

June 2020

## Highlights from TX RPC Members Conducting COVID-19 Research

### How to Reopen K-12 Schools in the Safest Way Possible

Steven Kelder, PhD, MPH - UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin

Experts in public health, school architecture, and health education will discuss how schools can begin to plan for reopening and how that might look in action.

Dr. Steve Kelder, a professor of epidemiology with the UTHealth School of Public Health, will provide his “**5 Planning Rules for Opening Schools**”. **This will include:**

- How to make informed decisions, establish proper protocols, and maintain open communications.
- The webinar will then provide information about the **spatial implications of social distancing** and how to deal with reduced capacity from Vandana Nayak, AIA/LEED AP, Principal and Texas K-12 Regional Practice Leader and Angela Whitaker-Williams, AIA, Principal and Austin K-12 Practice Leader, from the architecture firm Perkins & Will.
- Shana Green, a former middle school P.E. teacher with CATCH Global Foundation, will discuss the **implications for physical activity and physical education** when space and student interactions must be limited.
- Best practices and free resources will be discussed that can support both in-school and distance-based physical activity and physical education.

Listen in on June 3rd at 12pm or view the recording on the Center website on June 4th [on our website](#).

[REGISTER FOR THE WEBINAR](#)

### Staying Safe on a Construction Site During COVID-19

William Perkison, MD, MPH, FACOEM - UTHealth School of Public Health in Houston

Dr. Perkison was recently a panelist on the webinar *Construction and COVID-19: Staying Safe on the Job Site* in collaboration with UTHealth School of Public Health, Houston Area Safety, and El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

#### Key takeaways:

- The basics of COVID-19 and prevention techniques to prevent spread at a construction site. Two prevention techniques mentioned 1) workers near or with others should wear NIOSH 95 respirators with proper fit and 2) conduct a safety stand-down/toolbox talk/tailgate training.
- Methods to reuse and sterilize PPE equipment properly are detailed.
- Practical ways of ensuring a clean and sanitized job site are provided.
- A review of resources available to construction site managers and employees during this

time are also part of this webinar.

[WATCH THE 1-HR WEBINAR RECORDING](#)

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## COVID-19: Update on Vaccine Development

Rekha Lakshmanan - The Immunization Partnership

At this webinar, **Peter Hotez**, fellow in disease and poverty, and **Rekha Lakshmanan**, contributing expert for the Center for Health and Biosciences and director of public policy at The Immunization Partnership in Houston, discussed the steps involved in developing an adequate, safe and effective vaccine; the current vaccine candidates in clinical trials; and why vaccines are an important tool in pandemic preparedness and response.

### Key Takeaways:

- Vaccine development is a time-intensive and rigorous scientific process that can take 10-15 years before it is available for the public.
- Vaccine candidates go through pre-clinical studies and then three phases of trials that grow in size and testing.
- The earliest we could see a COVID-19 vaccine is the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2021, which would be a world record in vaccine development.
- There are multiple ways we are decreasing the time involved in developing a vaccine including: scaling up manufacturing of vaccine candidates, testing multiple vaccine candidates at a time, and consolidating the trial phases.

[WATCH THE 1-HR WEBINAR RECORDING](#)

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## COVID-19 Reopen Texas: Return to Work the Right Way Webinar Series

Dave Douphrate, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Dallas

A seven-part complimentary statewide weekly industry-specific webinar series is being held to support our community in looking at what the immediate future holds for various Texas industries. Each webinar will feature a panel of specialists in occupational safety, occupational medicine, risk assessment, and guest panelists who are industry representatives experienced in return to work practices. Registration is required to join each weekly webinar.

- Retail Industry, May 20, 2020 (available post-webinar recording)
- Restaurant Industry, May 27, 2020 (available post-webinar recording)
- Construction & Manufacturing, June 3, 2020
- Places of Worship, June 10, 2020
- Promoting Mental Health and Employee Resilience, June 17, 2020
- Personal Care Establishments, June 24, 2020
- Other Healthcare Settings, July 1, 2020

[REGISTER FOR THE WEBINAR SERIES](#)

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## Resources from TX RPC Members and Organizations

Join the Citizen Science Movement to Track COVID-19 Symptoms and Spread

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

Dr. Balasubramanian and Dr. Sharma joined a national research project coalition led by Harvard University that collects data from the public and monitors COVID-19 symptoms through the app **COVID Symptom Tracker**.

**Key Takeaways:**

- Symptom tracking can estimate community spread.
- The app is already being used by millions of people in the US and across the world.
- The information gathered through the app is confidential and de-identified.
- The more people who use the app, the more helpful the data collected are to healthcare workers and public health researchers. Greater participation leads to quicker identification of COVID-19 symptoms and progression.

[LEARN ABOUT THE APP](#)

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## **Produce Voucher Program Provides Fruit and Vegetables to Families** **Shreela Sharma, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Houston**

Brighter Bites is a nonprofit that delivers fresh fruits and vegetables directly into families hands. Due to the pandemic, they have pivoted their business and have formed partnerships with H-E-B, Southeastern Grocers, and Winn-Dixie to provide \$25 produce vouchers bi-weekly to every Brighter Bites household for fruit and vegetable purchases.

**Key Takeaways:**

- It is important to keep mindful eating and nutrition as a regiment in our daily lives as it can lower the risk of obesity.
- The new Brighter Bites initiative ensures that low-income families do not have to forfeit their health or safety in order to survive the pandemic.
- Brighter Bites strives to maintain the same level of produce that low-income families were receiving post-pandemic.

[READ ABOUT THE CHANGE](#)

## **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 purpose of the TX RPC Newsletter is to provide relevant, data-driven health information to Texas policymakers. This newsletter will facilitate communication about the recent COVID-19 pandemic implications related to public health, as well as provide communication about other current health issues.

## **Contact Us**

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

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