

Anchored in Our Community



UMass Memorial Health Care – committed to improving the environmental, financial and physical health of the people of Central Massachusetts.

September 2020

◆ FROM THE DESK OF ERIC DICKSON, MD

President and CEO, UMass Memorial Health Care



Because of the recent national attention on systemic racism that has gone unaddressed in our country for far too long, I felt that my message for this issue of our Anchor Mission newsletter should focus on what the UMass Memorial community is doing as a system to address racial disparities in health care and beyond.

The COVID-19 crisis underscored existing health disparities with the disease disproportionately affecting Hispanic/Latino, Black/African-American and low-income communities nationwide, and in our own service area. Early on in the pandemic, we launched a COVID education outreach project using our UMass Memorial Ronald McDonald Care Mobile team to share educational materials in six languages, demonstrate proper handwashing techniques and face mask use, and answer questions. This project served more than 2,000 people in 20 neighborhoods and helped us decrease the spread of this terrible virus in Central Massachusetts. You'll read more about this program inside this issue.

We also stood up a Health Equity Taskforce to focus on better understanding and addressing the root causes and impact of these disparities, and developing a short-term and long-term health equity strategy for UMass Memorial. This focus, coupled with continuing our Anchor Mission work, will redouble our efforts to help transform our communities.

There's a strong link between our Anchor Mission and the work of our Health Equity Taskforce. At its core, our Anchor Mission work has been focused on addressing barriers to those who are socially and economically disadvantaged. Racism is a major factor in the chronic inequality that we see in our communities. When we target more hiring from underserved neighborhoods and focus our investments and purchasing in communities of color, as we are doing now, we're not only investing in the communities we serve, but also are joining with them to combat these shocking inequities.

I recognize there's more work to be done to understand and address deep-rooted health care disparities and systemic racism. At times, it may seem insurmountable. While we've been doing this work for many years, the journey to finally end this kind of racial injustice needs to start now, and it starts with all of us. ◆

ANCHOR MISSION STEERING COMMITTEE

◆ CO-CHAIRS

Douglas Brown

President, UMass Memorial Community Hospitals Inc. and Chief Administrative Officer, UMass Memorial Health Care

Cheryl Lapriore

Senior Vice President, Chief of Staff, Chief Marketing Officer, and President, UMass Memorial Health Ventures, UMass Memorial Health Care

◆ COMMUNITY BENEFITS DEPARTMENT

Monica Lowell

Vice President, Office of Community Health Transformation/Community Benefits, UMass Memorial Health Care

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

To provide feedback or request more information, email communications@umassmemorial.org.



UMassMemorial
Health Care

◆ DATA COLLECTION EFFORT AIMS TO IDENTIFY HEALTH INEQUITIES

While equitable health care for all patients has always been a goal at UMass Memorial Health Care, the COVID-19 pandemic shined an especially bright light on the topic when the state’s testing data revealed that the Hispanic population in Central Massachusetts was being hit exceptionally hard by the disease. With this knowledge in hand, a health equities team was convened to identify ways to bolster our data collection efforts and use this information to support our Anchor Mission work.

“The data we received from the state showed that COVID was affecting Massachusetts’ Hispanic population more than any other subset, particularly in Worcester,” said Jeanne Shirshac, Vice President of Health Policy and Public Programs, and Chief Financial Officer of the UMass Memorial Accountable Care Organization. Additionally, social vulnerability data provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which measures socioeconomic factors such as food and housing, placed some neighborhoods in UMass Memorial’s service area in the top 1% in the country for vulnerability. “This realization prompted us to improve our own data in

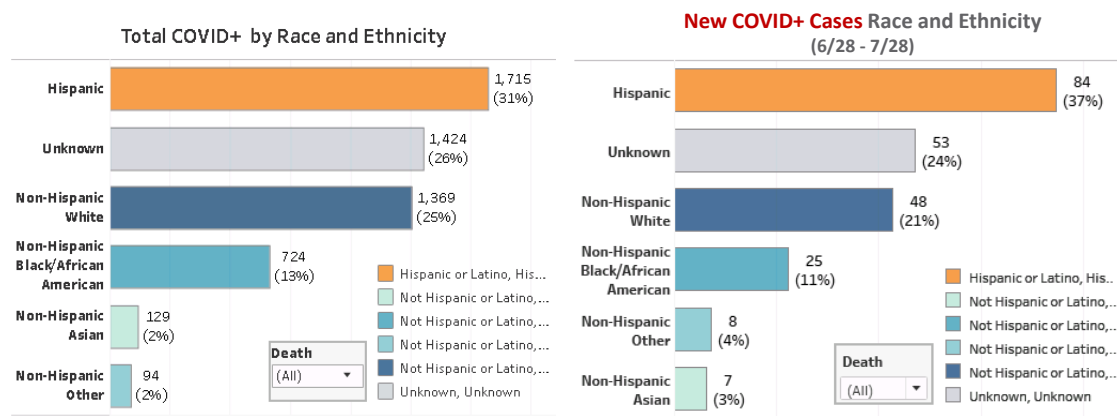
the hopes of identifying clusters of disparity or illness by neighborhood. By understanding the characteristics of that neighborhood that might be causing those concerns, we can strategically target those neighborhoods through our Anchor Mission efforts,” shared Jeanne.

To improve the accuracy and wholeness of our information, the team renewed our data collection efforts when asking patients a few questions about their race, ethnicity, and language preference at the point of scheduling an appointment, registration, or self-reporting via MyChart. “Now we’re using this data in ways that we never did. In addition to helping us identify and address inequities in our communities, this data also give us insight into how the care we’re providing in the hospital setting is received by our patients,” noted Eric Alper, MD, Chief Quality Officer and Chief Clinical Informatics Officer, UMass Memorial Health Care. “We’re looking at how race, ethnicity, and gender are impacting our care ratings, which help us understand where we need to change as we work to address systemic racism.”

“Combining this data is so powerful,” said Jeanne. “It helps drive what we can address and tells us where we need to target our outreach, education and support efforts to raise the health of these communities.” ◆

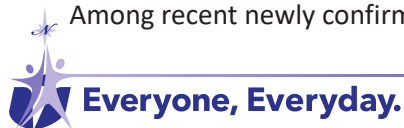
COVID-19 Positive Patients: Race and Ethnicity

Cases as of 7/28/2020: 5,469
(City of Worcester only)



In Worcester, **31%** of COVID+ patients are Hispanic and **13%** are Black/African American. Overall population in Worcester: Hispanic (**21%**) and Black/African American (**12%**). Among recent newly confirmed COVID+ cases, the majority is still Hispanic (**37%**).

Developed by UMMHC Office of Clinical Integration



A slide developed by the Office of Clinical Integration at UMass Memorial Health Care shows that the majority of COVID-19-positive patients in Worcester were Hispanic.

◆ CARE MOBILE PUTS FEET ON THE STREET TO CONQUER COVID-19

Knowing your community and how to organize for a quick and effective response when it's under threat: that's what the coronavirus crisis has revealed about the team operating the UMass Memorial Ronald McDonald Care Mobile.

Shifting gears this spring from providing preventive medical and dental care to distributing COVID-19 prevention kits, the Care Mobile team was nimble and creative in its efforts to block the virus's spread in Worcester's vulnerable neighborhoods.

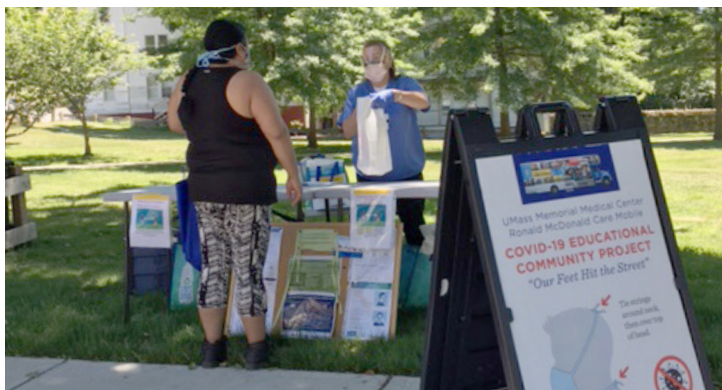
UMass Memorial's Monica Lowell, Vice President of Community Health Transformation and Community Benefits, and Kim Reckert, Community Relations and Community Health Manager, checked their contact lists, made connections, found funding, and drew from lessons learned in prior crises to orchestrate the successful deployment of health care colleagues, agency allies, and Latino Education Institute volunteers for the challenge at hand.

"This seemed like déjà vu," said Monica. "I recalled the HIV epidemic when we went into the community and provided education and condoms. We're doing it again, this time with masks and hand sanitizer!"

Kim and Michelle Muller, FNP, Care Mobile Manager, knew this opportunity for large-scale outreach needed to include information about housing and food assistance, insurance enrollment, and hotlines for mental health care, domestic violence, and suicide prevention. "In a crisis like this one, people become more vulnerable in many ways," Kim said.

As operation "COVID-19 Care Mobile: Feet on the Street" unfolded, quick thinking capitalized on people's skills and insights. The team sewed masks; pinpointed key locations for kit distribution; and identified smaller populations for outreach with translated materials, including those speaking Nepali and Swahili. Since April, the team has distributed nearly 6,000 kits in 20 neighborhoods.

Meanwhile, coronavirus testing in Marlborough and Worcester, the latter supported by funding from the Greater Worcester Community Foundation and Worcester Together, is focused on those communities that the UMass Memorial health disparities data workgroup identifies as most at risk. ◆



UMass Memorial Ronald McDonald Care Mobile Outreach Liaison, Nardy Vega, shares COVID-19 safety kits with a local woman at a recent community education event.

◆ RECOGNIZING THE IMPERATIVE TO IMPROVE HEALTH

When the American Hospital Association announced that UMass Memorial Medical Center was a nationwide finalist for its prestigious Foster G. McGaw Prize, it wasn't just acknowledging 12 months worth of effort to improve health in Central Massachusetts. The recognition – UMass Memorial's second in three years – affirmed the organization's decades-long, strategic imperative to promote community well-being with innovation, collaboration and an eye toward sustainability.



Doug Brown, President, UMass Memorial Community Hospitals, Inc. and Chief Administrative Officer, UMass Memorial Health Care, standing center, presents UMass Memorial's Anchor Mission work and numerous investment projects during the Foster McGaw site visit in February.

"We've had a long-standing commitment from our Board of Trustees and system CEOs to establish strategies that build strong coalitions with community and public health partners," said Cheryl Lapriore, Senior Vice President, Chief of Staff, Chief Marketing Officer, and President, UMass Memorial Health Ventures, UMass Memorial Health Care. "The McGaw recognition is as much an accomplishment for our partners as it is for us."

"McGaw is indeed a celebration of the community," said Monica Lowell, Vice President, Office of Community Health Transformation/Community Benefits, UMass Memorial Health Care, as she reflected on the presentation earlier this year to the visiting McGaw Prize panel. "In a way, the event captured the totality of our work and that our long-standing, and new partnerships are strong," she said.

Cheryl describes Monica and Kim Reckert, Community Relations and Community Health Manager at the Medical Center, as "the strategists our organization tapped for our initiatives," starting with a foundational Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) over a decade ago. A groundbreaking home ownership program quickly followed. The system continued its trendsetting when it developed one of the first Community Health Improvement Plans (CHIP), which aims to achieve health equity for our communities.

"Our approach is to meet the community where it is, connect the dots and engage people," Monica explained. "But we don't come in with the answers. We listen and then together, work to meet the need." Because needs are ongoing, and funding is always tight, ensuring a program's sustainability is essential. "We leverage resources and build strong infrastructures with the long-term goal of sustainability, so our partners can take it from there," said Kim. ◆

◆ COMMUNITY SNAPSHOTS

CARE MOBILE OUTREACH EXTENDS TO COMMUNITY HOSPITALS – As part of the community education efforts this past spring and summer, staff from the UMass Memorial Ronald McDonald Care Mobile visited the Country Cupboard Food Pantry and the Countryside Village – Affordable Community in Marlborough. In an effort to inform community members about the coronavirus and promote the importance of safe practices to slow the spread of the illness, the Care Mobile team provided COVID-19 safety kits, including informational materials, masks, a File of Life and reusable grocery bags.



Rafael Gonzalez, left, UMass Memorial Care Mobile Clinic Assistant Coordinator, and Stacy Hampson, RDH, Care Mobile Dental Program Coordinator, hand out COVID-19 safety kits in Marlborough.

MOBILE MARKET ADDRESSES FOOD INSECURITIES DURING PANDEMIC – UMass Memorial HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital recently partnered with Growing Places during the COVID-19 pandemic, to impact local communities hardest hit by food insecurities. Through a grant from their determination of needs funds, HealthAlliance-Clinton provided \$5,000 of support to augment the purchase of produce from local farmers to supplement Growing Places' mobile food market. The impact of COVID-19 provided a unique challenge for many families in the region, as well as for Growing Places as donated food became increasingly difficult to secure.

Growing Places mobile food market traveled to five different locations in Clinton, Fitchburg and Leominster focusing on communities where residents experience the greatest health disparities related to food insecurity and poor nutrition. One unique aspect of Growing Places mobile market is the ability to accept nutrition benefits, including SNAP/HIP, WIC, and Senior Farmers Market Coupons, allowing residents to stretch their food budget during the crisis.



CHL PROGRAM GOES BEYOND TRADITIONAL CARE TO ASSIST FAMILIES AFFECTED BY COVID – Community Healthlink's (CHL's) Victim Services program provides therapy, advocacy, safety planning, and crisis intervention for the following: survivors of crime; family members and loved ones of homicide victims; and children and family members who have witnessed domestic violence and/or community violence. At any given time, the team serves approximately 300 families and individuals throughout Central Massachusetts.



Christine Sauck, PhD, Director of Victim Services, holds a notecard and grocery gift card that will be sent to a family in need.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Victim Services team learned that some of the families they served were struggling to make ends meet – in part, because many were laid off from their jobs when businesses in the area were temporarily closed. With emergency funding from the Massachusetts Office of Victim Assistance (MOVA), the CHL Victim Services team purchased 55 grocery gifts

cards – valued at \$180 each – and distributed them to their client families who were most in need of financial support. The team's clients were incredibly grateful and credited the Victim Services team with helping them make it through a very challenging time.

UMASS MEMORIAL ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH CREATIVE HUB WORCESTER – On August 31, UMass Memorial joined with the City of Worcester and Creative Hub Worcester (CHW) to officially announce the health care system's seven-year, \$500,000 investment in the Creative Hub project as part of our Anchor Mission initiative. The Creative Hub will transform the former Boys Club, a historic building located at 2 Ionic Ave. in Worcester, into a multi-use arts center serving an under-resourced community – with a focus on at-risk youth and local working artists from the Main South area of the City. The dream of CHW Co-founders, Laura Marotta and Stacy Lord, is to transform the space to include rentable event space, maker space, and studios that will help to generate income to support programming, such as classes, art exhibitions, and after-school programs.



Pictured standing on the rooftop event space of Creative Hub Worcester, left to right: Doug Brown, President, UMass Memorial Community Hospitals and Chief Administrative Officer; Laura Marotta, Co-founder Creative Hub; Stacy Lord, Co-founder Creative Hub; Edward M. Augustus, Jr., City Manager, Worcester; and Eric Dickson, MD, President and CEO, UMass Memorial Health Care.

◆ UMASS MEMORIAL HEALTH CARE

UMass Memorial Health Care is the largest not-for-profit health care system in Central Massachusetts with more than 14,000 employees and 1,700 physicians, many of whom are members of UMass Memorial Medical Group. Our member hospitals and entities include UMass Memorial HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital, UMass Memorial – Marlborough Hospital, UMass Memorial Medical Center and UMass Memorial – Community Healthlink, our behavioral health agency. With our teaching and research partner, the University of Massachusetts Medical School, our extensive primary care network and our cancer, diabetes, heart and vascular, orthopedic and surgery programs, UMass Memorial delivers safe, high-quality and compassionate care. Visit www.umassmemorialhealthcare.org.

To find a physician in your community, call 855-UMASS-MD (855-862-7763). ◆