

WashU Med COVID-19 Update

June 11, 2020

Information for School of Medicine faculty, staff and students

Today's COVID-19 stats from BJH

41 inpatients confirmed positive

36 admitted, awaiting test results

COVID-19 mouse model will speed search for drugs, vaccines



The global effort to quickly develop drugs and vaccines for COVID-19 has been

hampered by limited numbers of laboratory mice that are susceptible to infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Now, School of Medicine researchers report they have [developed a mouse model of COVID-19 that replicates the illness in people](#). “There’s been a huge push to develop vaccines and therapeutics as quickly as possible,” said principal investigator Michael S. Diamond, MD, PhD, the Herbert S. Gasser Professor of Medicine and an expert on viral infections, “and since animal models have been limited, these investigational drugs and vaccines have been put directly into humans, and many of them haven’t panned out. Mice are useful because you can study a large number of them and observe the course of the disease and the immune response in a way that is hard to do in people.”

Further, the mouse model could be adopted easily by other scientists to dramatically accelerate the testing of experimental COVID-19 treatments and preventives. The approach is described in a paper published online June 10 in the journal *Cell*. Above, postdoctoral researcher Brett Case, PhD, sterilizes his suit with disinfectant spray before working with the virus.

Recommendations for managing skin cancer during COVID-19

Two Washington University School of Medicine doctors were co-first authors of a commentary exploring how to assess risks in treating patients with skin cancer. Brian Baumann, MD, assistant professor of radiation oncology, and Kelly MacArthur, MD, assistant professor of dermatology, published the piece in the [online June 1 issue of Cancer](#), the journal of the American Cancer Society. The commentary provides guidance on the treatment of early-stage, localized skin cancers during the COVID-19 pandemic, offering multidisciplinary, consensus recommendations from leading experts in Mohs surgery, radiation oncology and infectious diseases at 11 top U.S. academic medical centers.

The advice will help guide treatment decisions, particularly in areas of the U.S. experiencing high numbers of or a spike in cases. The authors discuss balancing treatment timing decisions against a patient’s risk of contracting COVID-19 or developing complications. They present specific situations when it may be safe to delay treatment without undue risk of worsening cancer outcomes. The factors to

consider in assessing risk include the type of skin cancer, tumor stage, and the patient's age, immune status and underlying conditions, such as diabetes or cardiopulmonary disease. They also emphasize the importance of shared decision-making between doctors and patients in understanding the pros and cons of early versus delayed treatment.

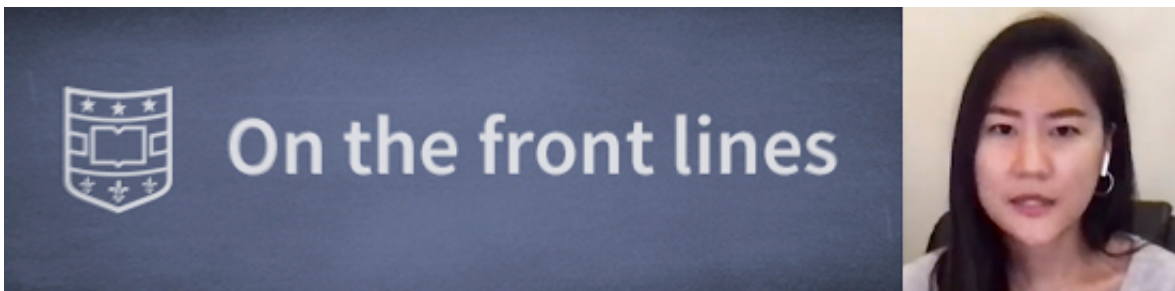
'For the first time in my life I am scared'

Physician-scientist Kenneth E. Remy, MD, assistant professor of pediatrics and medicine, writes movingly about his experiences as a clinician in the midst of the pandemic in a recent [commentary in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#). The virus, he writes, robs patients and their families of opportunities for human interaction when they — and we — need it most.



“Spouses, friends, children and parents are not present to hold hands, calm fears and kiss foreheads as loved ones battle with this disease,” he writes. “No one close to them is there to say ‘goodbye,’ ‘thank you,’ ‘I’m sorry’ or ‘I love you.’”

On the Front Lines: Kay Park



Medical student Kay Park discusses St. Louis Food Angels, a Sling Health initiative she co-founded, that is [addressing food insecurity and helping vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 crisis](#). Sling Health STL is a St. Louis-based, student-run health-care accelerator that brings together health professionals and students from diverse backgrounds to create solutions to real-world health-care problems.

This video is part of a [series of short videos](#) focusing on how Washington University health-care workers, scientists and students have responded to the coronavirus pandemic.

Mental health assistance for all employees

Having trouble sleeping, concentrating, working or just performing regular day-to-day activities? You're not alone. For in-the-moment support, WashU employees are encouraged to call the Coping with COVID hotline at 314-286-1700 from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday. Callers are transferred to a Department of Psychiatry mental health provider and may be referred for additional telehealth appointments with a psychiatry faculty member. Callers may also be given information on joining a Zoom support group. These weekly, confidential Zoom support groups led by faculty experts are another useful resource available to help employees cope during these challenging times. Details are on the [HR Mental Health Resources page](#).

In addition, the employee assistance program, [Work-Life Solutions](#), is available to faculty, staff, postdocs and all clinical fellows and residents. Call 844-365-4587 for free, confidential, 24/7 support and information. A guidance consultant will answer your questions and, if needed, refer you to a counselor or other resources. Employees receive five free counseling sessions.

WashU doctor answers coronavirus questions



[Jason Newland, MD, answers viewer questions on KSDK-TV, 5 on Your Side](#) each Sunday and Thursday. Recently, the questions came from a grandparent who wanted to know if it's safe to see grandkids, and a viewer wondering if testing is necessary before returning to work. Newland said as long as grandkids have been limiting their get-togethers with people their parents trust, and nobody has any symptoms like a runny nose or cough, then it's probably safe. He also recommended getting together outside and following all the precautions he's been talking about for weeks: practice social distancing, wipe down high-touch areas, and wash your hands effectively and often.

For the question about returning to work, Newland said if you've been practicing social distancing, have no symptoms and haven't been exposed to anyone with the virus, then testing is not necessary. He added, even if you have been exposed, and you have quarantined for two weeks without any symptoms, testing is unnecessary.

Feedback needed: second survey on employee wellness

The Healthy Work Center and the Employee Wellness program at Washington University are issuing a series

of three surveys to better understand the personal and family challenges that have resulted from the coronavirus pandemic. [Please take this 10-minute survey](#) that asks about work and family stresses you have experienced due to the coronavirus. The survey also asks about Washington University resources that would be helpful to you in the months to come. Results are anonymous. Survey respondents may choose to enter a drawing for one of multiple \$50 gift cards.



Gathering in Hope



Members of the Medical Campus community bow their heads in a prayer gathering at Hope Plaza Wednesday. About 75 people prayed for peace and an end to racism. The Spiritual Care teams from Barnes-Jewish and St. Louis Children's hospitals organized the event.

Important numbers and links

- Call the BJC/WUSM employee hotline for COVID-19 exposure or illness: 314-362-5056
- Use this [online screening tool](#) before reporting to work
- Know your [screening stations](#)
- Review [inpatient protocol](#)
- Review [ambulatory protocol](#)
- Call the Coping with COVID hotline for in-the-moment emotional support: 314-286-1700
- Contact the Employee Assistance Program for 24/7 work-life support: 844-365-4587
- Email inspirational stories to heroes@wustl.edu

For Medical Campus updates, visit coronavirus.med.wustl.edu »

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