COVID Update July 27, 2022

IN SC: Cases have recently climbed rapidly in SC and most of the state, including Greenville and the upstate, are now at the 'high' community transmission level, most of which is thought to be due to the new, highly transmissible BA.5 Omicron variant. Hospitalizations and deaths remain fairly low but are inching up as well, particularly in the elderly and those with risk factors for severe disease. The percent positive on reported COVID tests has skyrocketed to 25%. The CDC recommends wearing a mask indoors and on public transportation, and being vaccinated and boosted.

In the US: Over one million people have now died of COVID, and a total of over 91 million reported cases. There were over 11,000 deaths the past months

Vaccine update – The CDC continues to recommend that everyone over age 5 be vaccinated, and receive one booster, and those over age 50 or moderately or severely immune compromised receive a second booster. The timing of the second booster has been debated earlier this summer, when COVID cases were low, but with the rising cases, it is recommended that those who qualify receive the second booster now. They will still be able to get the 'new, improved' COVDI vaccine, along with their flu shot, in the fall. Moderna and Pfizer both that vaccines approved for children age 6 months and older. Although vaccines for infants have been difficult to locate, all the Prisma facilities have vaccines for infants, and pharmacies provide them down to age 3 years in most cases, and 18 months at some stores (call ahead to ask.) Moderna is a two shot regimen, and Pfizer is three, so most are opting for the Moderna for small children.

Mask guidelines – As mentioned above, the CDC recommends at 'high' community transmission levels that everyone wear a high-quality mask indoors. The Transition Team recommends that masks be worn indoors but they remain optional, except when serving food or attending children under age 5

BA.5 surge – The BA.5 Omicron variant is increasing in the upstate and accounted for 67% of cases in the past two weeks. It appears to be even more contagious than the 'original' Omicron, but causes milder illness than the Delta variant did. Vaccines do not prevent it but do protect well against severe disease, hospitalization and death.