

# We Need Your Help

**By Dr. Peter Rutherford and Dr. Malcolm Butler**

Our healthcare system is on the brink. We need you to stay home and wear your mask whenever you are around people who don't live with you.

We will not make this argument with graphs and data: Been there, done that.

The reserve capacity that any emergency system maintains to keep everyone safe is spent. The hospital is full and pulling staff from the clinics to support those who are sick and dying in the hospital. If it hasn't happened to you yet, understand that cancelled clinic appointments are most likely the result of resources being pulled toward those sick with COVID-19.

Our nurses and physicians are also spent, they drive home close to tears, and the next morning put on a brave face and head back into the fight.

We need you to stay home and wear your mask whenever you are around people who don't live with you.

For months our local leaders have petitioned the state for local control, arguing that those of us living in Chelan and Douglas counties know best how to control the pandemic within our communities. This is what local control feels like, two local physicians who have spent their careers in service to each of you, pleading with you. We need you to stay home and wear your mask whenever you are around people who don't live with you.

None of us plan to slice our finger, or break our ankle, or develop appendicitis. All of us plan to go to the hospital when a medical crisis strikes. The hospital has limits, and if people continue to ignore well proven COVID precautions - masking, distancing, hygiene - the hospital won't be available to suture your finger, set your fracture, or remove your appendix – it will be full.

We need you to stay home and wear your mask whenever you are around people who don't live with you. Please.

*Dr. Peter Rutherford is the CEO of Confluence Health. Dr. Malcolm Butler is the chief medical officer of Columbia Valley Community Health and the health officer of Chelan-Douglas Health District.*