

Business Health Care Group's Kluever, area's first confirmed COVID-19 case, is back to work



Jeff Kluever ... “I’m truly one of the luckiest people not only in southeast Wisconsin but all over the world.”

By [Rich Kirchen](#) – Senior Reporter, Milwaukee Business Journal
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After testing positive for COVID-19 and taking a two-week self-quarantine, [Jeff Kluever](#) returned to work Monday as executive director at the Business Health Care Group, a coalition that includes some of metro Milwaukee’s largest employers who strive to control health benefits costs.

“I’m Waukesha County patient number one,” Kluever told the Milwaukee Business Journal.

After more than 30 years working in corporate health care benefits, Kluever said he knew he had to stay home after feeling ill upon returning from a ski trip in Austria on March 8. He said a half-dozen friends from Milwaukee and Racine counties who joined him on the trip also self-quarantined after also testing positive for COVID-19.

“We’re absolutely confident there has been no community spread,” Kluever said. “We understand the seriousness and absolutely will not put anyone in a position where they could develop COVID-19.”

Read much more about Kluever's experience with coronavirus and the lessons he learned in the March 27 issue of the Milwaukee Business Journal.

Kluever, 64, has been executive director of the Business Health Care Group since August 2016. Before that, he was an executive at Journal Communications Inc. in Milwaukee and a member of the Business Health Care Group steering committee.

Kluever stopped briefly at his organization's Waukesha office Monday but said he was heading home in anticipation of Gov. Tony Evers stay at home order. All Business Health Care Group employees are on a mandatory work-from-home status, he said.

"Respect this for what it is," Kluever said Monday. "Too dangerous to not take all appropriate measures."

He knows that all too well.

Kluever said he contracted coronavirus on his ski trip to an area in the Alps that is a little more than 200 miles from the epicenter of the pandemic in northern Italy. His symptoms started with a cough then gravitated to his chest and later included a fever. When he returned from his trip, he contacted his primary care doctor who sent him to the emergency department at Aurora Medical Center Summit in western Waukesha County, where he was tested for influenza and COVID-19.

The hospital medical staff sent him home as the influenza test was negative; he later received a call informing him that the COVID-19 test was positive. He was contacted by the Waukesha County public health division, which informed him he was the first confirmed case in the county, but required no further medical services.

Kluever said his 14-day quarantine officially ended on March 21 and he is feeling much better.

Meanwhile, Kluever is planning webinars starting later this week for members of the Business Health Care Group, which has over 200,000 lives covered by health benefits from its member employers. Members include Kohl's Corp., Northwestern Mutual, Robert W. Baird & Co., Charter Manufacturing, Rockwell Automation, Children's Wisconsin, Direct Supply Inc., Sendik's Food Markets and Molson Coors Beverage Co.

Kluever said he offered to the Waukesha County public health division to speak with anyone who has questions about coronavirus or COVID-19.

"I'm truly one of the luckiest people not only in southeast Wisconsin but all over the world," he said. "There are many others who won't have the same result, which is tragic."