



## CONGRESSIONAL UPDATE | December 8

*Emory's commitment to the health and safety of our community is our highest priority. As we monitor the COVID-19 pandemic, our healthcare workers, researchers, and students, are taking action to combat this novel coronavirus.*

### **Current COVID-19 funding awarded to Emory University: ~ \$103 million**

#### **How Emory researchers are fighting COVID-19**

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the NIH and other federal funding agencies have ramped up support for academic research institutions to combat COVID-19. Emory University was one of these institutions and is currently third in the nation and leading in Georgia, for the amount of NIH COVID-19 funding received. In only a matter of months, Emory investigators launched 177 COVID-19-related studies, leading to more than 30 clinical trials, and 350 published papers on COVID-19. Many of these were the result of Emory researchers pivoting their expertise and resources toward fighting COVID-19, including experts like Dr. Denise Jamieson, chair of gynecology and obstetrics, who helped develop national guidelines for pregnant women with COVID-19 and Emory oncologists who adapted their therapies to tamp down COVID-19 inflammation. [Emory COVID research efforts](#) are primarily focused on addressing six major areas of concern: vaccine development for preventing COVID-19 transmission; modeling disease transmission and superspreading events; understanding COVID-19 immunity; estimating the number of exposed/infected people; improving COVID-19 testing technology; and devising a plan for vaccine administration. On the vaccine front, Emory was one of two sites nationally for conducting the Phase 1 clinical trial for [Moderna's mRNA-1273](#) vaccine (recently shown to have a 94% efficacy rate) and one of four sites working on the Phase 3 clinical trial for Johnson & Johnson's vaccine. As this crisis unfolds, researchers at Emory and across the country are working around the clock to find treatments, create rapid testing technology, develop vaccines, and identify preventative measures we can all take to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus.

#### **An Emory researcher is exploring ways to prevent the next global pandemic**

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) recently organized an urgent workshop that brought together 22 experts to evaluate scientific evidence and make recommendations to control and prevent future pandemics. The result of this workshop was a report, entitled "[Escaping the Era of Pandemics](#)," which consists of a robust examination of the evidence and knowledge about links between pandemic risk and nature since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The report notes that the economic costs of a major pandemic are about 100 times the estimated costs of prevention and lays out preventive government policy recommendations that the experts believe will help prevent future pandemics. Dr. Thomas Gillespie, an associate professor in Emory's Department of Environmental Sciences and Rollins School of Public Health, served as a scientific peer reviewer for the report and believes that the primary driving forces for pandemics are forest degradation and industrial animal production. Given the strong ties between human health, domesticated animals, and wildlife, the published report and Emory professor are advocating for a "One Health" approach that integrates human health, animal health and environmental sectors. The authors of the report estimate that there are currently about 1.7 million "undiscovered" viruses that exist in mammals and birds — and nearly half of them may have the potential to infect people, raising great concern about the potential for future pandemics and how we can prevent them.

#### **Emory Healthcare joins major U.S. health systems in #MaskUp campaign**

Emory Healthcare (EHC) is now on the growing list of U.S. health care systems taking part in a [#MaskUp](#) campaign. This collaborative effort between over 100 major health systems across the country is intended to encourage mask-wearing to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. With more than 11.5 million Americans testing positive for COVID-19, a number that continues to go up by the day, and more than 250,000 deaths, participating health systems want to remind everyone that they too can do their part in fighting COVID by wearing a mask. The #MaskUp public service message includes vital health resources based on CDC recommendations and encourages people to practice the three Ws – Wearing a mask; Washing your hands; and Watching your distance from others.

#### **Emory infectious disease physician and researcher is new ASM President-Elect**

We are excited and proud to announce that Dr. Colleen Kraft, one of Emory's leading infectious disease experts, is the newly elected [American Society of Microbiology](#) (ASM) President-Elect. Dr. Kraft is an infectious disease physician, Associate Professor in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, and the director of the Clinical Virology Research Laboratory at Emory University School of Medicine. In 2014, she led Emory's efforts to treat and care for patients with Ebola virus and is currently working to address the coronavirus pandemic. In addition to her work treating patients and conducting research, Dr. Kraft also serves on Georgia's coronavirus task force and is an active advocate for scientific research and health-related issues on the Hill. Congratulations, Dr. Kraft!

*If you need an Emory expert for a tele- town hall, please reach out!*

Through our work with other members of the National Ebola Training and Education Center (NETEC), we have developed a [NETEC Resource Repository](#) with materials that specifically pertain to COVID-19. We encourage you to share this repository with your local hospitals and healthcare facilities.