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COVID-19

Testing Toolkit

Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security COVID-19 Testing Toolkit Webinar Series

Lessons Learned Implementing a Testing Strategy for a Pandemic Wedding

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Panelists:

Manoj Jain, MD, MPH
Infectious Disease
Physician
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Summary:

How do you plan a COVID-safe wedding for 400 people in the middle of a pandemic surge? Very carefully. Dr. Manoj Jain discussed the four-pronged approach (communication, vaccination, masking, and testing) that helped his family safely plan and host a wedding for 400 people in January 2022, during the Omicron surge. All guests over age 5 had to be vaccinated, boosted, and symptom-free to attend. Testing was mandatory. Masking was highly recommended but, with so many negative PCR tests, people felt more relaxed. The combination of these careful planning measures led to safe multi-day wedding celebrations.

Key lessons include:

- Communication is key. Dr. Jain and his family held Zoom calls with all guests to explain their concerns and the testing strategy.
- Ground rules were non-negotiable for wedding attendance. Invitees who chose not to be vaccinated or boosted were asked not to attend. People who tested positive were asked not to attend.
- The wedding hosts provided free PCR tests to both out-of-town and local guests 12-48 hours prior to the event.
- Out-of-town guests were asked to take a rapid test at home 12 hours prior to traveling and then another upon arrival, in addition to PCR testing.
- Rapid tests are valuable tools for testing large numbers of people, even if they might miss some cases that PCR testing could otherwise uncover. Dr. Jain admits that not everyone has access to fast, affordable PCR testing and, if there had not been a case surge at the time, he would have used only at-home rapid tests.
- Strategies must be tailored to specific circumstances, preferably with layered mitigation techniques.