

WALTER REED ARMY INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER****Dear Reader,**

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the WRAIR Community Engagement newsletter, CE Updates. We would like to introduce you to WRAIR's brand new Community Engagement (CE) Project. The CE Project was started in October 2020 under WRAIR's Emerging Infectious Diseases Branch as our institute's first CE activity in the Washington, D.C. area. The CE project primarily focuses on supporting WRAIR's COVID-19 vaccine development. We help our COVID-19 vaccine and research awareness initiatives by informing, connecting, and collaborating with community stakeholders and community-based organizations (CBOs) to discuss WRAIR's COVID-19 vaccine trials. For the past few months, our program has been building relationships with community organizations and making headway on our main project goals. This newsletter is part of our commitment to inform community members about our organization, our COVID-19 vaccine research, and our CE project. This issue provides updates on the CE project, shares educational resources about COVID and clinical research, and provides you various opportunities for involvement. To find out more about our CE project, click on the link below and check out our new webpage:

Link to website: <https://www.wrair.army.mil/community-engagement>

About Walter Reed Army Institute of Research(WRAIR)

The Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) is centered at the Forest Glen Annex, in Silver Spring, MD, just north of Washington, DC, and also maintains a network of laboratories around the world. WRAIR's laboratories carry out biomedical research, product development, outbreak response, and disease surveillance to support Soldier health and global health. WRAIR scientists develop and test products that will ultimately reduce the impact of some of the most dangerous and debilitating diseases. The Institute is named after Major Walter Reed, MD (1851–1902), the Army physician who studied yellow fever and demonstrated in 1901 that mosquito species transmit this deadly disease, and that mosquito eradication can protect humans from the viral infection. (While WRAIR shares the same name as the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, MD, it is a separate institution at a different campus and focuses only on research.) Today, WRAIR conducts research on brain and behavioral health and on diverse infectious diseases, including HIV, malaria, dengue, Zika, Ebola, COVID-19 and many other pathogens. WRAIR has a Clinical Trials Center in its Forest Glen facility in which various clinical studies are carried out.

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Community Input matters: Community Advisory Board



Our CE Project uses multiple avenues to achieve project goals, including establishing a strong Community Advisory Board (CAB). Our CAB provides a vital link for building strong relationships between our researchers, the diverse local community, and other stakeholders. The Board serves to ensure that community perspectives and interests are considered in our COVID clinical research, and informs our researchers about community needs and values. The ten-member Board is comprised of representatives from community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, current and former WRAIR Clinical Trial Center (CTC) participants, community health workers, and nurses. The Board convenes on the second Monday of every month to discuss COVID-19, COVID vaccines, and clinical research topics. Click on the link below if you have any interest in learning about our CAB.

[CLICK HERE](#)

LISTENING TO COMMUNITY NEEDS: DISCUSSION GROUPS

Both keeping the community informed about WRAIR Research activities and understanding the community's needs are significant priorities for our community engagement project. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a disproportionate toll in communities of color and has brought light to deeply rooted health disparities. Developing and implementing culturally tailored community outreach programming that effectively engages individuals from the black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) community in conversations about participation in clinical research requires ongoing community needs assessment. Therefore, the CE team periodically holds informal focus group discussions with community members to understand their perspectives and thoughts on the COVID vaccine and clinical research. We use the information gleaned from these discussions to inform and address information needs among the different communities. If you wish to learn more about or receive information on upcoming discussion sessions, click on the link below.

[CLICK HERE](#)

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: WRAIR COVID-19 VACCINE



<https://abcnews.go.com/US/video/vaccine-watch-testing-vaccine-future-pandemics-76934429>

On Tuesday, April 6th, WRAIR started a Phase 1 trial of its COVID-19 vaccine, also known as the Spike Ferritin Nanoparticle (SpFN—pronounced “spiffin.”) SpFN is WRAIR's unique COVID-19 vaccine designed to pave the way for a universal vaccine to protect against the current COVID virus and future variants. Click on the image above to watch a video of the first volunteer receiving the WRAIR COVID-19 vaccine!

The WRAIR Clinical Trial Center (CTC) is accepting enrollment for this trial. If you are interested in learning or participating in the trial, please visit: <https://www.wrair.army.mil/clinical-trials-center/recruiting-studies#506>

Outreach and Education



To build strong relationships between WRAIR researchers and the local community, we offer regular educational and professional development events on topics related to COVID-19, vaccines and clinical research. These events aim to empower people in the local community with the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to make informed decisions about COVID-19 research. We are always seeking to partner with community-based organizations in the Washington, D.C. area that serve groups most affected by COVID-19 or who have an interest in COVID-19 research. To learn more about partnerships or our CE activities, please contact us at community@eidresearch.org.

WORTH LISTENING: HEALTH AND VALUES BASED LEADERSHIP



Listen to this webinar recording featuring Dr. Kayvon Modjarrad, Director, Emerging Infectious Diseases Branch, WRAIR; Dr. Sherrie Wallington, Assistant Professor and Health Disparities Researcher at George Washington University and Beza Gebrehana, WRAIR/EIDB Community Engagement Lead Coordinator. In this webinar, the panelists touch on various topics, including the critical role of ongoing COVID-19 vaccine research in preparedness for future outbreaks; the importance of good communication between scientists, community organizations and the public about the science around COVID-19, COVID vaccines and prevention; the critical role for community engagement in clinical research, and challenges for communities and community based organizations in returning to work in the post-COVID era.

Click on this link to listen to recording:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4Is9mLYuc4>

[CLICK HERE](#) to sign up for our mailing list! We will keep you up to date on our educational events and resources for COVID-19 research in your community.

OTHER RESOURCES

- **John Hopkins University & Medicine Resource Center-Vaccine blog**
 Checkout the latest blog by Alison Roxby addressing vaccination and older adults in long-term care. Click on the following link to view: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/vaccines/blog/with-an-rna-virus-the-past-doesn-t-predict-the-future>
- **Science Education and Fellowship Programs**
 Gains in the Education of Mathematics and Science (GEMS): GEMS is a one week hands-on program available throughout the summer for rising 7th through 12th graders aimed at involving and engaging young people with STEM early in their academic careers. The program uses a multi-disciplinary educational curriculum with age-appropriate, hands-on activities in a teaching laboratory. Students may choose either a biomedical or engineering focus. GEMS has worked with nearly 7000 middle and high school students over the past two decades. Visit the GEMS website for more information.
[Applications for Summer 2021 at WRAIR are available here until 30 April.](#)

Thanks for Reading this issue!

Sincerely the CE Team,
 Liza Dawson, Chief of Bioethics, Institutional Review Board Chair, and Research Integrity Officer
 Beza Gebrehana, Community Engagement Lead Coordinator
 Jael Kagai, Community Engagement Assistant
 Cortni Romaine, Research Integrity Specialist
 Jake Earl, Bioethicist

Ask the Experts

Offers you the opportunity to ask questions about topics related to COVID vaccines and Clinical Research. Submit your question using the link below and we will get our team will get back to you with a response.



[Submit your question for "Ask the Experts"](#)