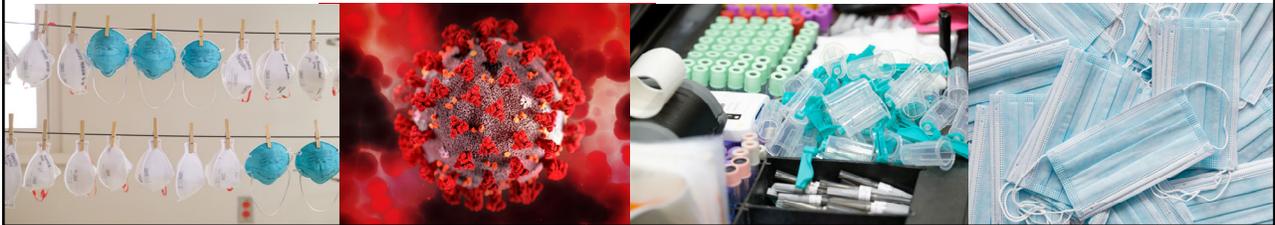


Pandemic research updates

January 2022



Agenda

- Pandemic research updates
- Non-pandemic research updates
- Q&A



Research Goals for This Year

1.

Grow funded research & recruit talented researchers

2.

Keep our research personnel & subjects safe

3.

Welcome and expand diversity in our research community

4.

Provide online materials & other resources to train & mentor researchers to compete nationally

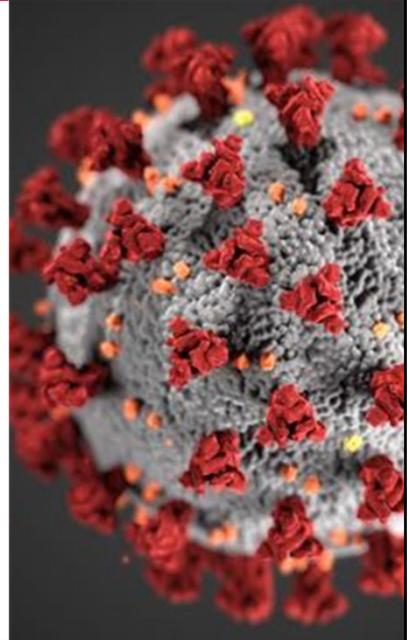
5.

Maintain cutting edge resources



COVID is Still With Us

- **Stay home and test** if you have symptoms
- **Why is Omicron different?**
 - Shorter time of incubation (48h):
 - More rapid spread
 - Even faster because vaccinated may have few symptoms
 - Result: higher cases than ever before
- **Unvaccinated still at risk with Omicron:** ICU or death
- **Boosters make a big difference** : anyone eligible should get one, any kind
- **Good news: UNMC still conducting COVID studies:**
 - vaccine studies for children
 - hospital treatments
 - oral anti-viral studies to prevent COVID





Mask 101

- **Cloth masks:** not adequate for Omicron for anyone
- **Surgical/procedural mask:** only for visitors and research subjects at UNMC and Nebraska Medicine at this time
- **KN-95:**
 - High quality filtration
 - Usually has ear loops, some adjustable
 - Choose one that fits tight on you
- **N-95**
 - High quality filtration
 - Has 2 elastic bands that reach behind the head for a tighter fit
 - If voluntarily using, choose one that fits tight on you
 - If required for employment (e.g., COVID or BSL-3 unit), must be fit tested and approved
- **What is a respirator mask?** A mask used to care for patients with highly infectious diseases, like a N-95



Surgical



KN-95



N-95



COVID Policies and Procedures

- **UNMC personnel required to use N95 or KN-95 mask if on campus, including Nebraska Medicine:**
 - Order via the [UNMC Mask Request Form](#).
 - N-95 and eyewear required for face-to-face care
- **Visitors discouraged** but must be masked and escorted into lab buildings with a surgical/procedural mask, at minimum
- **Research subjects and their 1 accompanying person must wear a surgical/procedural mask at a minimum**
 - Researchers should be prepared to provide





COVID Policies and Procedures

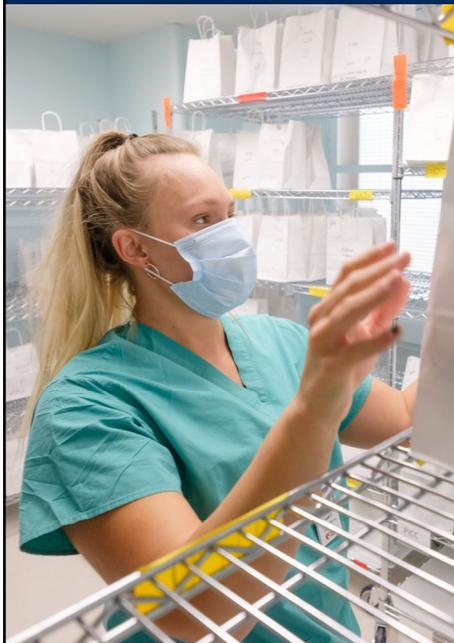
- **Pause on Volunteers** working in research labs, as of **January 17, except...**
 - International Scholars already on site
 - UNMC health professions students
 - Students enrolled in UNMC courses
 - Recently graduated students finishing up research
- **All volunteers on campus must be vaccinated**, no exemptions allowed, **and should obtain a booster** when eligible
- **New International Scholar applications on hold**
- **All researchers should work remotely whenever possible**, with supervisor approval



Mask Up

- **Mask inside everywhere on campus** unless eating or alone in your office with door closed
- **What if I share an office?** Mask or rotate times
- **Minimize time mask off when eating;** eat alone or socially distant from others
- **Mask inside buildings when off-campus:** eating inside any building other than your home is high risk
- **Conduct meetings & small groups using zoom/Teams**





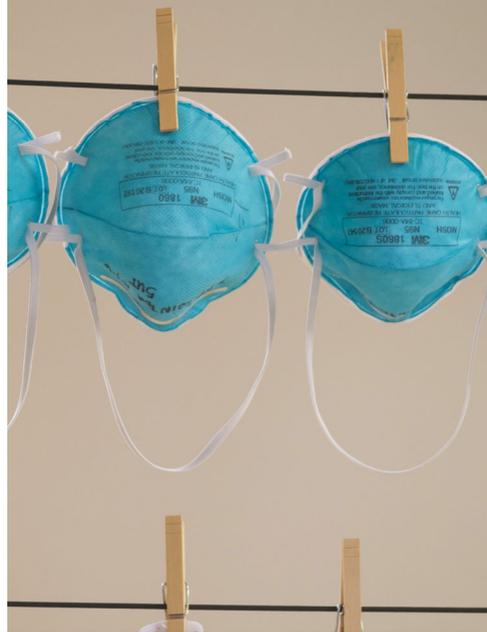
COVID Q&A

- **I got my vaccine and booster: am I not protected?**
 - Yes, from serious illness & Death
 - But you can still become COVID+ and spread COVID
- **I had COVID last fall, so I shouldn't have to worry, should I?**
 - Many persons with the Delta variant last fall, have gotten the Omicron variant, as well
- **What is the risk of Long COVID with Omicron or with minimally symptomatic COVID infection?**
 - We don't know but assume there is still risk



Mask Q&A

- **Can I reuse my N95 or KN95 mask?**
 - **Follow Nebraska Medicine guidelines** if you are working in a COVID unit or directly with patients
 - **You can reuse if non-health related areas;** let them dry out between days of wear by rotating 2 or 3 masks, setting them aside on a paper towel or in a paper bag on off days
 - **Throw away mask if function has changed:** wet (rain), torn, deformed, soiled, or loss of tight fit on your face (elastic band changed)
 - **You cannot wash N95 or KN95 masks**
 - **Masks fit better without facial hair**





Human subjects research

- All face-to-face human studies require a biosafety protocol
- Use distance methods whenever/wherever possible
- Assess research staff and subject symptoms and recent exposures before scheduling (recent unmasked large group gathering or work in a COVID unit)
- For a research subject with recent COVID who has a scheduled visit: delay until 10 days from diagnosis, conduct remotely, or schedule in the CRU (in 'hot zone' negative pressure room)
- **Pause face to face human subjects research as you can for now, unless coincident with clinical care**



Animal/laboratory research

- **For now, animal procedures and operations are unchanged**
 - If you have animal colonies, do not expand right now
 - Delay starting a complex protocol that requires a lot of personnel
 - New animal orders could be held if workforce shortage occur
- **Expect workforce shortages in your area:** discuss how you can/will help each other get work done if needed
- **Cores will request advance scheduling and communicate changes;** workforce shortages may impact services temporarily





Where to find pandemic-related updates?

- **Read UNMC Today**
- **Visit the VCR website**
 - Research operations updates can be found on the VCR homepage
- **Follow the VCR Twitter Account**
- **Check your UNMC email**
 - Internal communication will come from the research@unmc.edu email account



We've Got This

- **We have the expertise and experience** to conduct research safely
- **We're monitoring.** We may still need to make adjustments in policies over the next few weeks
- **What goes up must come down.** The Northeast has peaked and Nebraska predicted in 4-6 weeks.
- **Monitor how the people around you are doing.** Stress is often outside as much as at work.
- **Stay safe until then!**



National Institutes
of Health

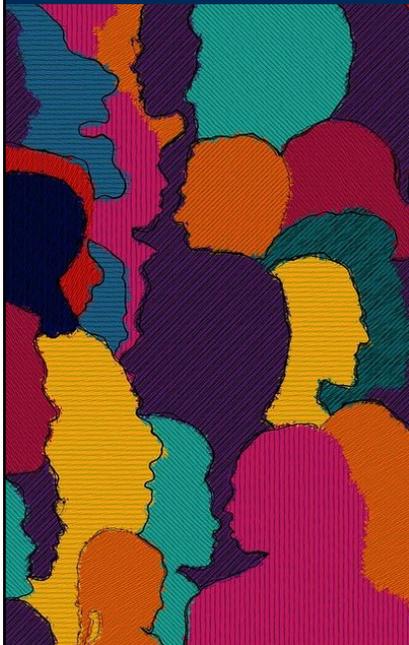
Other things on deck

- **New NIH Other Support page due Jan. 24** for continuing review as well as JIT: get trained with SPAdmin
- **Staff shortages may impact other areas:** IRB, Sponsored Programs, CRC, Cores....**be patient and don't wait to the last minute**

We need all of you!

- **Our team is our most valuable asset.**
- **Please stay well: in body and mind**
- **Take breaks:** walk around inside or outside, leave early, take your vacation
- **De-stress:** do something you enjoy doing, meditate, listen to music, make music, dance, practice some yoga, learn something new, help someone else, call someone, walk or run
- **UNMC has wellness resources** www.unmc.edu/wellness for more details





Importance of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

- **Our Research workforce is diverse:** many races, ethnicities, cultures & countries
- **Anxiety may cause people to say things** they didn't mean or regret
- **Assume positive intent or confirm**” I am not quite sure what you said/meant by that....”
- **Talk first** (phone or Zoom or Teams) because emails can be unforgiving and harsher than intended
- **Talk often**...don't just send another email if you remain confused



Questions?

Panelists Available

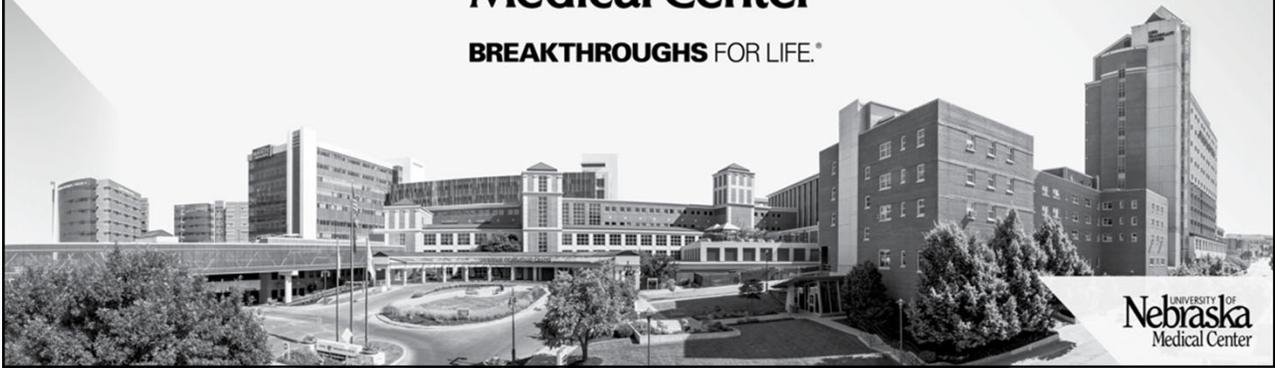
(listed in alphabetical order)

- Ken Bayles, PhD, Assoc Vice Chancellor, Basic Sciences
- John Bradfield, DVM, PhD, Director, Comparative Medicine
- Chris Kratochvil, MD, Assoc Vice Chancellor, Clinical Research
- Michael Dixon, PhD, President/CEO of UNeMed
- Bruce Gordon, MD, Asst. Vice Chancellor for Regulatory Affairs
- Madison Gray, JD, Director, Sponsored Programs Administration
- Tess Kuenstling, PhD, MBA, Asst. Vice Chancellor for Research Resources
- James Lawlor, MD, MPH, Assoc Dir., Center for Global Health Security
- Matt Lunning, DO, Asst. Vice Chancellor for Clinical Research
- Pat Wortmann, MPH, Environmental Health and Services
- **Facilitators:** Allegra Hardin & Max Kuenstling, MS



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