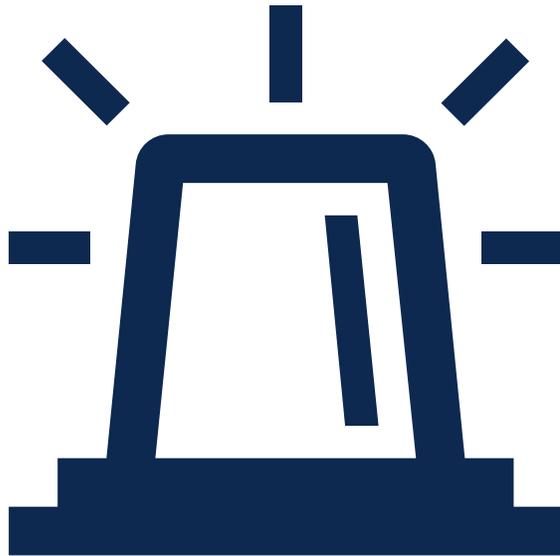
# Delayed and Deferred Care



- Surgical Volumes ↓20-50%
  - Supply conservation
  - COVID capacity
  - Ongoing patient fears
- Ambulatory Visits
  - Emergency Department ↓16%
  - Outpatient ↓6%
- Capacity Challenges
  - Patient Acuity ↑ ↑ ↑
  - Length of Stay ↑ 8-18%



# Safety Fears



- Physical harm/abuse of HCWs
  - Politicization/misinformation
  - Increase in behavioral health diagnoses
- Community threats
  - Doxxing of health care workers
  - Misdirected anger toward hospitals and providers

# Increased Costs



- Staffing firms now charging 3-4 times the hourly wage of many positions
- \*\*Changes in Expenses- 2021 YTD compared to pre-pandemic levels (per adjusted discharge):
  - Drug Expenses ↑24%
  - Supplies ↑17%
  - Non-Labor Expenses ↑17%
  - Purchased Services ↑15%
  - Total Expenses ↑15%
  - Labor Expenses ↑14%
- Don't forget the challenges and costs associated with sourcing PPE and basic supplies last year, now being stressed by global supply chain issues

# Burnout



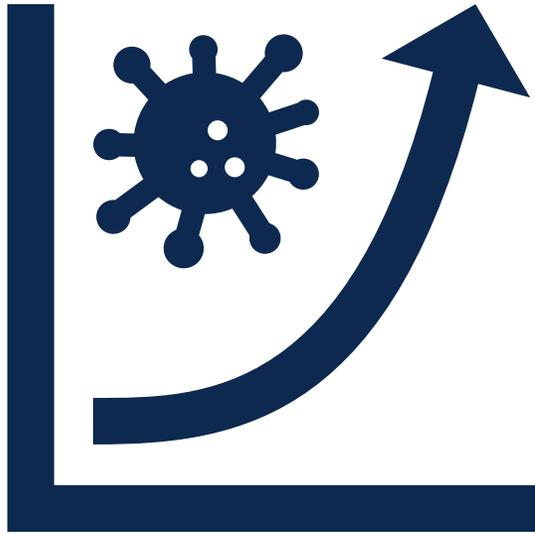
- Recent estimates show that roughly 20% of health care workers have left the profession or retired since the start of the pandemic
- Multiple surveys of health care workers remaining show that 20-30% are have contemplated leaving the profession
- “We keep asking the same people to do more. It’s been 18 months, I don’t know how much more they can take.”

# Increased Regulatory Activity



- New state and federal data reporting being added all the time
- Elevated infection prevention protocols and state survey activity
- New nurse staffing regulations
- Vaccine mandate for health care workers

# Waning Immunity and Spread of Variants



- Studies showing that immunity from vaccines begins diminishing after six months
- Vaccines were developed for original COVID strain (B.1.1.7 or Alpha)
- Dominant strain in Colorado now Delta variant (B.1.617.2)– which is far more contagious
- Despite all this, the unvaccinated still represent 80% of all hospitalizations

# Potential Short, Medium and Long-Term Strategies



**>1**  
Year

Support those  
taking care of  
us today



**1-5**  
Years

Prepare those  
taking care of  
us tomorrow



**5-10**  
Years

Recruit those  
taking care of  
us in the future



>1  
Year

Support those  
taking care of us  
today

# Potential Short, Medium and Long-Term Strategies

- Leverage infusion of federal dollars to fund:
  - Retention programs for front-line HCWs
  - Backfill high HCW replacement costs
  - Mental health supports
  - Temporary respite
- Increase protections for HCWs from threats and violence
- Investigate anti-competitive pricing by health care staffing firms that exacerbate existing shortages and disadvantage frontline HCWs



1-5  
Years

Prepare those  
taking care of us  
tomorrow

# Potential Short, Medium and Long-Term Strategies

- Reconstitute the Colorado Health Care Professions Workforce Policy Collaborative to identify gaps, areas of growth and opportunities for coordination in the current system
- Additional training and support for advanced practice nursing to practice at the top of their scope or move into leadership positions
- Additional training and support for new graduates, increase preceptorships
- Support community training programs, particularly for ancillary service providers
- Cross-training of HCWs (HB21-1005)



5-10  
Years

Recruit those  
taking care of us  
in the future

# Potential Short, Medium and Long-Term Strategies

- Update and implement the state's [Workforce Development Strategy](#) (last updated in 2014)
- Analyze existing state-level pipeline programs to identify gaps, areas of growth and opportunities for coordination in order to meet or exceed replacement needs
- Pipeline initiatives should be focused in the following areas at a minimum:
  - Growing the health care workforce at all professional levels
  - Diversifying the health care workforce so that the providers better reflect the communities they serve
  - Building out the safety net in rural and underserved communities to improve upon equitable access and outcomes