

Fortify for Fall – Deja Vu

by Ted R. Borgstadt

I recently reread an article I wrote last summer, *Fortify for Fall*, (<https://www.trestletree.com/Fortify-for-Fall.pdf>). The article was written four months after the start of the pandemic, encouraging people to get themselves in better physical and mental shape to be prepared for the projected escalation of COVID-19 during the fall and winter. Since no vaccine had been approved in 2020, the significance of controlling our own health issues was of paramount importance to help limit our own risk.

Throughout 2020 new information, and often conflicting information, seemed to come out daily. It felt like we were all on a seesaw together, shifting quickly from feeling up and hopeful, to feeling down and helpless. These news cycles reminded me of the old Clint Eastwood movie, “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.”

I am quite certain we could all make a personal list of the good, the bad and the ugly that has impacted us over the past 16 months. It has been a mixed bag for all of us. For me personally, one of the good things was less business travel, resulting in more consistent exercising and nutritious eating, and ultimately a better waistline.

A few things I place in the bad category are the loss of jobs for millions of people, the mental stress and anguish suffered by most families, the disrupted year of education for our kids, and the relentless exhaustion of our health care workers.

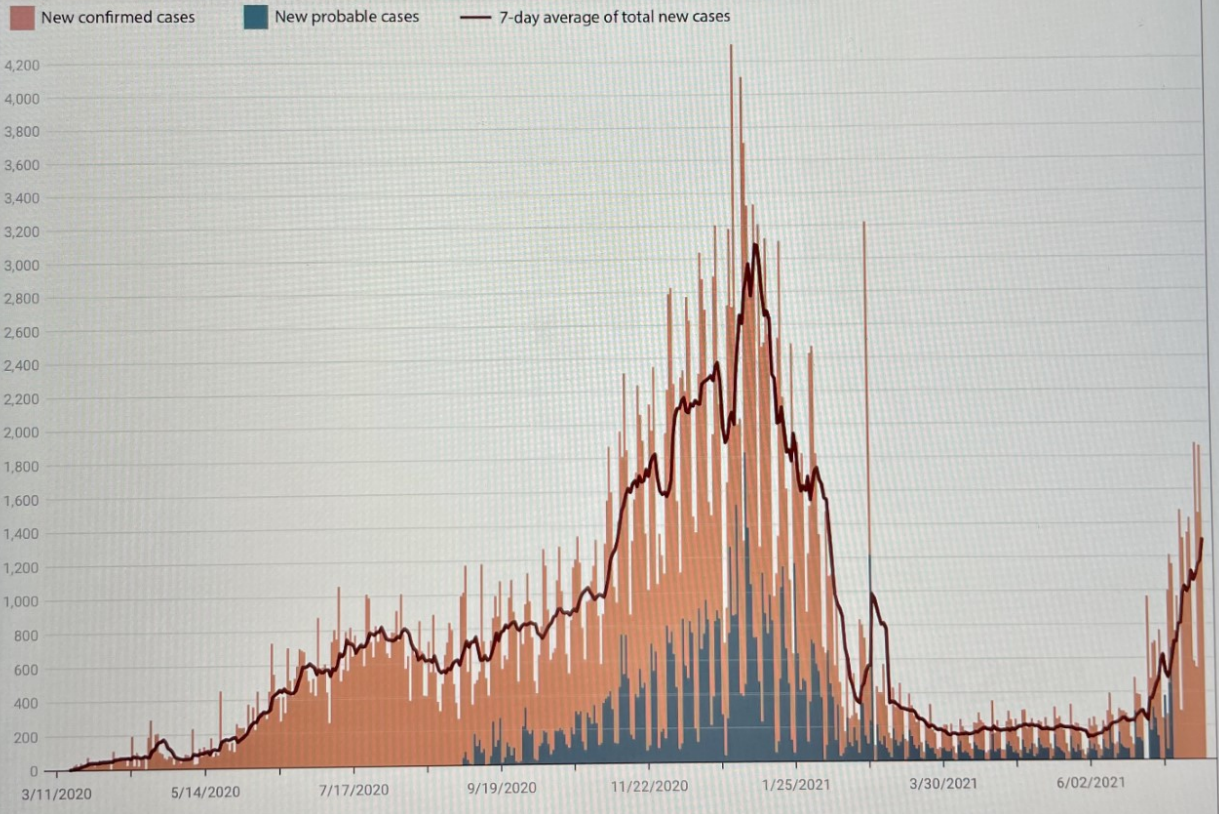
The ugly category is, well, ugly. I lost a beloved brother-in-law to COVID-19 on March 31, 2021. He was eligible to receive the vaccine early on but chose to not get vaccinated. The loss of loved ones affected over 600,000 families, and the number continues to rise. Another horrible impact was the number of drug overdose deaths in 2020, which was the highest ever at over 93,000, many of whom were directly impacted by the isolation and stress of the pandemic. The last thing I will put into the ugly category is the large number of people today who continue to choose not to get vaccinated. As we have heard repeatedly, “we are finished with the pandemic, but the pandemic is not finished with us.”

The current surge of the Delta variant in Northwest Arkansas, where I live, ties directly to the low vaccination rate. Less than 40% of adults are fully vaccinated in Arkansas, one of the lowest rates in the country.

The chart below shows the new cases in the state of Arkansas over the past 16 months. It is not a pretty picture as we begin to think about the high number of new cases as we contemplate moving into fall, a new school year and the looming winter months. The surge of new cases in July 2021 is real, it is growing, and it is dangerous.

These charts are updated daily at 8 p.m. For the latest numbers, refer to the [Coronavirus daily update graphic](http://www.arkansasonline.com/arvirus) in the A section of www.arkansasonline.com/arvirus.

New cases in Arkansas by day



The second chart compares COVID data for new cases, active cases, and hospitalization for a single day in 2020 vs 2021: July 22, 2020 vs. July 22, 2021.

Covid in Arkansas, a year ago			
<i>One way to gauge what's going on with the covid pandemic is to look at statistics today versus a year ago.</i>			
	7/22/20	7/22/21	Difference
New cases	591	1,860	1,269
Active cases	6,876	12,779	5,903
Hospitalized	474	849	375

SOURCE: Arkansas Department of Health Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

In my home of Washington County, Arkansas, the number of new daily COVID cases had fallen to only 71 people last month. Now, just one month later, we have surged to over 980 new daily cases due to the impact of the Delta variant and the low vaccination rate in our county. The hospitals and staff are overwhelmed, as articulated in the link below by a local hospital physician, Dr. Michael Bolding, at Washington Regional Medical Center, Fayetteville, AR.

<https://www.facebook.com/WashingtonRegional/videos/2957282111183602/>

Last year's surge in the fall and winter months was horrible and led to so many families losing loved ones before a vaccination was available. The pain and agony of family members in 2021 that have lost loved ones to COVID-19 that chose to not be vaccinated is both horrible and forever haunting. My brother-in-law's death still seems surreal to me. If you have chosen to not get vaccinated, please talk with your doctor and seriously reconsider.

Last July when I wrote *Fortify for Fall*, we did not have a vaccine available to us. The most important step to fortify for fall this year is to get vaccinated if you are not. If you have been vaccinated, please take the time to inventory your health and your families' health and do something positive.

The American Psychological Association's poll, published March 21, 2021, has a sobering picture of how we tried to manage our stress during the pandemic. 42% of our country gained an average of 29 pounds, 67% said their sleep was adversely affected, and 23% reported their alcohol consumption increased as they tried to manage their stress.

<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2021/03/one-year-pandemic-stress>

There is good news. There is hope. There is a path forward. First, get vaccinated. Second, take the time to take care of yourself and your family. There are wonderful tools available online that will match your learning style and motivation level, so just take the time to look. Also, there are a few tips in last year's article, *Fortify for Fall*, (<https://www.trestletree.com/fortify-for-fall.pdf>) that are just as helpful and meaningful this fall. There is still much at stake for our families, our communities, and our country. Let's find ways to do something positive this fall to abate the current trend toward another surge.

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To learn more about Fortify for Fall, please call 479-582-0777.