

## **PEELING BACK THE LAYERS OF A PANDEMIC** Nebraska's Response



# Medical Student Update

## UNMC COVID Relief: Building Student-Led, Community-Engaged Partnerships to Address COVID-19 in Nebraska

By Keely Reidelberger, Rohan Khazanchi, Taylor Kratochvil, Hannah Tandon, RemyGrace Sass, Gabi Brumfield (UNMC medical students)

The COVID-19 pandemic caused wide-sweeping changes to undergraduate medical education across the country. Given the postponement of clinical clerkships, faculty at UNMC leveraged institutional expertise in biopreparedness and public health to develop a virtual “Impacts of Infectious Diseases” course. This course included a service learning requirement to encourage student engagement in pandemic response initiatives. As medical students invested in serving our local community, we established UNMC COVID Relief (UNMC CoRe; <https://www.unmccore.org/>) to centralize this surge of student interest in volunteer efforts. In UNMC CoRe’s beginning stages, our leadership team developed a robust database of student volunteers to provide child and pet care services for residents and fellows. After formally being integrated into the UNMC Incident Command System,<sup>1</sup> we served as a point of contact for UNMC’s administration and community organizations to address systems-level needs as they arose. Further collaborations with the NMA, Metro Omaha Medical Society (MOMS), and other local and national partners were similarly integral to amplifying our scope and impact. We have been thrilled to share our work with medical students and educators around the country through the AAMC’s *iCollaborative* Collection and in the international journal



Child and Pet Care



Community Mask Sewing



Personal Protective Equipment Collection & Distribution

*Medical Education.*<sup>1,2</sup>

As of June 22nd, UNMC CoRe’s initiatives and outcomes include the following:

*Child and Pet Care:* With childcare facility closures and increasingly variable work schedules, healthcare providers at UNMC were facing challenges beyond the confines of the hospital. In response, a swell of student volunteers stepped forward to provide in-home child and pet care services to house officers in need. After our initial roll-out, we quickly expanded the initiative to residents, fellows, physicians, and frontline allied health professionals. To date, we have served 17 families during this difficult and unpredictable time.

*Community Mask Sewing:* UNMC CoRe recruits and oversees community volunteers for Nebraska Medicine’s Mask Sewing Program. In addition to overseeing 300 active sewing volunteers, over 70 students are involved in kit assembly, delivery of materials to sewing volunteers’ homes, and inventorying returned masks before they are distributed to hospital staff and visitors. To further leverage the expertise gained from managing this program, UNMC CoRe’s leaders recently partnered with MOMS and Nebraska Masks for Medicine to start a new program. With support from the Sherwood Foundation and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska, this effort has a goal of sewing 40,000 masks for underserved children and their families served by the Omaha Public School District’s grab-and-go meal assistance service.

*Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)*

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### UNMC COVID Relief: Building Student-Led, Community-Engaged Partnerships to Address COVID-19 in Nebraska (continued)

*Collection & Distribution:* As needs for PPE grew among hospitals and clinics in Omaha and throughout the Greater Nebraska area, UNMC CoRe volunteers responded by gathering supplies from local businesses, community donations, and Nebraska Medicine. National PPE initiatives, including GetUsPPE and MedSupplyDrive, also donated thousands of face shields and KN95 masks for distribution across our state. Collaborative efforts with MOMS, the NMA, and the Health Center Association of Nebraska (representing the state's Federally Qualified Health Centers) enhanced our ability to conduct needs assessments and broadened our distribution to high-need areas. To date, we have supplied over 40,000 units of PPE to 131 clinics and hospitals.

*Assisting Local Public Health Departments:* In recent weeks, our organization joined forces with the UNMC College of Public Health's Student Response Team. The effort pairs public health departments with a multidisciplinary team of UNMC volunteers to support contact tracing, data analysis, social media monitoring, and COVID-19 call center coverage throughout the state. This partnership has positioned our program to effectively respond if public health departments experience increased need as the pandemic evolves.

It has been a privilege for our team to help facilitate the rapid growth of UNMC CoRe over the last few months. We look forward to continuing our relationships with the NMA, MOMS, and our incredible local and national partners in the coming months, as our state continues along the path toward healing from the COVID-19 pandemic. □

#### REFERENCES:

1. Kratochvil TJ, Khazanchi R, Sass RM, Caverzagie KJ (2020), Aligning Student-Led Initiatives and Incident Command System Resources in a Pandemic. *Med Educ*. doi:10.1111/medu.14265
2. Kratochvil TJ, Sass RM, Tandon H, Reidelberger K, Khazanchi R (2020). "UNMC COVID Relief (CoRe): Child & Pet Care, Community Mask Sewing, and Personal Protective Equipment Distribution." AAMC *iCollaborative*. Available at: [tiny.cc/AAMCCoRe](http://tiny.cc/AAMCCoRe).

## Necrology

through 8/31/2020

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