National Institutes of Health Combats COVID-19 With Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics (RADX) Program

The NIH recently launched RADX, a large scale research effort to speed innovation in the development, commercialization, and deployment of technologies for COVID-19 testing with the aim of making millions of tests available per week. RADX funding supports both innovative approaches and research that seeks to improve existing technologies, and aims to provide rapid, widespread access to testing. RADX consists of four programs: RADx<sup>sm</sup>Tech, RADx<sup>sm</sup>Underserved Populations (RADxUP), RADx<sup>sm</sup>Radical (RADx-rad), and RADx<sup>sm</sup>Advanced Technology Platforms (RADx-ATP), with multiple funding opportunities available for each component.

RADxTech focuses on developing new in-home and clinic tests with a focus on speeding development and commercialization of testing technologies. It expands upon the existing Point-of-Care Technologies Network which was previously established by the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering, and matches investigators working on rapid testing technologies with technical, business, and manufacturing experts.

RADxUp seeks to understand the underlying factors that cause disparities in rate of infection and outcomes in underserved and vulnerable populations, as minority communities are known to be disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Funding through RADxUP will support clinical trials and encourage program sites to collaborate with community partners to identify and address their needs.

RADx-rad supports innovative approaches, like rapid detection devices and home based testing, that address gaps in the current testing climate, or projects which optimize existing testing technologies to make them more usable, accessible, or accurate.

RADxATP focuses on scaling up and improving existing technologies or those nearing FDA approval. RADxATP projects will establish regional testing hubs, and speed the development of tests for multiple infectious diseases.

Together, RADX program innovations have the potential to combat the global pandemic and improve public health.
There are several organizations at the University of Pittsburgh that provide instructional opportunities for the research community, as well as national organizations that provide webinars and host websites with relevant updates on all things research related.

Locally, the Human Research Protection Office and the Office of Sponsored Programs both offer ongoing training regarding research related issues, with the latter also offering consultation regarding finding funding via Finding Funding Workshops and individual consultations. The University of Pittsburgh Health Sciences Library System also has ongoing training on diverse topics like using PubMed, developing data management plans, and using electronic lab notebooks (LabArchives). CTSI is also working to transition the Responsible Conduct of Research Series, which features many presentations relevant to all aspects of research, and the Orientation to Research Fundamentals workshop, geared to new coordinators or those looking for a refresher on topics relevant to research, to an online format. Stay tuned to our website for updates.

Nationally, the Center for Information & Study on Clinical Research Participation (CISCRP) is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating and informing the public, patients, medical/research communities, the media, and policy makers about clinical research participation. CISCRP offers many free webinars on their website for both research professionals and research participants. Recent presentations have included Maintaining Clinical Trial Continuity in the Age of COVID-19: the Patient Perspective and Building a Clinical Trial Website that Engages Patients and the Public. They also work on the participant-facing side to help people find clinical trials and become better educated about research participation.

The Trial Innovation Network (TIN), a collaboration between Clinical and Translational Science Award sites across the country, also provides online education via webinars which are archived on the TIN website. Recently featured topics include using social media to recruit participants, recruitment in the time of COVID-19, and guidance and tips on developing an effective recruitment plan. View past webinars or register for upcoming webinars for more information.

Public Responsibility in Medicine and Research (PRIM&R) is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing high ethical standards of conduct in research and medicine through education, professional certification, programs public policy initiatives, and community building. PRIM&R offers many educational opportunities; some require membership or are fee-based, while others are free of charge. In collaboration with Human Research Protection Office at Washington University in St. Louis, they created More than Meets the IRB: A joint initiative of Washington University in St. Louis and PRIM&R, a series of educational podcasts related to research ethics that are free to the public. PRIM&R also offers two credentialing programs: Certified IRB Professional and Certified Professional in IACUC Administration, and publishes the Research Ethics Digest, which features articles that highlight new research and scholarship related to research ethics in both human subject and animal research.

Funding Opportunities

For information on COVID-19 related funding, a curated list can be found on the CTSI website. While the pandemic has created an urgent need for COVID-19 research, discovery in other disciplines remains ongoing and important as well. Other opportunities can be found below.

**Pilot Studies to Test the Initiation of a Mental Health Family Navigator Model to Promote Early Access, Engagement and Coordination of Needed Mental Health Services for Children and Adolescents**

The National Institute of Mental Health seeks applicants who plan to develop and pilot test the effectiveness of a family navigator model in improving mental health in the pediatric/adolescent population. The family navigator model is defined as one in which healthcare professionals or paraprofessionals work closely with families and treatment providers to promote engagement and optimize care. More here.

**Heart to Heart Grant**

The Alpha Phi Foundation places special emphasis on women’s heart health and sponsors this award annually to encourage research and education to lessen the impact of heart disease in women. More here.

**Pitt Momentum Funds**

Pitt Provost Ann E. Cudd and Senior Vice Chancellor For Research Rob A. Rutenbar joined forces to streamline internal funding opportunities into a large-scale development fund, the Pitt Momentum Funds. Funding has a three tiered structure and encourages research in STEM, Health and Life Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, and Preventing Sexual Misconduct. This funding encourages multi-disciplinary collaborations to successfully pursue external funding. More here.

**Elucidating the Role of Nutrition in Care and Development of Preterm Infants**

The National Institutes of Health and the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development seek research focused on filling gaps in knowledge regarding nutritional care of pre-term infants, as there are currently no uniform standards. More here.
**Regulatory Notes | New COVID-19 Related Training Module and Webinars Released**

Research has gradually restarted at Pitt, and the fall semester will see an increase in the number of people on campus as students and faculty return for classes. The Collaborative Institutional Training Institute (CITI) and the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) joined forces to design a new training module, **COVID-19: Back to Campus (Fall 2020)**, to provide guidance on the safe return to campus during the COVID-19 pandemic. The course provides an overview of COVID-19, prevention strategies, recommended laboratory practices, and other points to consider as university and research communities move forward in resuming on-campus operations. Supplemental modules focus on topics related to research with human subjects, animal care and use, and working with patients who may be infected or suspected with COVID-19.

To access this course, log in to the Pitt CITI website, [CITI.Pitt.edu](https://CITI.Pitt.edu), using your Pitt Passport credentials or HSConnect username; click View Courses, and at the bottom of the next page, Add Course. **Note that this module does not replace any other mandatory COVID-19 training required by the University of Pittsburgh or your department.**

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**CTSI Updates | Products of Pittsburgh Podcast Returns**

After a three month hiatus due to COVID-19, the Products of Pittsburgh podcast is returning in August. On Products of Pittsburgh, interviewers speak with Pittsburgh based innovators, scientists, and community leaders to learn about the work that is their passion, and the journey that led them to it.

The first guest on the newly reactivated podcast is Dr. Ravi Patel, PharmD, the Lead Innovation Advisor for School of Pharmacy. Dr. Patel talks about his path coming to Pitt with his major undecided and exploring the health sciences, his transition from student to teacher, the role of human-centered design in research and healthcare, adapting his research in our ever-changing environment, and how the Pitt+Me registry has helped his recruitment efforts. You can hear his story [here](#).

**Community PARTners Core: Lunch and Learn, Dinner and Dialogue Series Go Remote**

The Community PARTners Core at CTSI works to connect investigators with community members and organizations through partnerships designed to promote diversity and equity as a way to produce inclusive research. Monthly, staff with the PARTners Core, the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, and UPMC’s Center for Equity and Inclusion craft relevant health topics and research dissemination by pairing University of Pittsburgh researchers with Community partners on the Take Charge of Your Health Page in the New Pittsburgh Courier, a historic newspaper that focuses on issues affecting the Black community.

In partnership with the Urban League, Community PARTners presents educational opportunities through a Lunch and Learn and Dinner and Dialogue series. In association with the monthly Take Charge of Your Health page, the Lunch and Learn brings researchers and community organizations from the Courier together for a meaningful exchange of ideas.

Expanding on the Lunch and Learn, three times a year, researchers expand on the health topic covered in the New Pittsburgh Courier during a Dinner and Dialogue event. A panel of community and university leaders and experts join the researcher to translate their knowledge about the chosen topic to a larger group of community stakeholders. Both Lunch and Learn and Dinner and Dialogue focus on actionable steps to lead to more inclusive and equitable research. As a way to disrupt university-community hierarchy, researchers are asked to limit their slides, and address their data in plain language to promote a true dialogue with valued, reciprocal exchange with community members in attendance.

Formerly, these opportunities for dialogue were held at the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, community spaces, or the Homewood Community Engagement Center. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, they have been transitioned to a virtual format.

For more information about attending these educational opportunities, please contact the PARTners at [bos23@pitt.edu](mailto:bos23@pitt.edu) to get on list for the e-newsletter, the sharing platform distributing Zoom links to dialogue opportunities.
Dear CTSI,

Hello Readers! This space is reserved for your questions. If you have a research question you would like to see answered in print, please send it to cliftons@pitt.edu and look for answers in our next edition.

Dear CTSI,

Question: What is required in terms of protecting our study team and research participants when returning to in-person visits?

Answer: The Department of Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) has detailed information regarding this issue, and is an excellent source of information. General recommendations include using face coverings, maintaining social distance when possible, frequent disinfection of office/lab surfaces, and both staff and participant monitoring for symptoms/elevated temperature/travel history before proceeding with appointments.

The kind of PPE used/precautions taken will vary to some degree based on the type of research that is being conducted; there are some research procedures, for example, that don’t allow the possibility of social distancing and require more protective PPE that a face covering. EH&S guidelines provide several detailed tables to help researchers understand requirements, as well as a sample screening form for use with participants for symptom monitoring. It is highly recommended that researchers use this guidance in determining what infection control measures to implement.

Questions for us?

We’d love to hear from you.

Upcoming Virtual Events

Finding QI Research
Presented by the University of Pittsburgh Health Sciences Library System
Wednesday, September 9, 2020; asynchronous, online session
More here

Finding Funding Workshop
Presented by the Office of Sponsored Programs
Monday, September 14, 2020 10 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
More here

Practical and Ethical Considerations for Single IRB Review
Presented by the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP)
Thursday, September 17, 2020 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
More here

Improve Patient Comprehension, Engagement, and Retention with eConsent
Presented by The Center for Information and Study on Clinical Research Participation (CISCRP)
Recorded webinar, viewable here