

Written by Arizona Foothills Magazine

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We all have questions about COVID-19. But more specifically, we want to read about COVID within the context of where we live. We went ahead and asked one of our favorite local docs, Dr. James Loo, what he is seeing, what he thinks about testing in the Valley, and what he feels optimistic about.

Are you seeing cases of COVID personally?

Yes, we have had three patients test positive in our practice and we have tested well over 100 patients. Each of these patients had the criteria for testing, i.e. fever, cough, shortness of breath, headache and sore throat. All patients recovered within 2-4 days, even the covid positive ones.

How are you prepared at your office? Are you open and operating right now?

We have been open and operating, but we have changed the way we see our patients. All sick patients are either seen in their cars or are brought into the office through a back door. All patients are screened for fever prior to being evaluated. We have continued to see our well-check visits also, like physicals, diabetic patients and medication follow ups.

What symptoms should Valley citizens be looking out for?

According to the CDC, the main symptom is fever, followed by cough, shortness of breath, headache and sore throat.

Can you tell us about the different tests available in the Valley?

There are different diagnostic tests available but the two that are used most frequently are the nasopharyngeal swab and oral pharyngeal swab.

There has been talk about faulty tests. Is there a way to know if a particular test is legit?

There are many antibody tests being pushed by the drug companies and only a couple have been approved by the FDA, but those are still not very accurate and a number of them have been recalled.

Are tests covered by insurance, or can they be out-of-pocket?

Most insurance companies do cover the diagnostic test and antibody test.

When should Valley citizens be tested for COVID and for antibodies?

According to the guidelines we should only be testing patients that have certain criteria ie fever cough headache shortness of breath. It is currently not recommended to test asymptomatic patients.

COVID-19 in AZ: a Q&A with Dr. James Loo

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Does the presence of antibodies mean the patient is immune?

Antibody testing is a very difficult question to answer, since there are so many variables to take into account. For example, just because someone tests positive for the antibodies does not mean they are immune to the virus. I would currently wait on doing an antibody test until we get a proven test which won't be recalled a week after it's been out.

There has been a lot of talk about asymptomatic spread, and studies in CA and NY showing that many people have antibodies but never experienced symptoms. Does this change your perspective on the virus?

That's the million dollar question: how common is asymptomatic spread? I don't think anyone has the right answer to this. And those asymptomatic people with antibodies - were they truly positive for COVID? [It] goes back to the question [of] how valid these tests are.

What is your current outlook? What can we be optimistic about?

Currently in my private practice we have seen a significant decrease in sick visits and we have not tested any patients for Covid in the past 10 days. I'm hoping we have seen the last of this novel virus so we can try and get back to normality.

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Note: The Content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.