Resource Reminders

COVID-19 Rapid Response Requests

Since the start of the pandemic, Texas legislators have expressed the need for access to accurate information in a timely manner from experts in the field. As a result, the Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration (TX RPC) Project has created multiple reports and/or one-pagers using Texas data on public health topics of interest expressed by Texas legislators. If you would like to request additional information on a public health topic related to the upcoming legislative session, please complete the following form.

ACCESS FORM HERE

The Texas RPC Project resources are available on our website. We hope these resources are valuable to your respective offices.

- **TX RPC Health Policy Resources** (resources available to policymakers to provide facts and evidence on health-related topics)
- **Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living Webinars** (includes COVID-19 specific webinars)
- **TX RPC Newsletters Archive**
- **Texas Legislative Bill Tracker**
- **Texas Child Health Status Reports and Toolkits**

Highlights from TX RPC Members Conducting COVID-19 Research

Comparing COVID-19 Vaccines: Pfizer/BioNTech vs. Moderna

Shreela Sharma, PhD, RD, LD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Houston
Katelyn Jetelina, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Dallas

This graphic describes and compares the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, and is available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Mandarin. It can be downloaded and distributed to the public free of charge.

Key Takeaways:
- Both vaccines are mRNA vaccines, meaning they provide "instructions" for our cells to make a piece of protein that is found on the surface of the virus that causes COVID-19. Our body recognizes this protein as "foreign" and will
build an immune response that protects us from COVID-19.
- To gain maximum protection and ensure "memory" immunity, you must get the second dose.
- Vaccine side effects are a sign that the immune system is responding as it should and do not mean that the vaccine is unsafe.

Advocates worry vaccines will be out of reach for Black and Hispanic neighborhoods devastated by COVID-19
Dennis Andrulis, PhD, MPH - UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin

TX RPC Network Member Dr. Andrulis was quoted in a Texas Tribune article about COVID-19 and the disproportionate impact on minority communities. Advocates for minority communities are worried that they will have more trouble accessing vaccinations because of where vaccination sites are located. Dr. Andrulis stated that health officials should actively search for places like churches or community centers, which have been used as coronavirus testing sites, as vaccine distribution sites in underserved communities.

Key Takeaways:
- In Harris, Dallas and Travis counties, there are fewer vaccine distribution sites in majority Hispanic and Black areas.
- COVID-19 and the issues around access to care and the distribution of vaccines has been historically embedded in inequity.
- People in underserved communities do not often have vehicles and must rely on public transportation.

Are two face masks better than one when it comes to slowing the spread of COVID-19?
Catherine Troisi, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Houston

TX RPC Network Member Dr. Troisi spoke to KHOU-TV Channel 11 about wearing two face masks. “If you have a mask that is already double-layered and has a pocket you can put a filter in, it is probably not necessary to double mask,” Dr. Troisi said. “If, however, you have a thin mask, then double masking might be a good idea.”

Key Takeaways:
- No matter what kind of mask a person wears, it is always better than no mask.
New Variants Mean We Need to Vaccinate Quickly
Katelyn Jetelina, PhD, MPH - UTHealth School of Public Health in Dallas

The emergence of three more contagious variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 has created a race to get as many people vaccinated as soon as possible. TX RPC Network Member Dr. Jetelina was quoted by North Texas NPR station KERA about the need to speed up vaccination efforts in order to keep new COVID-19 variants at bay. “We can get a mutation today or in a couple of months, and it will be able to completely escape the vaccine,” she said. “And so all of these people would have to get a new vaccine and that is worst case scenario.”

Key Takeaways:
- The longer the virus circulates without herd immunity the more likely a variant will come along.
- All three of the more contagious variants have been found in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Only one of them, the UK variant, has been confirmed in Texas.

Your Local Epidemiologist
Katelyn Jetelina, PhD, MPH - UTHealth School of Public Health in Dallas

TX RPC Network Member Dr. Jetelina was interviewed by NPR Petrie Dish host Bonnie Petrie about her website, Your Local Epidemiologist. Dr. Jetelina writes about various public health topics surrounding COVID-19 and the pandemic that are evidence based, data driven and in a timely manner. Her YLE posts have reached over 150,000 people and makes it easier for them to understand the firehose of the COVID-19 information by translating science into layman’s terms. During her interview, Petrie asks her several questions about the new variants and more.

Key Takeaways:
- Q: We are closely watching the three variants that have been found in the U.S. The one we’ve known about the longest is B.11777 that was detected in U.K. There are also variants detected in Brazil and South Africa. Why are we paying attention to these three variants closely?
- A: These three variants have mutations on their spike protein. The spike protein is the key into our cells. If the virus figures out how to make a smarter key to get into our cells quicker, we need to know that information. The mRNA vaccines look like they work against the U.K. variant. For the South
African variant, the vaccines will still work but will not be as effective. However, we are very happy to hear during this past week that it will work against it.

- **Q:** According to the CDC, these new variants are more contagious. What does it mean for our lives and the precaution to take?
- **A:** For the U.K. variant, it is more transmissible. We always say that if you’re in close contact with someone for more than 15 minutes, your likelihood of getting infected goes up exponentially. Well now, we have to divide that number by 2 so it’s more about 7 to 8 minutes. It really underlies the importance of wearing a mask, washing your hands, social distancing, and getting the vaccine.

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**LISTEN TO THE NPR INTERVIEW**

**VIEW YOUR LOCAL EPIDEMIOLOGIST WEBSITE**

**TX RPC Partner Events**

**World Obesity Day Summit**

**Live Smart Texas**

**Thursday, March 4th, 2021**

Join Live Smart Texas as we observe World Obesity Day with a summit highlighting the impact of obesity and how we can work together to address its many root causes. Dr. Tom Farrey, Executive Director, Sports & Society Program at the Aspen Institute will be our keynote speaker. Dr. Farrey is dedicated to improving the world through sports. He founded the Sports & Society Program to convene leaders, facilitate dialogue and inspire solutions that can help sports serve the public interest. Two years later, Project Play, its signature initiative, was launched to help stakeholders build healthy communities.

After the Dr. Farrey’s presentation we will have members from Live Smart Texas share how Texans are addressing the obesity epidemic in our state, and the Partnership for a Healthy Texas will present on the “State of Obesity in Texas” plus their priorities for the 87th Texas Legislative Session.

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**REGISTER HERE**

**February is Active Classrooms Month!**

**Healthy Living Matters**

Research shows how much of an impact brain breaks and active learning can have on the way students feel, interact with others, and retain information. Throughout the month of February, you can participate in Active Classrooms month by
showcasing the ways your classrooms integrate physical activity into learning. Active Classrooms will also host a variety of webinars for Active Classrooms Month that may be of interest to you and your school communities.

**WATCH THE WEBINARS**

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**Walk to School Day!**
**Healthy Living Matters**

March 4, 2021 is World Obesity Day; the mission of this day is to increase awareness, encourage advocacy, improve policies and share experiences. Organizations and individuals throughout the world will be shining a light on the health issue of obesity on this day with different initiatives. In recognition of World Obesity Day, HLM is encouraging schools to host a "Walk to School Day!" Walk to School days are a great way to encourage families to get physical activity together, and also get kids minds ready to learn.

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**Recent Publications by TX RPC Researchers**

**Texas Population Publications**

**General:**


Pike, Jordyn; Marsden, David G.; Wilkinson, Anna V.; Lee, Miryoung; McCormick, Joseph B.; and Fisher-Hoch, Susan P. (2020) "Susceptibility, Trial, and Current Use Prevalence of Cigarettes, E-cigarettes, Cigars, Snus, and Snuff Products in Mexican-Americans Adults at Texas-Mexico Border." *Journal of Family Strengths* Vol. 20 : Iss. 1 , Article 8. Available at: [https://digitalcommons.library.tmc.edu/jfs/vol20/iss1/8](https://digitalcommons.library.tmc.edu/jfs/vol20/iss1/8)


the timing, how, and setting of youth physical activity. (In press: *Journal of Physical Activity & Health*)

**Central TX:**
https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-10128-2

**South TX:**


**Non-Texas Population Publications:**


**About the TX RPC Project**

The Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration (Texas RPC) Project is a non-partisan network that aims to bridge research and policy by supporting partnerships between child health researchers and policymakers.

[Learn more online.](#)

The Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration Project team and overall network are available to support Texas policymakers with informational requests or resources related to health topics, during the interim and throughout the 2021 Legislative Session.

**Contact Us**

For more information, email [TXRPCNetwork@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:TXRPCNetwork@uth.tmc.edu).

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