



September 3, 2021

Dear Tennessee Residents,

The past 18 months have taken a toll on all of us as our lives have been touched by COVID-19 in countless ways. Many have lost loved ones, worried about the health and well-being of their children or felt the economic impact of the pandemic. Controversies over the most basic public health measures have created uncertainty and stalled efforts to control the virus. We long for the time when the pandemic is over.

As clinicians in Tennessee hospitals, we feel it, too. While the pandemic has impacted us individually, we also worry for our patients, many of whom were perfectly healthy just days before contracting the virus but now are dependent on ventilators to breathe. We grieve for family members as we watch them say their final good-byes. We also are frustrated that the simple steps that could greatly reduce the loss of life are not being taken by all Tennesseans.

Currently, the Delta variant is spreading rapidly across our state. Hospitals are quickly running out of beds and staff to care for the ill and injured, not just those with COVID-19, but those with injuries, heart attacks and other life-threatening conditions. Healthcare providers want to be there in your time of need, but we are asking for your help.

We, the Chief Medical Officers and Chief Nursing Officers of hospitals across the state of Tennessee, are banding together in one unified voice to say that vaccination is safe and the most effective way to reduce hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19. We urge all eligible Tennesseans to get a COVID-19 vaccine to reduce the spread of the virus and prevent future variants. As more Tennesseans get vaccinated, the number of patients needing hospitalization for COVID-19 will go down, allowing more capacity for all patients needing life-saving care.

Please do your part to protect your family, your healthcare team and your community by getting vaccinated and wearing a mask in public spaces. Together, we can protect our neighbors and ourselves and ensure healthcare services remain available when and where we need them.

Sincerely,

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Chief Medical Officer

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Chief Medical Officer

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**Ballad Health, Johnson City**

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Chief Medical Officer Pediatric Services & Southern Market of Ballad Health

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Brian Dawson  
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Chief Nursing Officer

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Vice President Adult Ambulatory Nursing

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University Medical Center

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