

ATRN Newsletter



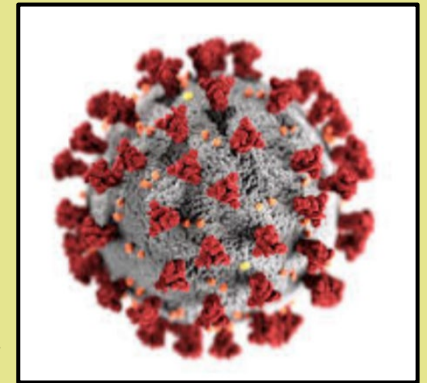
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COVID-19: Impact and Response in Appalachia

Greetings ATRN Community,

This special edition of the ATRN Newsletter will detail the various ways that the COVID-19 health pandemic has impacted our universities, approach to research, and communities in the Appalachian region. The newsletter will also highlight how individual universities, community-based partners, and communities have responded both separately and together—to keep each other safe and informed about access to basic needs and healthcare resources and information.



The ATRN is collaborating to develop and distribute a survey to better understand how the pandemic is impacting individuals and communities across Appalachia. The results of this survey can support the development of programs across Appalachia that are responsive to our communities.

Thanks,
ATRN Leadership

IT'S OFFICIAL! THE ATRN IS NOW A 501C3 NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

ATRN has exciting news to share since our last update! With the approval and support of eight universities operating with the network, the ATRN Executive Leadership Committee has been working diligently since last fall to incorporate and obtain 501c3 status, and successfully achieved both goals in early 2020. The ATRN now has a formal non-profit entity, a Board of Directors and has secured the services of a management company to support membership and operational endeavors.

The Board of Directors is finalizing the membership benefits for CTSA's or IDeA CTR institutions, other academic Institutions, community organizations, and individuals. Once this is finalized, the ATRN will be creating an easy to use online database for the members to join and utilize. More information regarding ATRN membership will be available on the ATRN website very soon.



WVCTSI FUNDS ELEVEN COVID-19 RESEARCH PROJECTS

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the West Virginia Clinical and Translational Science Institute is funding eleven research projects related to enhancing understanding of this public health crisis. The Pop-Up COVID-19 funding opportunity will provide up to \$30,000 for projects that address urgent health care challenges, including prognostic and therapeutic studies, as well as the far-reaching impacts of the pandemic. Funding received must be utilized within a 12-month project period. To view the full story, click [here](#)

See awardees below.

[Crystal Boudreaux](#)

[Wei Li](#)

[Larissa Casaburi](#)

[Shipra Gupta](#)

[Sarah Hadique](#)

[Salik Hussain](#)

[Brian Kellermeier](#)

[Ivan Martinez](#)

[Brad Price](#)

[Ankit Sakhuja](#)

[Carl Shrader](#)

The Community Engagement and Outreach Core (CEO) of the West Virginia Clinical and Translational Science Institute is participating in several community initiatives and projects relating to the current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Core is launching a project entitled, WV Community Perception of COVID-19 and Mitigation Factors where the CEO staff will be conducting interviews with community members to identify beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to coronavirus and mitigation. Information from these interviews will help the project team define facilitators and barriers of community member participation in mitigation, and pinpoint preferred messaging for mitigation factors such as mask wearing and maintaining appropriate social distance. Additionally, the CEO Core is a participant in the ATRN-led survey to capture the impact of COVID-19 on Appalachian communities.

As part of the annual Collective Outreach and Research Engagement (CORE) Survey, the West Virginia Practice-Based Research Network (WVPBRN) evaluated provider preparedness for public health emergencies, a project added in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. WV Project ECHO, a program for primary care doctors, nurses, and other clinicians to learn excellent specialty care to patients in their own communities, also used the baseline feedback. WV Project ECHO began offering a valuable resource to these clinicians with the creation of a special series dedicated to the latest updates, best practices, and research related to COVID-19 twice a month.

The WVPBRN is also participating in a WVU-led study to monitor the health and wellness of health care workers, as they carry out their duties and deal with the current COVID-19 pandemic, through the use of wearable monitoring device technology.

The West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (WVSOM) has participated in several initiatives for their surrounding communities. In collaboration with Greenbrier County Schools (GCS) and the Greenbrier County Health Department (GCHD), the Center for Rural and Community Health (CRCH) assists in the production, assembly, testing, and distribution of masks for frontline healthcare workers. Additionally, the CRCH purchased a large PPE order in early May, distributing over 30,000 units of N95 masks, surgical masks, face shields, gloves, gowns, Tyvek suits, goggles and hand sanitizer to essential workers county-wide.

The WVSOM has also provided support and assistance to the Greenbrier County Schools Feeding Program, and the Feeding Seniors/Saving Business program. Through these partnerships, thousands of meals have been prepared and delivered to both children and seniors impacted by COVID-19.

COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS TOOLKIT, PENNSYLVANIA 2020



Recognizing the need for a comprehensive resource for all Pennsylvania counties, including its 52 counties in Appalachia, an alliance of organizations developed the COVID-19 Preparedness Tool Kit, Pennsylvania 2020 in April 2020. The purpose of the Tool Kit is to provide timely, evidence-based information in real-time for the prevention, treatment, and control of COVID-19. The Tool Kit was compiled by ATRN health disparities researchers and content experts, utilizing information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH), Federal Drug Agency, and the Office of Attorney General. The Tool Kit provides information on peer-reviewed studies and evidence-based strategies to reduce health disparities and addresses the social determinants of health in the context of COVID-19. The Tool Kit is in public domain and available at no cost in either English or Spanish languages. For more information, contact Eugene Lengerich at elengerich@psu.edu.

The COVID-19 Preparedness Tool Kit, Pennsylvania 2020 is available by clicking on the links below:

[COVID-19 ToolKit- English](#)

[COVID-19 ToolKit- Spanish](#)

Institute supports Centre County COVID-19 project Adapted from a story by [Kristie Auman-Bauer](#).

A research project allows residents of Penn State main campus's home county to share their pandemic experiences and participate in decision-making as the region moves forward. Penn State [Clinical and Translational Science Institute](#) is supporting Centre County COVID-19 Data 4 Action Project. The institute is providing both staffing support and the resources and services it provides the University. Penn State [Social Science Research Institute](#) and Penn State [Huck Institutes of the Life Sciences](#) are sponsoring the research. "As a collaboration among three Penn State cross-University institutes within the Office of the Senior Vice President for Research, the Data 4 Action Project exemplifies interdisciplinary team science and is core to the mission of our Clinical and Translational Science Institute," [Susan McHale](#), associate director of Clinical and Translational Science Institute and director of Social Science Research Institute, said. "This project also highlights the role of the University's land grant mission in its focus on improving health in our communities." As its first project, Centre County COVID-19 Data 4 Action Project personnel are conducting an anonymous survey to document how the pandemic is affecting Centre County residents' lives and their experiences as they return to work and school. This survey uses [REDCap](#), Penn State Clinical and Translational Science Institute's research data collection tool. The REDCap tool helps researchers create surveys and securely stores and protects the survey responses. "The [Data 4 Action community survey](#) is a way to ensure everyone's voice is heard and allow them to participate in the decision-making process of our community and University," [Meg Small](#), assistant research professor, Penn State Social Science Research Institute, said. Small and [Matthew Ferrari](#), [Huck Institutes of the Life Sciences](#) Career Development Professor and associate professor of biology, are working with local government and community groups to understand the health, economic, educational and social effects of the pandemic on Centre County. Their work will continue over the next two years.

A second survey for Penn State students returning to campus and Centre County residents will track effects over time. "As the students return to campus, and our regional population increases, Centre County will no longer be isolated from the coronavirus outbreak," Ferrari said. "This project will allow us to follow changes over time, and help local government officials and Penn State administrators make decisions about the right actions to support the health and safety of Centre County residents and Penn State students." Researchers may invite survey participants to participate in a follow-up multi-year study collecting additional data, including virus and antibody testing. Penn State Clinical and Translational Science Institute's [Clinical Research Center at University Park](#) will conduct this testing. Clinical research centers, located at both University Park and [Penn State College of Medicine](#) campuses, provide infrastructure for research with people. The centers employ nursing staff who can assist with blood testing and medicine administration, among other healthcare-related services, for research studies. "Clinical Research Center at University Park is a key resource for Data 4 Action," McHale said. "Our Clinical Research Center staff's expertise and dedication and the center's established infrastructure mean that we will be able to efficiently and safely collect the data we seek from Centre County residents and Penn State students who will be involved in our project." This biological information will help local leaders to stay more informed while making public health policy decisions as the pandemic continues to evolve. "The voluntary biological survey will involve testing both before and after the University resumes operations," said Ferrari. "We'd like to document social and economic impacts alongside biological data to guide our community leaders. Without an effort like this one, decisionmakers are forced to make very important decisions about public health and safety in the dark. We want to bring local data to the table to inform local decisions." Researchers will summarize the Data 4 Action Project results for the community and University. "We want to use our expertise and our world-renowned research centers to move the community forward as safely as possible during these unprecedented times," said Ferrari.

CCTST COVID-19 CRITICAL COMMUNITY CHALLENGE GRANT (C5G) PROGRAM

While there are many significant scientific efforts directed at COVID-19 happening across our Academic Health Center (AHC), there was a lack of community-based, behavioral and surveillance research, which is desperately needed to develop effective anti-COVID-19 interventions in our city and region. In order to move forward with “re-opening” our economy while maximally protecting the health of our citizens, we must focus on COVID-related health disparities, keeping $Reff < 1$, identifying “hot spots” in real time, implementing rapid contact tracing, ensuring that safe behaviors (physical distancing, mask wearing) are maximally followed, and systematically collecting data to understand the rate of asymptomatic carriers. The [CCTST COVID-19 Critical Community Challenge Grant Program \(C5G\)](#) was developed to provide opportunities for investigators from the University of Cincinnati (UC), Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC) and the Greater Cincinnati community to develop and implement proposals that would have direct impact on COVID-19 in the Greater Cincinnati community of 14 counties in Southwest Ohio. A request for proposals was created and 15 applications for up to \$10,000 for phase 1 studies were received. Each application received 3 reviews and a convened meeting of the reviewers selected 8 proposals for support:

Funded proposals from CCHMC included:

1. Katherine Bowers, PhD and colleagues’ study, “Epidemiology and Transmission of COVID-19 among Hispanic and Black Families in Cincinnati,” in which they plan to evaluate the epidemiology and transmission of COVID-19 among the Black and Hispanic population of Cincinnati.
2. Lori Crosby, PsyD and her colleagues’ proposal, “Attitudes about COVID-19 and Heath (ATTACH) study,” who plan to address behavioral issues associated with COVID-19 and whether specific messaging would impact behavior.
3. Keith Martin, DO and Amy Rule, MD, MPH, in their study, “Barriers and Facilitators to Prevention of Care of COVID-19 Infections in Cincinnati Latinx Families,” propose to evaluate Latino knowledge of COVID-19 and factors and barriers to prevent the spread of COVID-19 including the development of educational materials in Phase 2.
4. Claire Seid and Aimee Miley in their study, “A Mutual Aid Response to COVID-19 for People Recently Released from Hamilton County Justice Center and People Experiencing Homelessness in Downtown Area,” propose to study the needs and experiences and to develop interventions based upon their surveys in populations of recently released prisoners and homeless.

Funded proposals from the community include:

1. Regina Hutchins, PhD, BSN, RN and Holly Jones, RN in their study from the Black Nurses’ Association of Greater Cincinnati, “Cincinnati’s African-American Community Establishments Face Mask Project,” proposes to evaluate African-American businesses to define masking behavior and providing masks to businesses to support compliance with mask wearing.

Funded proposals from UC included:

1. Victoria McKenna, PhD whose proposal, “The Impact of Masks on Speech Acoustics and Voice Fatigue in Healthcare Workers: A Pilot Study during COVID-19 Pandemic,” proposes to help define voice and common problems with masking in the workplace in healthcare workers that includes an educational module in Phase 3.
2. Jess Kropczynski, PhD and colleagues in their proposal, “Mapping Local Beliefs and Non-Adherence to COVID-19 Prevention Measures using Social Media,” proposes to use social media to assess behavior related to COVID 19 using a novel application that they have developed called PIVOT allowing overlay of geospatial data on social media.
3. John Kues, PhD, and Melinda Butsch-Kovacic, PhD proposed the study, “A Community Based Approach to Understanding and Improving Adherence to CDC COVID-19 Guidelines”. Mask-wearing and social distancing are at rates less than 50% despite wide-spread requests and calls by community leaders and public health officials. It is imperative to better understand behavior and underlying motivation in order to design meaningful messaging in this area. The study team is conducting a broad-based community [survey](#) to better understand current behavior and motivation and we invite you to participate. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and your answers are anonymous. The results of this study will be shared with researchers, healthcare professionals, and public decision-makers to help them better understand the public’s perspective regarding COVID-19. The results will also serve as a foundation for developing new messaging and to help overcome current barriers to increasing mask-wearing and social distancing behavior that does not overtly challenge underlying beliefs or fears. [Click here to take the survey.](#)

The CCTST would also like to draw attention to its website (www.cctst.org/covid) where weekday updates on Coronavirus in the 14 county area of Greater Cincinnati are posted and in the future, the funded studies by UC College of Medicine and CCHMC that support research in COVID-19 and active clinical trials related to COVID-19 at UC/ UC Health and CCHMC will be posted.

STAYING CONNECTED TO COMMUNITIES DURING A PANDEMIC

Department of Social Sciences and Health Policy; Program in Community-Engaged Research Wake Forest School of Medicine

Like many research teams, ours has had to quickly adapt to the new context of COVID-19 and find ways to stay connected with community members and community-based partner organizations while practicing social distancing to promote community health and safety.

Many of our projects, which focus on promoting HIV and STI prevention and care among communities of color and sexual and gender minorities, already involved the use of social media prior to the pandemic; we have expanded these social media components during this time.

We communicate with community members (including community advisory board [CAB] and steering committee members, community-based peer navigators, and other project participants) using texting, Facebook messaging, and other app-based messaging (including GPS-based apps designed for social and sexual networking, like Grindr).

Messaging groups that had already been established to maintain communication among CAB and steering committee members and community-based peer navigators between meetings have become increasingly important for allowing exchange of information and social support among these groups during this potentially isolating time. In addition, we continue to engage with partner organizations through linkages between our project-specific social media accounts and partner organizations' social media accounts, using our accounts to amplify messages about how to access needed services during this time of social distancing and about resources specific to COVID-19.

We are also leveraging online video meeting platforms such as WebEx and Zoom given that convening in-person is not possible. We are successfully using Zoom for regularly scheduled CAB and steering committee meetings and for community navigator group meetings. Currently, we are carefully adapting a small-group in-person intervention designed to support the uptake of pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV (PrEP) and medically supervised hormone therapy among Latina transgender women to these online platforms. We also are translating interactive empowerment theory-based community forums to these online platforms. We are utilizing the wide range of features these platforms offer – such as screen sharing, chat boxes, non-verbal reactions (e.g., hand-raising and “liking”), and breakout rooms – to bring community members and partner organizations together for activities that are engaging and avoid “screen fatigue”.

Finally, knowing that community members' and project participants' time and energy are valuable, we are working creatively to use the mail and app-based payment systems (e.g., Cash App and Venmo) to maintain timely payments of stipends, incentives, and tokens of appreciation, without interruption.

COVID-19 has changed daily life in many ways, has a disproportionate impact on the health and social determinants of marginalized communities, and has the potential to profoundly exacerbate existing health disparities. It is important to work collaboratively and innovatively to ensure that community-engaged work in partnership with communities most affected by these disparities is sustained as we face these challenges.



COVID-19: UPDATES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the University of Kentucky (UK) has established multiple initiatives to engage with communities in Appalachia and across Kentucky to address the significant challenges associated with the pandemic. The [UK Center for Clinical and Translational Science \(UK CCTS\)](#) has been integrally involved in these initiatives. For example, the CCTS collaborated with the University COVID-19 Unified Research Experts (CURE) Alliance to launch a [pilot program](#) that supports research to enhance our understanding of and ability to diagnose and treat this new coronavirus as well as to reduce the impact of the pandemic. The following are exemplary of the 32 pilot studies funded to-date:

- Beth Garvy, PhD, and colleagues’ “[Longitudinal Study of Immune Responses in CoVID-19 Patients](#),” will examine the long-term effects of the virus on the immune system;
- James Keck, MD, MPH and colleagues’ “[WACKY: Wastewater Assessment for Coronavirus in Kentucky](#),” (co-funded by UK-CARES) will evaluate wastewater for the presence of viral biomarkers;
- Caitlin Pope, PhD, and colleagues’ “[Health Disparities, Self-efficacy, and COVID-19: Understanding the Associations Between Resiliency Resources and Self-Reported Health and Wellbeing in Disadvantaged Older Adults](#),” will examine how the pandemic has affected the psychosocial wellbeing of those who are most at-risk for effects of social isolation such as community-dwelling older adults and persons who have limited economic resources.

Complimenting this significant investment of resources and effort by the University of Kentucky research community to address COVID-19 are the collaborations between the [UK CCTS Community Engagement and Research Core \(CERC\)](#) and our Kentucky communities established to respond to the needs of Kentucky communities in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Among these, we have established community coalitions to initiate and support efforts to educate populations about COVID-19 and to respond to needs in the face of the tremendous economic and personal impact of the pandemic on individuals and families in our local communities. We have also developed and are maintaining English- and Spanish-language webpages to provide continuously updated information about (a) CDC, state and local guidelines regarding COVID-19; (b) education on protecting oneself and others during the pandemic; and (c) available resources across communities and how to access these.

[COVID-19 Community Resources page](#)

[COVID-19 Recursos para la Comunidad page](#)

We are also working with other CCTS cores to develop and disseminate PSAs to reinforce the importance of mask-wearing and handwashing among young people and are partnering with University investigators and local health departments to apply for funding to support a strategic coordinated testing initiative for areas in our communities that have had limited access to such resources.

Watch UKY Football player, Josh Paschal’s Public Service Announcement
#MASKUPCATS [HERE](#)

Knowledge for the People

As an athlete and cancer survivor, I know how important it is to take care of your health—you only get one body!

I also know that **everyone** deserves access to the information they need to stay healthy. That’s why I’m partnering with the UK CCTS to share tips and information to help you improve your wellbeing and healthy habits.



UPCOMING EVENTS



The 6th Annual Appalachian Research Day (ARD): Come Sit on the Porch will be held as a virtual seminar series, beginning **Sept. 16, 2020**. ARD is an annual event hosted by the University of Kentucky Center of Excellence in Rural Health (CERH) to share results of health research conducted with communities in Appalachia. “Disseminating health disparities research findings at the local level is something our Center is strongly committed to,” said Dr. Fran Feltner, director of the UK CERH. “We value our community members and organizations who are willing to partner with us to conduct and participate in community-based research to address rural health concerns. Appalachian Research Day provides an opportunity for us to keep conversations open and continue efforts to move in a positive direction.”

The agenda for the virtual research series will include:

REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES IN APPALACHIA THROUGH COMMUNITY-ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS, by Ellen J. Hahn, Ph.D., University of Kentucky Center for Appalachian Research in Environmental Sciences, **2 to 3:15 p.m., Sept. 16, 2020.**

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER RECOVERY TASK FORCE PANEL, by Jennifer Sandlin, Kentucky State Police; JoAnn Vanzant, Operation Unite; and others to be announced, **2 to 3:15 p.m., Sept. 30, 2020.**

PROJECT PRESENTATIONS BY GRADUATES OF THE 2020 COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE OF KENTUCKY (CLIK), by the 2020 CLIK graduates: Cathryn Forester, Ricki Draper, Sandra Jones, Sarah Olinger, Brandy Slone and Sherry Spragens. Moderated by Kathryn Cardarelli, Ph.D., director of the Community Leadership Institute of Kentucky, **2 to 3:15 pm., Oct. 14, 2020.**

VIRTUAL POSTER SESSION, posters will be judged and the winners will have the opportunity to present their research during this shared session. All selected posters will be published in an online gallery, **2 to 3:15 p.m., Oct. 30, 2020.**

Register for Appalachian Research Day [here](#).

Submit poster abstracts [here](#).

Visit us at kyruralhealth.org, follow us on [Facebook](#), click [here](#) to join our mailing list to receive announcements and updates about ARD and other UK CERH events and happenings, or contact beth.bowling@uky.edu for more information.

HAVE YOU REGISTERED FOR THE ATRN SUMMIT?



September 22-23, 2020
Virtual Conference



The Wake Forest School of Medicine Clinical and Translational Science Institute ([WFSM CTSI](#)) will host the **ATRN Summit** on **September 22-23, 2020**. The theme for the Summit is **Community-Engaged Research in Translational Science: Innovations to Improve Health in Appalachia**. Note: The Summit will be abbreviated and held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are most interested in research, programs, and/or community efforts that highlight success in improving health and well-being in the Appalachian Region. The Summit will showcase both podium presentations and poster sessions. There is no cost for abstract submission, and we encourage student attendance and abstract submission.

For more information, click [HERE](#)

TO REGISTER, click [HERE](#)

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUBMIT CONTENT FOR THE ATRN NEWSLETTER?

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Welcome to the Team!

Welcome to the Team!

Newsletter content includes:

- Researcher Spotlights
- Funding opportunities
- Seminars/Lectures
- Trainings
- Events
- Collaborations among partnering ATRN institutions
- Other—send your Communications Group representative an email with your ideas!