



UMB News

School of Medicine Coronavirus Updates

March 25, 2020 | By *SOM Office of Public Affairs*

Dear UMSOM Community:



As we continue to move forward in these challenging times, I would like to bring you a message of encouragement and hope. First and foremost, please be assured and confident that we are, and will continue to do, everything we can to ensure the health and well-being of all within our SOM community. Significant steps are being taken by the state of Maryland, the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS), the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), and the School of Medicine to ensure that everyone is healthy and safe. Second, I want to encourage each of you to use this time when you are working remotely to advance the mission areas of the School

of Medicine — research, clinical care, education, and community impact. I am convinced that if we focus on these priorities, when we resume our normal schedules, we will quickly be able to realize that there was little or no "lost time." As you will see below, much work is being done by members of our academic community to focus on this COVID-19 pandemic.

New Executive Order

Gov. Larry Hogan  has issued a new executive order that closes all non-essential businesses in the state of Maryland. The new restriction reflects the growing number of cases in the state and the need for residents to stay at home unless it is absolutely necessary to go out. As we continue to implement Step 2 activation level for all of our employees, it is critical for everyone to follow all of the state and federal laws that are now in place that restrict travel and social distancing. The governor's office has created a new website that provides official information for the state of Maryland at <https://governor.maryland.gov/marylandunites/> 



Gov. Hogan

Update from UMMS

As part of the latest [announcement](#) , Gov. Hogan reiterated that all health care workers — including those employed by the University of Maryland Medical System — are essential and will continue to serve the health care needs of the people of Maryland. Other health care-related businesses that will continue to operate include pharmacies, home health care companies, manufacturers and distributors of medical equipment and supplies, senior living facilities, diagnostic facilities, rehab facilities, and offices of health care providers. [UMMS President and CEO Mohan Suntha, MD, MBA](#), has acknowledged this as a further indication of the vital role our Medical System plays in caring for the communities we serve. Our patients and communities are counting on us and we will be there to answer the call.

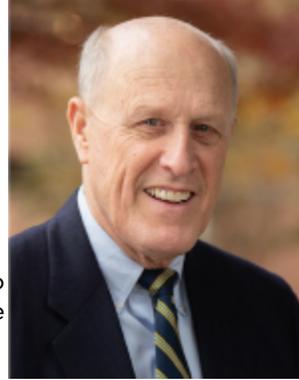


Dr. Suntha

Update from UMB/UMSOM

[UMB Interim President Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS](#), announced on March 23 that the campus will now move to an elevated level for our research activities, from Moderate Research Restrictions to Severe Research Restrictions. In sum, as stated in the Basic Science Research [policy document](#) , Severe Research Restrictions means that "we expect that you will curtail all activities not critical to maintaining animals, unique reagents/cell lines and essential equipment, at which point only 2-3 essential personnel (designated by the Principal Investigator) will be allowed in the lab and should be according to a defined employee schedule that ensures appropriate staggering." UMSOM is supportive of the UMB decision to restrict research in accordance with the

governor's mandate. UMSOM is working with the campus and has developed further guidelines regarding the use of laboratory research. The new guidelines, which were sent to all principal investigators, describe further restrictions as well as exceptions for certain laboratories. These exceptions include laboratories involved in COVID-19 research, critical ongoing experiments, and those that have equipment requiring maintenance. As previously noted, all UMB grant support services will continue to operate as is. New grant submissions should continue to be a priority.



Dr. Jarrell

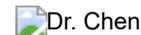
Faculty Research and Involvement in COVID-19

[Kathleen Neuzil, MD, MPH, FIDSA](#), the Myron M. Levine, MD Distinguished Professor in Vaccinology, and director, Center for Vaccine Development and Global Health (CVD), is part of a leadership team working with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) to test vaccines and therapies at sites across the country. CVD is part of NIAID's Vaccine and Treatment Evaluation Unit Network, one of nine sites researching vaccines and other therapies for COVID-19. The first Phase 1 trial of a vaccine began last week in Seattle, and Dr. Neuzil continues to work with infectious disease experts on the launch of additional trials. In addition, CVD's **[Karen Kotloff, MD](#)**, Professor of Pediatrics and Head of the Pediatric Infectious Disease Division, and **[Justin Ortiz, MD](#)**, Associate Professor of Medicine, are the principal investigators on a trial to study the efficacy of an antiviral therapy for treating COVID-19.



Dr. Neuzil

[Wilbur Chen, MD](#), associate professor of medicine and an adult infectious disease specialist, and **[David Marcozzi, MD, MD, MHS-CL, FACEP](#)**, associate professor of emergency medicine and head of the Incident Command for UMMS, are both serving on Gov. Hogan's COVID-19 response team.



Dr. Chen

Dr. Chen

They are advising top state officials about the illness, treatment, and containment.

Robert C. Gallo, MD, the Homer and Martha Gudelsky Professor in Medicine, co-founder and director, Institute of Human Virology at UMSOM, and co-founder and chairman of the International Scientific Leadership Board of the Global Virus Network, helped facilitate the delivery of [1,000 coronavirus tests](#) to Baltimore. The tests, approved last week for marketing and use in the United States by the Food and Drug Administration, were donated by a company in China and arrived in Baltimore on Saturday. On Monday, Dr. Gallo was making arrangements for their distribution through the Maryland Department of Health.



Dr. Gallo

A new UMSOM study looks at the health toll of stress brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. **Tracy Bale, PhD**, professor of pharmacology and director of the Center for Epigenetic Research in Child Health & Brain Development at UMSOM, published her study in the journal [Nature Communications](#). It outlines a biological mechanism for how a father's experience with stress can influence fetal brain development in the womb. She and her research team found the effects of paternal stress can be transferred to offspring through changes in the extracellular vesicles that then interact with maturing sperm. The [news release](#) on Dr. Bale's research provides important tips for managing stress while we are all working at home and maintaining safe social distancing.



Dr. Bale

Matt Frieman, PhD, professor of microbiology and immunology at UMSOM, continues his important work on testing potential new therapies to treat COVID-19. He and his colleagues published a paper on Monday in the journal [Nature Nanotechnology](#) that provides insights from the field of nanomedicine into the efficacy of chloroquine to treat COVID-19. He also continues to be

quoted extensively in the media on his coronavirus expertise and his work studying this novel coronavirus. Here are his latest insights in [The Atlantic](#) .

A complete listing of UMSOM faculty appearances in national media can be found



Dr. Frieman

at <https://www.medschool.umaryland.edu/news/coronavirus/UMSOM-Faculty-Expertise-Involvement--Media-Coverage/>

In closing, I want to reinforce my points of encouragement and extend my best wishes to each of you to remain optimistic. I am confident that each of us can continue to demonstrate the courage and relentless spirit that I have seen countless times in the UMSOM community when we are faced with adversity. Thank you again for everything that you do.



E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA

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