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Founders Week 2021: Special COVID-19 Pandemic Award

October 13, 2021 | Joanne Morrison

The School of Medicine's Neuzil, Chen, and Marcozzi are honored for their work in responding to the crisis at the UMB, state, and federal levels.

Three top COVID-19 experts at the University of Maryland School of Medicine (UMSOM) are being honored with a University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) Founders Week Special COVID-19 Pandemic Award in recognition of their research and emergency responses to the crisis, guiding vaccine development across the country and serving as key advisors to Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan and U.S. policymakers.

The award winners are Kathleen Neuzil, MD, MPH, FIDSA, Myron M. Levine, MD, DTPH Professor in Vaccinology and director of UMSOM's Center for Vaccine Development and Global Health (CVD); Wilbur Chen, MD, MS, professor of medicine and chief of the Adult Clinical Studies section within CVD; and David Marcozzi, MD, MHS-CL, FACEP, professor of emergency medicine and chief clinical officer and senior vice president for the University of Maryland Medical Center.



Neuzil — as head of CVD and in concert with the National Institutes of Health and the President's COVID-19 Response Team — has helped shape and lead COVID-19 vaccine research across the United States. Neuzil's CVD team has led several COVID-19 vaccine trials, coordinating with multiple research sites across the country. CVD's research in this area ultimately helped lead to Food and Drug Administration emergency use authorization for COVID-19 vaccines.

This unprecedented research at CVD began early in 2020, with, among other things, the center serving as one of the first research sites in the country to administer the now-fully approved Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. CVD continues to research booster and pediatric vaccines.

"The CVD's unprecedented research has helped the entire country and beyond as we continue to bring the COVID-19 pandemic under control," said UMB President Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS. "I was happy to be a part of this research, participating in the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine trial on my first day as president of UMB in September 2020."

Jarrell noted that CVD's research under Neuzil's leadership continues with her team researching treatments for COVID-19 as well as factors related to community spread of the virus. Much of CVD's work has focused on reaching underserved populations most impacted by the deadly virus.

Marcozzi and Chen continue to serve in high-level advisory roles at the UMB, state, and national levels. In March 2020, Hogan appointed Marcozzi and Chen as members of his Coronavirus Response Team. In this capacity, Chen, an adult infectious disease specialist, and Marcozzi, the University of Maryland Medical System's COVID-19 incident commander, have advised top state officials on COVID-19 safety, treatments, and vaccinations. Their roles have been critical in helping to control the pandemic and respond to hospital and emergency response capacity issues, helping to place Maryland as a national leader in responding to the pandemic.

"Drs. Chen and Marcozzi have contributed important expertise that has helped place the state of Maryland ahead of other regions," Jarrell said. "Their expertise has been essential in keeping our UMB community safe, and it has been impactful for individuals across the state."

Chen also was appointed to a four-year term as a voting member of the federal government's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, the prestigious board of experts that makes recommendations on the safe use of vaccines for Americans. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services selected Chen for the 15-member group based on his expertise and national leadership in vaccinology, infectious diseases, public health, and preventive medicine.

"It is no surprise that our COVID-19 experts have helped to advance vaccines and treatments and are serving as top advisors to state and federal policymakers," Jarrell said. "Their role in this pandemic has ultimately helped to save many lives, and UMB congratulates them for these outstanding accomplishments."

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