

Virology Newsletter

Summer 2020



Black Lives Matter at UIHC

Our clinic, our program, our hospital, and our University are here to serve everyone, regardless of their age, gender identity, orientation, race or ethnicity. The senseless and horrific killing of George Floyd and others this Spring has left us, like many of you, angry, hurt, and sad. We resolve to help make this country and this community a safer and more welcoming place for all people, especially people of color. Many of our clinic staff joined and/or supported the protests, and we sympathize with all who have suffered from the response of some law enforcement agencies. We will do all we can to promote justice and fairness.

It is important that we remember George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Philando Castile, Rayshard Brooks and others, especially African-American and Latinx men and women unjustly

killed every year. But we know we cannot mention these names without also mentioning the horrific killings of our Black trans family that are often left out of the conversation. But we will say their names, and strive to make change in their names and affirm that their lives have mattered and will matter. We believe that Black lives matter.

We know that we have a lot of work to do. We will continue to have the hard and important conversations within our organization and staff to promote the needed systemic changes for true health equity for our patients, realizing that significant barriers to health care exist for people of color. We will work to reduce those barriers and improve the health outcomes for our patients. We are fortunate that we have the opportunity to work with and for you, and we are committed to fight with you for fairness and justice. We know that we cannot experience true equality until we ensure equity for all. We believe in the words of the great African-American novelist and civil rights advocate James Baldwin, "I have a vast amount of determination. I have a great deal of hope. I think the most hopeful thing to do is to look at the situation.... If you don't look at it, you can't change it. You've got to look at it. And at certain times it cannot be more grim. If we don't look at it, we won't. If we don't change it, we're going to die. We're going to perish, every single one of us is. That's a tall order, a hard, hard bill to pay; but you have been accumulating it for a very long time. And now the bill is in." It is time for all of us to join together and address longstanding inequities in order to make the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness achievable for all people.

Does living with HIV increase your risk for COVID-19 infection or severity?

A recent study by de Amo and colleagues in the Annals of Internal Medicine (June 26, 2020) provides some interesting information addressing this question. Importantly, the authors stress that the relation between HIV and COVID-19 is unclear. Although there are reports of higher mortality rates due to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in people who are "immune suppressed", HIV infection has not been specifically identified to have a higher rate of hospitalization or severe COVID-19 in New York City or Madrid. The paper suggested that the reason for this might be that people living with HIV do not develop the intense inflammation often found in people with severe COVID-19 disease. Because several risk factors for severe COVID-19 are common in our clinic — older age, male sex, hypertension, diabetes mellitus, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and kidney disease — we are very concerned about COVID-19 in our patients. Since HIV has not been specifically associated with severe COVID-19, the authors of this article proposed that the apparent lack of increased risk for serious COVID-19 among people living with HIV might be due to HIV (antiretroviral) therapy (ART).

COVID-19 is caused by the virus SARS CoV2. ART was suggested to be a protective factor against the original SARS virus in 2003, but no conclusions could be drawn due to the very small number of people who were taking ART in that outbreak. Some laboratory studies have suggested that one class of ART (tenofovir, emtricitabine) might have activity against SARS CoV2. The study of de Amo and colleagues found that people living with HIV who received tenofovir and emtricitabine had a lower risk of COVID-19 and a lower rate of being hospitalized for COVID-19. From this observation, the authors raised the possibility that some combinations of ART might be protective against SARS CoV2. The authors stress that the findings are **NOT** conclusive and that further investigation in HIV ART are needed to determine if the findings are valid. Nevertheless, HIV does not prevent COVID-19. As of June 29th, 2020, 134 of our patients have been screened and nine (6.7%) have tested positive for COVID-19. Thus, we want to stress how critically important it is for all of us and our patients to follow guidelines to reduce the spread of COVID-19. However, this new information is somewhat reassuring as living with HIV does not appear to greatly increase the risk of infection or severe disease.

COVID IMPACT

You may have recently seen news about UI Health Care COVID-19 unpaid time off and vacation give back program. Although this will affect our program, we want to assure you our staff are being strategic in their time off so that we will always have coverage available. While staff are on this leave, they cannot work in any capacity. However, while staff are out of the office, emails will have an alternate contact listed and voice mails will be checked by another team member. During this time, we are confident our team will maintain your ongoing access to care and treatment. Thank you!

COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter have forever changed our work and the delivery of HIV prevention, care, treatment, and wrap around services - NMAC 6/22/20



Welcome All!!



Welcome Matt Smith!



My name is Matt Smith, this year will be my first year as an Infectious Disease fellow, and thus it will be my first year caring for patients living with HIV. I'm very excited to get to know the incredibly supportive community. In the future I hope to be an epidemiologist and work in clinical medicine on the side.

Welcome Joseph Tholany!!

Hello, my name is Joseph (Joe) Tholany and I'll be a first year Infectious Disease fellow starting in July. I am originally from New York, but I have spent the last 3 years living in Pittsburgh. I cannot wait to start working with all of you. My outside work interests include reading fiction, cooking, and playing board games with my friends and family.



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Welcome our new Staff Physician, Quan Kaewpoowat!!!



I am a new Staff Physician at UIHC and I am grateful to be a part of the Virology Clinic. Thailand is my motherland where I was born and raised. I completed my medical training in New York and Texas. After graduation, I went back to work in the Northern part of Thailand for several years. Now, I am heading to Iowa :) My area of interest is HIV treatment and prevention. Outside working hours, I enjoy cooking! Please feel free to share your best recipe with me!!

Do you know someone that would benefit from PrEP?

PrEP is the once a day HIV prevention medication. Through Iowa TelePrEP, people can get PrEP using a telemedicine app on their smartphone, tablet or computer. Iowa TelePrEP also has a navigator that can help people get copay cards or other assistance programs so everyone can get PrEP for little or no cost. Most of our patients get PrEP medication for free. Please refer anyone you think would benefit from PrEP. Call or text 319-930-9093, visit us at www.prepiowa.org/teleprep, or ask to talk to Dena in clinic.

Iowa TelePrEP is the Power of Prevention in the Palm of Your Hand.



HIV Clinic Information:

Due to COVID-19, many of our patients were not seen in March, April, and May. Although we're back up to our regular clinic visit numbers, patients who had to reschedule appointments will need to be seen and we continue to have new patients coming to clinic. Thus, we anticipate that the next few months will be extremely busy. One complication is that approximately 20 percent of appointments are cancelled at the last minute or rescheduled completely. While we do our best to reschedule people as soon as possible, given the increase in expected visits we fear that it will be difficult to reschedule people as quickly as we have in the past.

We understand that life is complicated and that missed appointments and late cancellations are going to happen from time to time. In this challenging time of the COVID pandemic, anything you can do to help us to reduce the number of cancelled or missed appointments will be greatly appreciated. Also, if there is anything we can do to help you keep the appointments you have, including assistance in finding or paying for transportation, please let us know.

Source: Sexual Health Alliance of Linn and Johnson Counties

<https://www.facebook.com/162930683780217/posts/3896731587066756/?d=n>

What we're doing to keep you safe during this pandemic

1. Visitor restrictions and screenings

To protect the health of our patients and their families, University of Iowa Health Care has implemented visitor restrictions (updated June 2, 2020) and is screening everyone who enters the hospital for symptoms of COVID-19.

2. COVID-19 testing for new inpatients

Safety continues to be our number one priority, which is why we are expanding COVID-19 testing to include all patients admitted to our hospitals, beginning Thursday, June 11. This additional testing is another way we are protecting our patients, visitors, staff and the community from the spread of COVID.

Please refer to <https://uihc.org/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19> for more current UIHC information.

Please reach out to our Team or your Case Manager if you need help accessing masks, hand sanitizer, etc.

We encourage you to use MyChart (<https://mychart.uihealthcare.com/mychart/>) to allow for a Telemedicine visit when needed.

Thank You and Good Luck to our Dearest Staff



Thank you and Best Wishes to Colleen Brems

Colleen Brems, Psych ARNP, did HIV work in Dubuque since 1985. Colleen then moved to Iowa City in 1989 and continued seeing some patients for therapy. Her involvement with our HIV Program evolved from there. Colleen has been an invaluable resource for our staff and liaison to Mental Health Resources at UIHC and the surrounding community. She enjoys traveling and horses and we wish her all the best in her retirement, she will be missed.

Farewell and Thank you Sam Kouba!!

"Thank you so much to all the wonderful people I worked with here at UIHC for the last two years. To the patients that I worked with, it was an absolute privilege to take part in your care. I will miss my patients and our Virology clinic team. We have a great team! I can't thank you all enough. I will be headed North to live closer to my family after graduation and cannot wait to continue my practice and meet new people. Take care."



Thank you and Best Wishes to Taka Kobayashi



It is amazing to think I have worked at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics for 2 years already as an infectious disease fellow. During this 2 years, I have learned invaluable lessons at virology clinic. To social workers, case manager, and nurses, the hard work you put in each day helps me more than I can tell you. You were always organized and prepared for our patients.

I have decided to do a 2 yearlong VA quality scholar fellowship from July 2020. During this scholarship, I mainly work on quality improvement research study at VA Iowa hospital. However, I also continue to do an inpatient clinical ID fellow job (around 20 % of a year) at UIHC while my outpatient clinic is close.

Thank you for all the good times and sweet memories that we shared together. And, I look forward to continuing working at UIHC with a new role. - Taka



Virtual Pride

June celebrated Pride for the LGBTQ+ community, but due to the pandemic many in-person events were cancelled. Not only was 2020 an unprecedented year for events to go virtual, but many organizers of these events are also used this time to amplify Black voices and stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter cause. While Pride may have looked different this year, it definitely was not cancelled. We hope that no matter where you were in the world during June you were able to celebrate Pride with the click of a button.



UIHC's Support Group for People Living with HIV

When: First Wednesday of the month from 4:00pm-5:30pm

Where: Online for now!

Contact: Daniel Czachura, BHC

Phone: 319-383-3621

Email: daniel-czachura@uiowa.edu

Mental Health and the News Cycle

As the pandemic and increased unrest in response to racialized violence continue, so do increased stress, mental health and substance use concerns. Often, as we watch these things in the news, anxiety and feeling on edge can become more prevalent feelings. We can't change that the news is there, but there are some strategies to avoid feeling overwhelmed by the news cycle:

- Pick certain times to check the news
- Identify news topics that trigger you, and limit these
- Reflect on social media use and consider other forms of engaging with friends and family temporarily if you notice social media negatively impacting you
- Get involved! Feeling connected to efforts to make change can turn anxious energy into useful energy.

Additionally, below are resources to aid in coping with these difficult times:

Your Life Iowa: the statewide crisis line anyone can contact when they're struggling with suicidal thoughts, mental health, alcohol, drugs, gambling or more. Your Life Iowa's compassionate professionals can help you get through this difficult time with free, confidential help, 24/7.

Call: (855) 581-8111

Text: (855) 895-8398

Chat: YourLifeIowa.org

Facts to know about Food Assistance:

1. You can still get food assistance even if you
 - work
 - own a house and a car
 - get other benefits like social security, supplemental security income (SSI), unemployment, or welfare
2. Benefits come on an EBT card that you can use at the store or farmers market to buy food.
3. To get food assistance the value of your counted resources must not be more than:
 - \$2,250 for most households
 - \$3,250 for households of one or more if at least one person is 60 years or older or has a disability
4. For households with a member 60 or older or with a disability, only the net income limit applies.

2020 gross and net income limits:

Household Size	Max. Gross Monthly Income	Max. Net Monthly
1	\$1,354	\$1,041
2	\$1,832	\$1,410
3	\$2,311	\$1,778
4	\$2,790	\$2,146
5	\$3,269	\$2,515
6	\$3,748	\$2,883
7	\$4,227	\$3,251
8	\$4,705	\$3,620



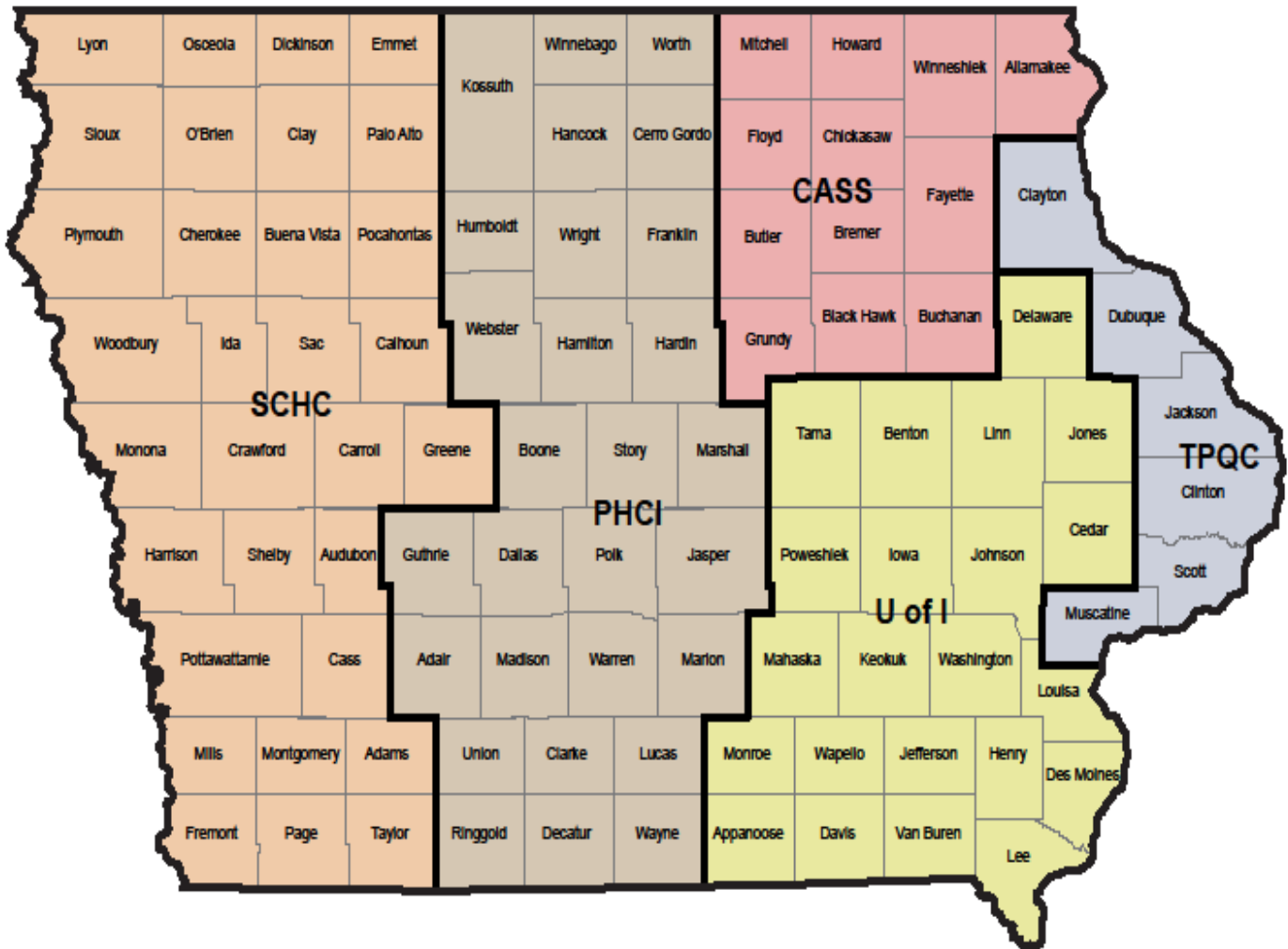


HOPWA



Having trouble maintaining your housing due to an emergent situation such as job loss or illness? You may be eligible for HOPWA assistance. Please contact the HOPWA provider in your area to see if assistance is available. UIHC currently offers assistance with long-term rental assistance (TBRA), short-term rent, mortgage, and utility assistance (STRMU), and permanent housing placement services (PHP) (deposit and/ or 1st months rent). If you live in the U of I area, contact Jennifer at 319-467-5662.

Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)



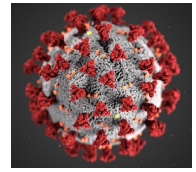
Siouxland Community Health Center (SCHC)
1021 Nebraska Street
PO Box 5410
Sioux City, IA 51102
(712) 252-2477

Primary Health Care, Inc. (PHCI)
1200 University Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50314
(515) 248-1517

Cedar AIDS Support System (CASS)
2101 Kimball Avenue
Suite 2880
Waterloo, IA 50704-2880
(319) 727-2002

University of Iowa (U of I)
200 Hawkins Drive
Iowa City, IA 52242
(319) 467-5662

The Project of the Quad Cities (TPQC)
1701 River Drive #110
Moline, IL 61265
(309) 762-5433



Virtual meet and greet

**Please join us Thursday July 23, 6-7 pm for PITCH's zoom meet
and greet**

This month Denise Fuller from Horizon's financial wellness center Will
present on personal finance

Each month we will have a new presenter.

Virtual meet and greet

Please click on the zoom, or copy URL to register. Once registered you will re-
ceive login information



[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/vJ0kc-
mqrj8t4vORFMTOzpM5oeOB-pE8xg](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/vJ0kc-mqrj8t4vORFMTOzpM5oeOB-pE8xg)

"In these times of facing the pandemic of COVID-19, there is a message that the state's health care workers and our CEO wish to share: We stand with you. We're making sure we have every tool in our toolkit to fight this thing together."

- [Suresh Gunasekaran](#)



CONTACT US



- To schedule a clinic appointment at UIHC, call **319-356-8133** and for Cedar Falls Outreach, call **319-356-8133**.
- For lab results or health related questions, please call Amber Phelps, MA at **319-335-7218**.
- For refill requests, have your pharmacy fax a request to **319-356-3004** or contact the Infectious Disease refill line at **319-356-8133**.
- For insurance questions, contact Angela Speers at **319-335-7309** or **319-333-8714**
- If you have a medical emergency during the 8am-5pm work day, please try contacting Amber or your provider. If Amber and your provider are unavailable, you may call the hospital operator at **319-356-1616** and ask for the Infectious Disease doctor on call.
- For medication questions, contact Dena Dillon at **319-541-0335**.
- Sub-contracted Ryan White case management services now offered at Great River Medical Center in W. Burlington at **1-319-800-5430**, and River Hills Community Health Center in Ottumwa at **1-319-800-5561**
- Social work questions and concerns should be directed to:
Malory Dreasler at **319-356-1545** or **319-359-9181** **Sarah Hambright** at **319-353-8951** or **319-930-9829**
Jennifer Keeler at **319-467-5662** or **319-499-7963** **Katie Vodraska** at **319-353-7173** or **319-383-6563**
Kari Vrban at **319-467-5655** or **319-471-2123** **Tricia Kroll** at **319-384-7307**

If you have questions or would like more information about our HIV program please contact **Abby Dalton** at **319-335-7444**.