

## Don't be a Do-It-Yourself Doctor

by William Mills, MD

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DIY (**do-it-yourself**) has become quite the popular acronym recently. It is almost as popular as COVID (**coronavirus disease**), from DIY PPE (personal protective equipment) such as masks, face coverings, head coverings, gowns and shoe covers to the more typical DIY projects such as home repair, lawn care, automotive repair, etc. Since you may be getting good at some of these DIY opportunities, please don't think that your abilities can expand to include becoming a DIY doctor. Remember, the life you save, may just be your own.

It certainly appears that the social distancing, stay at home messages during the COVID pandemic have been heard. The number of emergency room visits at both BRMC and OGH is about half what it was before the pandemic. The concern is that people are following the rules and staying home, even when the best thing for their health is a doctor or emergency room visit. Most physician offices have remained open during the pandemic (some even offer telehealth appointments) and the emergency rooms and hospitals have remained open 24 hours a day. Historically, some people have used the ED as their primary care provider for minor ailments that could have easily been taken care of in an outpatient office setting. An unexpected consequence of COVID-19 might be that EDs are now decompressed and therefore more rapidly care for people with true emergencies. But if people aren't coming because they are afraid they will catch COVID, this misperception must be cleared up so people get the treatment they need.

Both of our hospitals are very safe places. Over the past month we have become COVID prevention experts. In fact, we have only had one health care worker become infected. We have adequate PPE for all of our staff, provide masks for all of our inpatients and provide masks for every patient that comes into our emergency departments. Our environmental services teams clean continuously and we use the ultraviolet C producing robots to kill any bacteria or SARS-CoV-2 virus that may be present. You are very safe if you are having a baby, need an emergency operation or need to be admitted due to a heart attack.

So don't be a DIY doctor – if you have chest pain, it may be a heart attack not a pulled muscle; if your belly hurts it may be appendicitis, not bad pizza; if you cough, it may be your asthma, not COVID; and if you injure something while being a DIY kind of person, our emergency rooms and hospitals are not only safe, but are here to help you. If you are not sure, let us help you figure it out.