

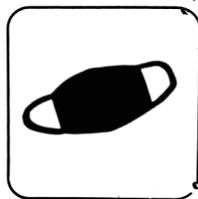


# Fall 2023 Virology Newsletter

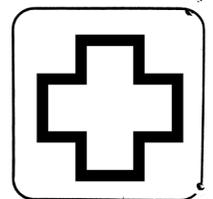
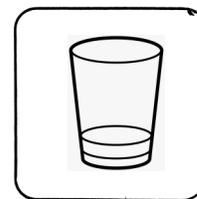


## Influenza, COVID-19, RSV and Cold Season

### Prevention



### Treatment



As colder weather approaches and we spend more time indoors, the likelihood of contracting contagious diseases increases. In order to protect yourself and others, take safety precautions such as washing your hands frequently, masking when you are sick, and getting vaccinated. The CDC recommends everyone getting their flu shot and a COVID-19 booster this year. For older adults, an RSV vaccination is available and may help prevent serious illness. If you do become ill, take care of yourself by resting, eating and drinking well, and if necessary, seeking medical attention. You can order 4 free COVID-19 testing kits per residential address from the US Government online at: <https://www.covid.gov/tests> (effective after 9/25.)

- Insurance—Open Enrollment . . . . . 2
- Article: Iowa tops nation in HIV viral suppression. . . . 3
- Medicine Take Back Day and Voting Information . . . . 4
- Staffing Changes . . . . . 5
- Data Corner and LIHEAP . . . . . 6
- Program Reminders and Updated Contact Information. 7



### Autumn Meditation

Sit outside in a comfortable position. Take a moment to recognize what you are sensing. Do you hear people crunching leaves? Is it chilly?

Now imagine yourself as a tree –straighten your trunk and breathe in. Feeling strong? Now in your minds eye watch your golden leaves floating through the air and softly settling on the ground. Ponder: What are you ready to let go of this fall?



# Insurance - Open Enrollment



## For people with employer sponsored insurance:

Most employers have an open enrollment period for coverage in the following year sometime between October and December. If you have concerns about your insurance coverage, please contact your employer’s HR to find out when your open enrollment period is so you can compare coverage with other options available. Many employers automatically enroll people in coverage for the following year during open enrollment, so you’ll need to contact them to opt out if you’d like to make a change. If you work at Tyson, JBS, or Whirlpool, we strongly encourage you to reach out to your case manager or Field Benefits Specialist for assistance with a plan comparison, as these plans have problematic limitations around filling HIV medications.

### **ADAP-sponsored insurance (now BDAP, Benefits and Drug Assistance Program):**

Please plan to be in touch with your case manager or Field Benefits specialist in November 2023 for assistance re-enrolling in your coverage for next year. Please be sure to let us know if your income or family circumstances have changed so we can evaluate other options.



### **Medicare Information:**



Medicare Part D open enrollment runs from October 15-December 7. Field Benefits Specialist Eliza Rose is available to assist with plan comparisons to be sure you are in the lowest cost plan with the best coverage. Eliza can offer in person Open Enrollment assistance in the Med Specialty Clinic. Please contact her at 319-335-7449 to schedule an appointment.

**Important Medicare supplement information:** It’s very important to choose your Medicare supplement wisely. After your initial open enrollment period (at age 65 or when you end employer coverage after 65) you will not be “guaranteed issue” for a supplemental policy. This means that companies can decline your coverage based on your health conditions or charge you a significantly higher price. If you choose a Medicare Advantage plan, your coverage network may be limited and you may have higher and less predictable out of pocket costs. You may not be able to return to a supplement from a Medicare Advantage plan. Please contact your Field Benefits Specialist for help making these important coverage decisions.

**For those nearing age 65:** You have three months before and three months after your 65<sup>th</sup> birthday to sign up for Medicare coverage. If you do not choose to do so and can’t show proof of other coverage (i.e. employer coverage from you or a spouse) you may face a lifetime premium penalty for not signing up during your initial enrollment period. This means that you will pay more every month for coverage. Please don’t miss this important enrollment window!



**UIHC’s Field Benefits Specialist, Eliza Rose, is available to help with any insurance questions and concerns. Please call 319-335-7449 for assistance.**



# MAKING THE ROUNDS

University of Iowa Department of Internal Medicine



## Article: Iowa tops nation in HIV viral suppression outcomes

by: the University of Iowa Department of Internal Medicine on 09/01/2023

In a report released in May 2023, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognized the state of Iowa for having one of the highest percentages of HIV viral suppression in the country, which allows people living with HIV to reach their best health outcomes. People who sustain an undetectable viral load for at least six months also can not transmit HIV to their partners, a model known as Undetectable = Untransmittable, or U=U.

In the report, national trends show that states average 65.9% of their populations of people living with HIV achieve viral suppression, whereas Iowa reaches significantly beyond the average at 81.7%. Only one other state in the country has reached 80%, pushing Iowa to the forefront of effective HIV patient care.

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Center for Acute Diseases Epidemiology writes of the report, “This is a great achievement for the state, and reflects a number of factors, including . . . consistent leadership over many years at the state and local levels.”

One of these leaders is Jack Stapleton, MD, professor in Infectious Diseases and of Microbiology and Immunology, and director of the HIV/AIDS Clinic at University of Iowa Health Care, which is now finishing its 35th year. Stapleton credits “the great team we have in our clinic” for the superlative national results. “Our staff – including physicians, physician assistants, social workers, nurses, data managers, and more – provide patient-focused care, which earns patient trust. Thanks to our grants, we can additionally provide a variety of support resources to assist with the medical care of these people living with HIV infection.”



He also credits the “great funding” received through the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Legislation, or the Ryan White Program. The Ryan White Program is the third largest source of federal funding for HIV care in the country after Medicare and Medicaid. Stapleton noted that three other clinics in Iowa also receive funding from the program.

The Virology Clinic at University of Iowa Health Care serves more than 25% of Iowans living with HIV, and offers a multidisciplinary approach to patient care, utilizing funds from the state-level program. This approach includes specialty pharmacists, psychiatry and social services, satellite health clinics, and housing services to comprehensively offer people living with HIV the highest rate of preferred outcomes in the state of Iowa.



To read this article in full and see the helpful links it provides, please visit:

<https://internalmedicineiowa.org/2023/09/01/iowa-tops-nation-in-hiv-viral-suppression-outcomes/>





On Saturday, October 28, 2023 from 10 AM to 2 PM, thousands of DEA-coordinated collection sites will be available across the country, and consumers are encouraged to use this unique opportunity to safely and legally dispose of any unneeded medications, including prescription painkillers and other controlled substance medications, which can only be accepted for disposal when law enforcement is present. The take-back service is free and anonymous, with no questions asked. Participating sites will accept tablets, capsules, and all other solid dosage forms of unwanted medication. To find a drop-off location near you and for more information please visit:

[https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug\\_disposal/takeback/index.html](https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/index.html)

Take Back Day Locations: **Saturday, October 28, 2023, 10:00 am - 2:00**

COLLECTION SITE	~ DISTANCE
If you do not find a collection site near you, please check back frequently, sites are added every day.	
JOHNSON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE	
JOHNSON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE LOBBY	1miles.

## How much do you know about voting?

People who are eligible to vote can vote in federal, state, and local elections. General voting eligibility guidelines are being a U.S. citizen, being 18 years old (you can register at age 17 if you will turn 18 before election day) and being registered to vote (<https://www.usa.gov/who-can-vote>). However, some eligibility guidelines vary by state. In Iowa, people with felony convictions were previously barred from voting. This law was changed in 2020 by Executive Order 7 (EO7). The voting restoration applies to people who have completed their felony sentence as of August 5, 2020, including probation or parole. Please note that there are a few exceptions to the law for those convicted of homicide. If you have any questions about the EO7 you may contact the Iowa Department of Corrections at 515-725-5701 (<https://sos.iowa.gov/elections/voterinformation/restorerights.html>).



People with disabilities may receive the needed assistance to vote. If you can't leave your home, you may request an absentee ballot by printing a request form from [sos.iowa.gov](https://sos.iowa.gov). You may also choose to request an absentee ballot if this is a more convenient voting option for you, regardless of disability. If you need help filling out your ballot at the poll you may choose a person, including your legal guardian, to assist you or you can use the voter assist terminal (<https://sos.iowa.gov/disabilities.html>).

You may register to vote online on the Iowa Dot Iowa online Voter Registration website or by submitting a Voter Registration Form to your local County Auditor. You can find the registration form on [sos.iowa.gov](https://sos.iowa.gov). If you need assistance registering to vote you may contact case manager Viri Estudillo at 319-353-8951. For more information about voting, please visit [www.usa.gov](https://www.usa.gov).

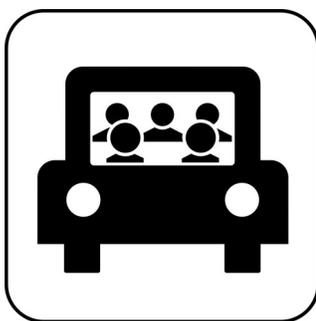




## Staffing Changes: Farewells

### Tracy Peters (Program Nurse)

If there is one thing that I have learned in the 41 years that I have been employed here, it is the fact that life is full of changes. I am preparing for yet another change. I will be leaving the Ryan White team on October 5th to embark on a different mission of research into osteoarthritis. This is a research project conducted through the College of Public Health at the University of Iowa. I have a strong research background, and though I was not looking for a “change”, this opportunity was presented to me. I will no longer be based out of the hospital and will be working in a clinic on the east side of town (closer to my home) with free parking in the front of the building and I can be at my desk as soon as I walk in the door. For 41 years I have commuted to the Hospital and made the mile long trek across the hospital to reach my office each



day. 35 years I have commuted on a vanpool with others from my community. I am feeling somewhat liberated to be able to drive and park right outside my office. Although I am excited about this opportunity, I will greatly miss all of you. I have been here for 3 years and have forged some strong bonds with many of you. I want you all to know that my greatest satisfaction comes from my interactions with you. I will miss you and wish you all the best. You are in very capable hands. - Tracy

### Jennifer Keeler (Case Manager, HOPWA)

It is bittersweet to say farewell! A lot has changed in the 12 years since I joined the Ryan White Team. Thank you to the patients that continued to trust the process every year even as things changed. Thank you for sharing your stories with me and allowing me to be a small part in your journey. I know change is hard, continue to trust the process. The remaining team will take good care of you. To my colleagues- Keep doing amazing work! Thank you for your guidance and support over the years. - Jennifer



## Staffing Addition: Welcome

### Dr. Renate Gyenge (ID Fellow)

Hello everyone - my name is Renate Gyenge and I am one of the new first-year Infectious Disease fellows at UIHC! I am originally from Romania but have lived in Cleveland, Ohio since 1999. I have done all my medical training in Northeast Ohio prior to my current fellowship. I recently moved here over the summer and am excited to see what opportunities Iowa has to offer. In my free time, I enjoy running, hiking, and cooking. I look forward to meeting the community of Iowa and I thank you for trusting me in your healthcare! - Dr. Gyenge





## Data Corner

In our last newsletter, we discussed how the rate of patients keeping their appointments in our clinic had risen slightly, but also highlighted the need for this trend to continue to free up valuable slots to see our providers. We worked hard to contact patients and/or their case managers prior to their appointments to provide reminders, assist with transportation in certain cases, and to help with re-scheduling visits when conflicts come up. This quarter, we're excited to report that our efforts to reduce missed appointments have paid off.

In July, August, and September, 428 patients saw a provider in our clinic, with a missed appointment rate of just 10.3%. In each of the three months, the rate was below 12%, the first time this has happened since we began tracking it in 2017. While we know we still have room to improve, this speaks to the incredible work being done by our team, and by our patients, to help our clinic operate smoothly and ensure that everyone can be seen by their provider when they need to. We're grateful to everyone who made this improvement happen.

To sustain this success over the winter months, when bad weather can lead to additional complications, we continue to ask our patients to get in touch with our program at 319-335-7520 if they have any concerns about whether they can attend their appointments, and to let us help them access care at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics.

## Community Resources

### Get energy assistance to reduce your heating costs!

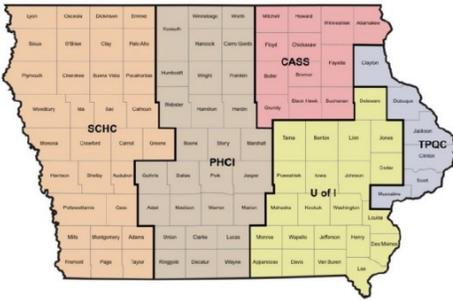
The LIHEAP program offers financial assistance to offset high winter utility costs for those households under 200% of the federal poverty level (\$27,180 annually for a household of one). This program is available to both homeowners and renters who pay heating costs. If approved, payments are made as a lump sum directly to your utility company. For homeowners, weatherization assistance to make your home more energy efficient may also be available. LIHEAP begins accepting applications on November 1, or October 1 for households with members who are over 60 or disabled.

In Johnson County, call 319-337-5765 for application information

In Linn County, call 319-366-7632 for application information

See <https://humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply> for other county information, or contact a social worker/case manager for assistance.





**HOPWA (Housing Opportunity for People with AIDS)**  
 Are you in need of financial assistance to get or maintain housing? You may be eligible for services provided by HOPWA such as Long-Term Rental Assistance or Short-Term Rent, Mortgage and Utility Assistance. Permanent Housing Placement Services may be able to provide your rental security deposit and/or first month's rent. Eligibility is based on your income and limits vary by county. Please contact the HOPWA provider in your area to learn more/apply. For those covered by the U of I, please direct your questions to Viri Estudillo at 319-353-8951.



Permanent Housing Placement Services may be able to provide your rental security deposit and/or first month's rent. Eligibility is based on your income and limits vary by county. Please contact the HOPWA provider in your area to learn more/apply. For those covered by the U of I, please direct your questions to Viri Estudillo at 319-353-8951.

**CLEAR (Choosing Life, Empowerment, Action and Results)**



CLEAR is a program open to those living with HIV interested in increasing or enhancing behaviors that support a healthy life. The program specializes in topics such as medication adherence, disclosure of HIV status, managing sexual risks and self advocacy in health care, but the program is personalized to fit your needs and wants. For more information, please contact Kari Vrban at 319-467-5655.

**Updated Contact Information**

Tricia Kroll	Program Coordinator, Case Manager	319 384 7307
Malory Dreasler	Case Manager	319 356 1545
Kari Vrban	Behavioral Health Consultant, Case Manager	319 467 5655
Viri Estudillo Gil	HOPWA Manager, Case Manager	319 353 8951
Lisa Dye	Case Manager	319 335 7309
Megan Mineart	Case Manager	319 335 7218
Eliza Rose	Field Benefits Specialist	319 335 7449
Rina Chaudhary	Clinical Trial/Grant Specialist	319 335 7437
Mike Bates	Data Quality Manager	319 335 7442
Ashley Brennan	Administrative Services Coordinator	319 335 7520