

our

16TH ANNIVERSARY MAY 2021

HEALTH

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THE SCIENCE BEHIND VACCINES THEN AND NOW

IT TAKES SCIENCE & YOU TO MAKE IT WORK!

Families Find New Ways to Keep It Together During Pandemic

By Debra Orbuch Grayson, M.S., LMFT

The 2020 pandemic has challenged parents and children to get more comfortable with “being uncomfortable.” Grayson, a licensed marriage and family therapist, outlines the “ABCs” of managing change to help families build strength during these bumpy times. Visit kcourhealthmatters.com to read this exclusive.



Why Aren't There More Black Doctors?

According to Medscape Medical News, the percentage of doctors who are Black has barely changed in 120 years. A study on availability of Black doctors reveals Black patients are more likely to seek preventive care from Black doctors. Visit kcourhealthmatters.com to read the full story.

Watch Out for Cyber Scams

By Burton Kelso, Integral Computer Consultants

Did you know 99% of Cybercrime requires user interaction? A national or global crisis such as Covid-19 is fodder for cyber criminals who see an opportunity to take advantage of people. Visit kcourhealthmatters.com to learn what award-winning technology expert Burton Kelso recommends to protect your devices and finances.



Make Your Wishes Known

You've probably heard these three words – advance care planning – and perhaps wondered about the process. If so, do yourself and your loved ones a big favor by attending this webinar on May 20th! Sign up to receive hands-on support to complete the documents. Visit kcourhealthmatters.com to learn about the webinar on Advance Care Planning.

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COVER STORY

The Science Behind Vaccines, Then and Now

Vaccine research scientists work around the clock to find cures for the world's most puzzling and often deadly diseases. History shows that vaccines do work! Learn about the impact vaccines have had historically in protecting our health.

CAREERS IN VACCINE RESEARCH

A variety of careers are available in vaccine research and development, clinical trials, production, and distribution of vaccine to the public. Jobs are available in universities, industry, government laboratories, hospitals and not-for-profit organization laboratories. Many people start their career in vaccines with an undergraduate degree such as a Bachelor of Science (BS) in fields such as cellular and molecular biology, chemistry, biochemistry, or microbiology. Interested in this career, visit: <https://medicine.missouri.edu/departments> and <https://www.kumc.edu/research/research-technology-and-innovation.html>.

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MEDICINE

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Vaccine Approval and Acceptance are Key to Stopping Covid-19

By Tenille L. Lawson, PharmD, BCPS
Medical Writer

Now that vaccines are available, it is important to get them into the arms of as many people as possible. Learn which ones are being administered.

MISSOURI PUBLIC HEALTH

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The Health Department Addresses COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy, Distribution and Safety

By Michelle Pekarsky
Public Information Officer
Kansas City Health Department
City of Kansas City Missouri

Learn why the local health department prioritized building trust as the key to vaccination acceptance in communities of color.

KANSAS PUBLIC HEALTH

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Why Get Vaccinated?

By Barbara Mitchell
Public Information Officer
Johnson County Department of Health and Environment
Kansans are being urged to get vaccinated. Vaccines greatly reduce the risk of infection by working with the body's natural defenses to safely develop immunity to disease.

VACCINE PERSONAL STORY

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Pregnant Mom Looked Beyond Her Fears to Get the COVID-19 Vaccine

Local mom, seven months pregnant, knew she was at a higher risk for serious illness if she got COVID-19.



A New Start

It's not every day that we find ourselves grappling with a worldwide pandemic. Yet this is what we are experiencing—a health crisis of monumental proportions. The COVID-19 virus proved to be one of the world's most deadly viruses and brought attention to health disparities that impact people of color twice as much as whites. Health equity is taking center stage around the nation, and ZOOM conversations about vaccine hesitancy and ways in which to encourage trust in “the science” abound.

Happy to say, I received my vaccine without any complications. I encourage everyone to exhale during these crucial times. Let's do our part to shape a better society: hasten social and economic justice, police reform, health equity, diversity and inclusion.

Continue to recognize medical providers and first responder heroes in our community. Let's heed the federal government's call to get vaccinated, wear a mask, wash our hands and social distance at least 6 feet.

In this special issue on vaccines, we take a glance into the history of vaccines, past and present. And we also learn how public health agencies are equitably coordinating distribution of vaccines and helping people overcome their hesitancy of taking the vaccine.

We are all in this together. One day at a time and one step at a time we will move to the other side of this moment in history.

Stay well and enjoy this season of renewal.



Ruth Ramsey, Publisher and CEO

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WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU.

Send us your suggestions for health topics you would like to see in *Our Health Matters*. Also share what you enjoy about the magazine. Email us at info@kcourhealthmatters.com or write to us at

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On behalf of the Kansas City region we offer our sincere gratitude to the directors, staff, volunteers and others who serve our communities through our

LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES

Thank you for all the support you provide to our communities, especially your dedication and hard work during the COVID-19 pandemic. You have helped save countless lives.

LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENTS IN GREATER KANSAS CITY:

CASS COUNTY • CLAY COUNTY • JACKSON COUNTY • JOHNSON COUNTY
LEAVENWORTH COUNTY • MIAMI COUNTY • PLATTE COUNTY • RAY COUNTY
WYANDOTTE COUNTY • CITY OF INDEPENDENCE • CITY OF KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

We've made great progress, but the work is not done.

We can all support public health by continuing to take the virus seriously.
Take action to protect your family, your community and yourself.



WEAR
A MASK



AVOID
CROWDS



WASH HANDS
OFTEN



GET
VACCINATED



GET TESTED
IF YOU HAVE
SYMPTOMS

We're all in this together.

Vaccine Approvals and Acceptance Are Key to Stopping Covid-19

Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) causes the COVID-19 virus that has impacted the world. On December 11, 2020, the U.S. FDA issued the first emergency use authorization to allow a vaccine to be made available that prevents the COVID-19 virus.

The first vaccine given in the U.S. is made by Pfizer. The second vaccine is made by Moderna. A third option, Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine (J&J), is given as a one-dose vaccine. It is currently being held as of April 13, 2021 due to safety concerns.

If you have had COVID-19 before, you should still GET THE VACCINE.

Both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines use mRNA, or Messenger RNA. The mRNA tells your body that the COVID-19 virus is foreign and not good for your body. This triggers your body's immune system to fight the virus if it enters your body.

Key things to know about the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines:

- Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have over a 94% efficacy rate of preventing COVID-19. The higher the efficacy rate, the better the vaccine works.
- COVID-19 vaccines are given at no charge. No insurance card is required to get vaccinated.
- If you have had COVID-19 before, you should still get the

vaccine. Check with your doctor to see how long you should wait after quarantine if you currently have COVID-19.

- Both vaccines require two shots. The Pfizer vaccine is repeated in 3 weeks after the first shot, and the Moderna vaccine is repeated in one month. You should not get a second dose of the vaccine before this scheduled time. You are considered to be fully vaccinated two weeks after getting your second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine.
- If you must delay getting the second dose of the vaccine, you can get your second dose up to 6 weeks (42 days) after the first dose. There is limited information about getting the vaccine later than the recommended time frame.
- There is no information available about changing vaccines for the second dose. If you get the Pfizer vaccine for dose 1, you should get the Pfizer vaccine for dose 2. Same for Moderna.
- You should keep your vaccination card and take it with you when you get your second dose. This will help to make sure you receive the same vaccine the second time.
- All of the current vaccines make your body's immune system active. This can make you feel sick, especially after the second dose. You can report vaccine side effects to your doctor or through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) v-safe program, using your smartphone.
- Serious reactions are rare and should be reported to your medical team immediately.



By Tenille L. Lawson
PharmD, BCPS
Medical Writer

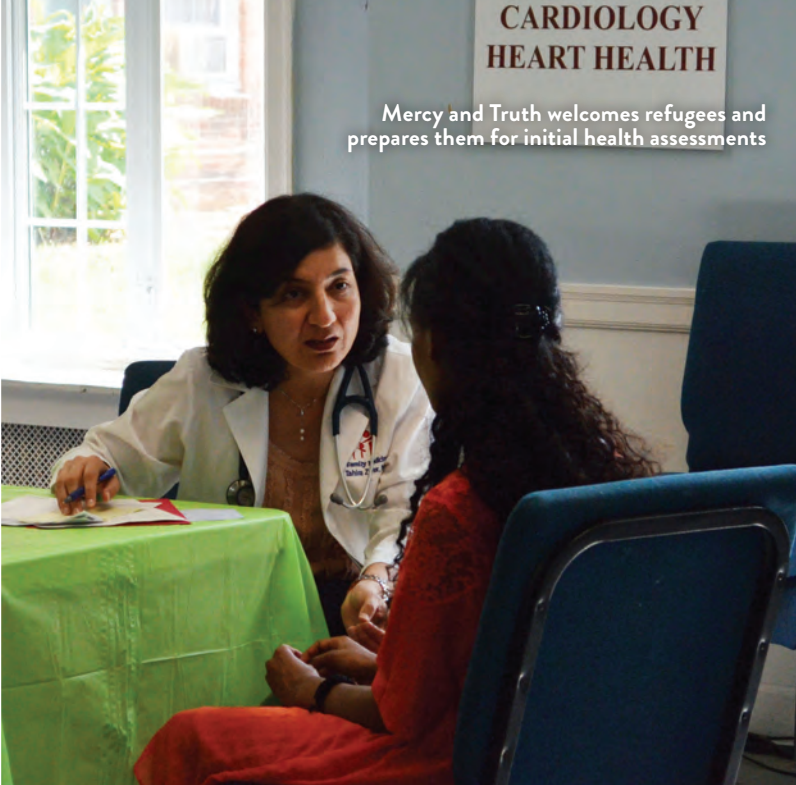
For the latest information about the COVID-19 vaccines, please visit:

- ▶ www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow
- ▶ covidvaccine.mo.gov/
- ▶ www.kansasvaccine.gov/158/Data

COVID-19 is a serious, life-threatening illness that can affect you, your family, and those you come in contact with every day. The CDC states the best way to prevent COVID-19 is to wear a mask, wash your hands, social distance at least 6 feet, and to get fully vaccinated. •

CARDIOLOGY HEART HEALTH

Mercy and Truth welcomes refugees and prepares them for initial health assessments



Geoffrey Kigenyi
Executive Director

MISSION POSSIBLE

COMPASSIONATE MEDICAL CARE FOR THE MOST IN NEED.

During an overseas medical missions trip, Cathy Gordon, founder, felt the call to start a medical mission back home in the Kansas City metropolitan area. She had worked with underserved populations in Mexico, Russia, China, India, Venezuela, Bolivia, Peru and Brazil. She returned to Kansas City with a commitment to ease the burden imposed by lack of access to quality healthcare for the uninsured.

Founded in 1995, Mercy and Truth Medical Missions (MTMM) provides healthcare for uninsured and underserved families in Johnson and Wyandotte Counties. Services are provided on a sliding scale and based on one's ability to pay.

Mercy and Truth also provides health assessments for refugees coming to the United States and internationally has sent over 75 medical mission teams to more than 50 different countries.

In 2021 Geoffrey Kigenyi, the Executive Director of Mercy and Truth, estimates they will serve a combined average of 10,000 patients between both clinic locations.

Types of services offered by the clinics include:

- Primary family care
- Full laboratory services
- Acute and chronic care
- Immunizations
- Preventive healthcare and education
- School and sports physicals
- Colonoscopies
- Early Detection Works Program for Women

To qualify for services at a reduced rate (sliding scale) a copy of at least two pay stubs or other financial verification is required.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Mercy & Truth Medical Missions accepts monetary donations, medical supplies and equipment to meet the needs of the families they serve.



MERCY & TRUTH
MEDICAL MISSIONS

For more information, contact Mercy and Truth Medical Missions www.mercyandtruth.com

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MidAmerica Rehabilitation Hospital (MARH) has earned The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval® for Disease-Specific Care Certification in stroke rehabilitation.

Throughout the pandemic, MidAmerica Rehabilitation Hospital (MARH) has remained a safe, effective and fully functioning rehabilitation center. MARH is the Gold Standard for providing quality and technologically advanced rehabilitation care for patients impacted by stroke, spinal cord injury, brain injury, amputations, Parkinson's disease, peripheral neuropathy, critical illness and trauma.

MARH Board Certified physicians care for patients in highly specialized treatment areas:

- Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
- Internal Medicine
- Pulmonary Medicine
- Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapy.
- Infectious Disease
- Nephrology
- Wound Care
- Psychiatry and Psychology

Throughout the pandemic the MidAmerica Rehabilitation Hospital has ensured the safety and protection of staff and patients continue to be high priority.



Cielo Navato-Dehning, M.D. is the Medical Director at MidAmerica Hospital and has served patients for the past 25 years. Dr. Navato-Dehning, is board certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation and spinal cord injury medicine.

MAY IS NATIONAL STROKE AWARENESS MONTH

Know the Signs and Symptoms. Spot a stroke FAST by learning and sharing the F.A.S.T. warning signs. You just might save a life from stroke.

Face Drooping

Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile. Is the person's smile uneven or lopsided?

Arm Weakness

Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

Speech Difficulty

Is speech slurred? Is the person unable to speak or hard to understand? Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence.

Time to Call 9-1-1

If the person shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 9-1-1 and get them to the hospital immediately.

Source: American Stroke Association



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*Dobson | DaVanzo analysis of research identifiable 20% sample of Medicare beneficiaries, 2005-2009



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The Health Department Addresses COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy, Distribution and Safety

By Michelle Pekarsky

Public Information Officer, Kansas City Health Department, City of Kansas City Missouri

The Kansas City Health Department is focused foremost on vulnerable communities that have experienced disproportionate suffering during the pandemic.

Because of longstanding injustices and racism, these communities are also understandably distrustful of the medical system, including lifesaving vaccinations. The distrust is rooted in history, most notably the shameful Tuskegee Study in the 1930s, in which Black men in Alabama were intentionally left to suffer from syphilis.

Men, women and children of color have also historically received lower-quality health care than the white community. With such deep-rooted and enduring mistreatment, dispelling misinformation is a challenge.

Through our services and health department staff, we try to build trust. The Kansas City Health Department does outreach in communities toward that goal.

We talk about the lifesaving vaccines and their safety, with those in the media whose audiences may not be eager to get the vaccination.

For example, Frank Thompson, deputy director of the KCMO Health Department, recently did a community outreach/education event (and Facebook Live) with Mattie Rhodes.

Thompson and KCMO Health Department Director, Dr. Rex Archer, and other representatives have spoken at many other events, including churches, to take the vaccine safety message to where people are. Messages are better received in a comfortable setting from people you trust.

Dr. Archer and Mr. Thompson also recently did an hour-long interview with KKFI.

In all these messages, we try to help people understand the vaccine has been highly effective in saving lives. Your odds of being protected are much better with the vaccine than without it.

We also address the most common concerns, related specifically to the COVID-19 vaccine:

There are a number of reasons these vaccines came out quickly. Scientists started working on the mRNA (Messenger

RNA) vaccine technology after the 2001/2002 SARS outbreak. They had been researching and developing this type of vaccine for 15 years. All they had to do with COVID was adjust the technology to the virus.

Second, there was a lot of interest in volunteering for the trials that tested the vaccines' effectiveness, which expedited the process. Researchers often wait many months and sometimes even years to get enough people to volunteer to be part of trials.

Third, production of the vaccines started before the end of phase 3 clinical trials.

Finally, Mayor Quinton Lucas created the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force, which also identified "vaccine misinformation" as a challenge and action item.

Kansas City COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force:

- **RENITA MOLLMAN, CHAIR** – Burns & McDonnell
Chief Administrative Officer
- **DR. REX ARCHER** – Kansas City Health Department
Director of Public Health
- **DR. VALERIE CHOW** – Truman Medical Centers
Chair of Department of Anesthesiology
- **KATHRYN KNOTTS** – Truman Medical Centers
Director of Government Relations
- **DR. OLEVIA M. PITTS** – Research Medical Center
Chief Medical Officer
- **JERON RAVIN** – Swope Health
President and Chief Executive Officer
- **DIANE TRIMBLE** – Saint Luke's Health System
Chief Nursing Office

Get the latest vaccine information and more answers to your questions at <https://www.kcmo.gov/city-hall/departments/health/what-do-i-need-to-know-about-the-covid-19-vaccine>

PREPARE FOR A SAFE RETURN TO WORK



The Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) requires employers to implement a COVID-19 Workplace Prevention Plan.

Precise Operations Management's *Return to Work Playbook* covers best practices and standards on how organizations manage:

- Cleaning and disinfecting their facilities including, workstations, common areas, equipment, tools, etc.
- Train their employees to Self-Certify and how to work safe to increase infection control prevention.
- Implement a Communications Plan.
- How to use and maintain Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

PRECISE OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT CAN HELP YOU WITH:

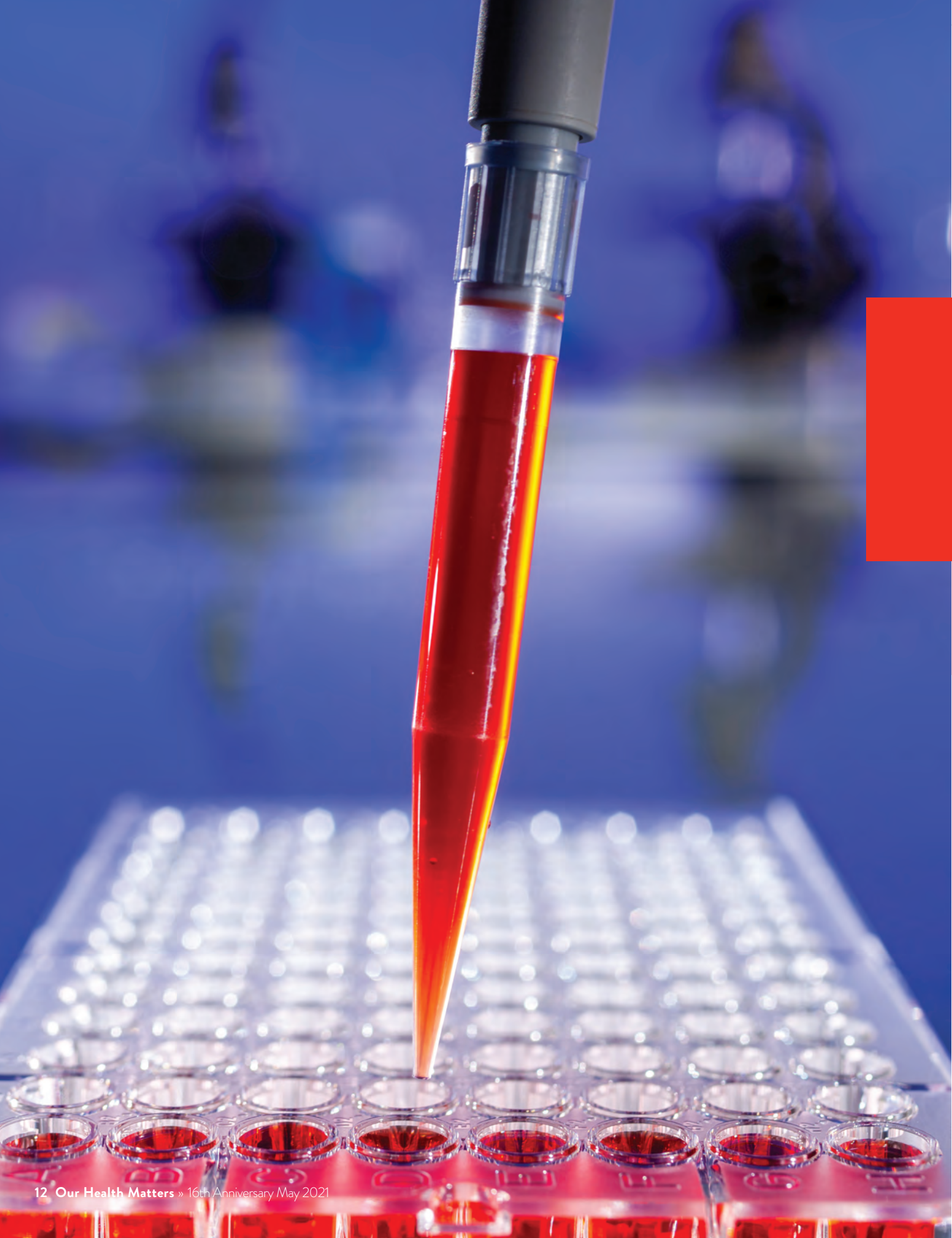
- **Hazard Plans.** Identify hazards and risk to reduce or mitigate COVID-19 exposures.
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Janet Lockridge, MA, Owner
Safety Strategist Consultant

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THE SCIENCE BEHIND VACCINES THEN AND NOW

IT TAKES SCIENCE & YOU TO MAKE IT WORK!

Vaccines are among the most important public health interventions in history, having led to the eradication of smallpox and to significant reductions in the incidence of many other viral and bacterial diseases.

Understanding Vaccines

The immune system is the body's natural defense mechanism. Most of the time, it works efficiently to combat invading pathogens. However, certain pathogens can overwhelm the immune system, causing serious infection and illness.

Vaccines help the immune system combat invading disease-causing pathogens. They are a safe and effective method for preventing certain diseases.

HOW DO VACCINES WORK?

Vaccines safely expose the body to pathogens so that the immune system can make antibodies capable of binding to their antigens. This allows the immune system to fight off a specific disease-causing pathogen should it encounter that pathogen in the future.

Vaccines help prevent disease by preparing the body for exposure to disease-causing pathogens: a bacterium, virus or other microorganism that can cause disease.

Today, vaccines help control and prevent a range of serious diseases, including polio, tetanus and whooping cough.

Vaccines train the immune system to detect and combat disease-causing pathogens. Different pathogens have different antigens on their surface. A pathogen can only be killed or disabled by an antibody that is capable of binding to its antigens. These antibodies will exist only if the immune system has encountered the antigen in the past.

Source: US National Library of Medicine

People have benefited from vaccines for centuries. Yet the pathway to effective vaccines has been neither neat nor direct. *Our Health Matters* explores the history

of vaccines and immunization, which began with Edward Jenner's creation of the world's first vaccine for smallpox in the 1790s. Many of the issues that were significant in Jenner's era — such as the need for secure fundings sources and streamlined manufacturing, safety concerns, and deep-seated public fears of immunizing agents — have frequently resurfaced and have often dominated vaccine policies. However, it is possible that historical awareness can help inform viable long-term solutions to contemporary problems with vaccine research, production and supply.

The practice of immunization dates back to the 11th century. Buddhist monks drank snake venom to immunize snake bites, and variolation (a process of

VACCINES HELP THE IMMUNE SYSTEM COMBAT INVADING DISEASE-CAUSING PATHOGENS.

using viral matter from smallpox patients to immunize against smallpox), was practiced in 17th century China. Edward Jenner became known as the founder of vaccinology in the West, when in 1796, he inoculated a 13-year-old-boy with vaccinia virus. In 1798, the first smallpox vaccine was developed. Over the 18th and 19th centuries, systematic implementation of mass smallpox immunization culminated in the global extermination of the disease in 1979.

Louis Pasteur's experiments spearheaded the development of live weakened cholera vaccine and inactivated anthrax vaccine in humans (1897 and 1904, respectively). Plague vaccine was invented in the late 19th century to fight the bubonic plague. Between 1890 and 1950, bacterial vaccine development flourished, including the Bacillus-Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccination, which is still in use today to treat tuberculosis.

IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HISTORICAL AWARENESS CAN HELP INFORM VIABLE LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS TO CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS WITH VACCINE RESEARCH,

In 1923, Alexander Glenny perfected a method to inactivate tetanus toxin with formaldehyde. The same method was used to develop a vaccine against diphtheria in 1926. Pertussis vaccine was a whole cell vaccine first licensed for use in the US in 1948.

Viral tissue culture methods were developed from 1950 to 1985 and led to the arrival of the Salk polio vaccine and the Sabin polio vaccine. Mass polio

immunization has now eradicated the disease from many regions around the world. Weakened strains of measles, mumps and rubella were developed for inclusion in vaccines. Measles is the next possible target for elimination through vaccination.

Despite the evidence of health gains from immunization programs, there has always been resistance to vaccines in some groups. The late 1970s and 1980s marked a period of increasing lawsuits and decreased profitability for vaccine manufacturers, leading to a decline in the number of companies producing vaccines.

As research continues, look for the development of new vaccines. The future looks bright for this science, including advances in delivery strategies and technologies, manufacturing and clinical evaluations. •

Source: [Center for Disease Control \(cdc.gov/vaccines\)](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines), [Health Affairs \(healthaffairs.org\)](https://www.healthaffairs.org)



WHY GET VACCINATED?

Vaccines are so important to our overall health. Thanks to vaccines, some diseases are almost gone from the US. Think about diphtheria or polio, which are becoming very rare because we have been vaccinating against them. Vaccines are safe and effective and prevent diseases that can be very dangerous or even deadly. Vaccines greatly reduce the risk of infection by working with the body's natural defenses to safely develop immunity to disease.

VACCINE-PREVENTABLE DISEASES HAVE NOT GONE AWAY

The viruses that cause illness and death easily can be passed on to those who are not protected by vaccines.

VACCINES HELP KEEP YOU HEALTHY

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccinations throughout your life to protect against many infections. When you skip vaccines, you leave yourself vulnerable to illnesses such as shingles, pneumococcal disease, influenza, and HPV and hepatitis B, both of which are leading causes of cancer.

VACCINES ARE AS IMPORTANT TO YOUR OVERALL HEALTH AS DIET AND EXERCISE

Like eating nutritious foods, exercising, and getting regular check-ups, vaccines play a vital role in keeping you healthy. Vaccines are one of the safest and most convenient preventive care measures available.

VACCINATION CAN MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

Vaccine-preventable infections are dangerous. Every year, approximately 50,000 US adults die from vaccine-preventable diseases.

VACCINES ARE SAFE

The US has the best methods in the world for continuing assessment, making vaccines extremely safe. Strong

data from many different medical investigators all point to the safety of vaccines.

VACCINES WON'T GIVE YOU THE DISEASE THEY ARE DESIGNED TO PREVENT

You cannot "catch" the disease from the vaccine. Some vaccines contain "dead" virus, and it is impossible to get the disease from them. Other vaccines have "live" but weakened viruses that are designed to ensure that you cannot catch the disease.

VACCINE-PREVENTABLE DISEASES ARE EXPENSIVE

An average influenza illness can last up to 15 days, typically with five or six missed work days. Adults who get hepatitis A lose an average of one month of work.

WHEN YOU GET SICK, YOUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN AND PARENTS ARE AT RISK, TOO

A vaccine-preventable disease that might make you sick for a week or two could prove deadly for your children, grandchildren or parents if it spreads to them. When you get vaccinated, you're protecting yourself and your family.

At the end of the day, each individual has to make a choice between risking contracting a deadly disease and receiving a vaccine that will protect them from disease, as well as preventing that disease from spreading to others.

Visit jocogov.org/covid-19-vaccine to learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine rollout plan. •

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



By Barbara Mitchell
Public Information
Officer

Johnson County
Department of Health
and Environment

Pamela Smart,
Executive Director



A LIVABLE



Affordable Single Family Housing Program. Homes sold below market price for people who qualify.

COMMUNITY BY DESIGN



experiencing financial crisis, homelessness, and hunger.

Through a partnership with the Unified Government of Wyandotte County the organization sees an average of 600 to 1,000 clients, 365 days a year, at the Wilhelmina Gill

Center. A hot meal and wraparound social services bring comfort to many in need. MCRC owns 65 units of senior housing and 6 units of transitional housing, with additional housing under construction for completion this year.

Faith, vision and exceptional leadership are ingredients that make neighborhood revitalization a success. The benefits are affordable housing, healthier families, safe and livable neighborhoods.

Since its founding in 1994, Mt. Carmel Redevelopment Corporation (MCRC) has worked strategically to improve the quality of life for residents of Northeast Wyandotte County, in Kansas City, Kansas through community revitalization and economic development. MCRC places strong emphasis in giving a hand up over a handout in its drive to create a community where families thrive – not just exist. To do this, MCRC addresses the social and economic needs of seniors, individuals, and families with children



MCRC'S SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Mental and behavioral health services
- Affordable housing construction
- Economic & workforce development
- Emergency assistance and case management
- Food pantry and kitchen (hot meals and to-go)
- Life skills (budgeting, applying for benefits, obtaining ID, homeownership education)

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Mt. Carmel Redevelopment Corporation invites support from the community.

- Financial or in-kind donations to support case management staff and to purchase food and hygiene items for pantries
- Volunteers to assemble food packages, distribute food from the pantries and serve hot meals; to serve on the MCRC board; and to host fundraising events

The Mt. Carmel Redevelopment Corporation is a 501(c)(3) organization. For more information contact Mt. Carmel Redevelopment Corporation at 913-621-4111 and visit mtcarmelrc.org.

MT. CARMEL REDEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, INC.
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SWOPE HEALTH'S PROMISE...

Healthcare for the Whole Person: PART 1

On the occasion of *Our Health Matters*™ 16th Anniversary Edition, we are proud to feature a conversation with Jeron Ravin, President and CEO of Swope Health which has provided quality healthcare since 1969.

Ruth Ramsey, publisher of *Our Health Matters*, had the privilege of having a conversation with Mr. Ravin that follows:

RAMSEY: Swope Health has served the Kansas City community for more than 50 years. Share with us what's new and exciting.

RAVIN: Oh, wow, that's a great question. I think I'm most proud at least during my tenure of our \$15 million senior facility opening up next year, just directly west of the Swope central location. It's a program called PACE that stands for

the Program All-inclusive Care for the Elderly. It offers an adult daycare setting to ensure that seniors have

an opportunity to "age in place" as opposed to going to a nursing home. PACE will treat seniors 2-3 days a week. They will have access to everything from arts, music, their pharmaceutical needs, speech therapy and more. We will offer transportation to and from home. So, it's pretty all inclusive. I like to think about it as a senior spa.

RAMSEY: Swope has a fairly comprehensive strategic plan. You've made promises. Tell us about some of them.

RAVIN: Swope has really talented people. Our strategic plan is centered around growth. Our goal is to serve as many people as we can who are in need. We also want to reestablish a presence in south Kansas City. We're also looking at Leavenworth, Lawrence (KS), and other parts of Missouri. The state has not been welcoming

in terms of Medicaid expansion, but our goal is to still serve people. We are going to continue investing in communities and enlisting elected officials and faith leaders to help us navigate challenges in terms of expanding into new communities.

RAMSEY: In what ways has the COVID pandemic impacted your efforts to serve the community?

RAVIN: I frankly believe that we have done more for our mission in the wake of COVID because we've responded to tragedy. We responded when I think communities needed us most. In 2020 we tested nearly 20,000 people in our parking lot. Every month we held First Saturday events where we distributed groceries, cleaning and hygiene products, as well as other family essentials.

Fast forward to this year 2021, we've vaccinated nearly 15,000 people now and continue to hold events. So, we were very agile and able to turn our operations quickly to serve the community. I love where we are, I think we're doing a fantastic job in terms of serving the community during this difficult time, and I hope we continue to do so. •

Jeron Ravin has been serving as CEO of Swope Health for 17 months. Originally from Houston, Texas, Ravin has worked in community health for nearly 15 years. He is a graduate of Howard University and the Thurgood Marshall Law School at Texas Southern University. Ravin also holds a Master's from Brown University in healthcare leadership. Prior to coming to Kansas City, Ravin served as Chief Operating Officer for the Community Health Center Association of Mississippi.



READ Jeron Ravin's entire and very insightful interview at kcourhealthmatters.com. Learn how Swope's Strategic Plan fulfills their promise.



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Pregnant Mom Looked Beyond Her Fears to Get the Covid-19 Vaccine



Rachel was seven months pregnant when she started hearing that a COVID-19 vaccine was set to be approved soon. “I didn’t think the vaccine would even be an option for me when the news first came out saying studies hadn’t been done on pregnant women,” she explains. She knew being pregnant put her at a higher risk for serious illness if she got COVID-19. Rachel continued to take precautions and get as much information as she could from her own research and from her health care team.

“I’m so grateful the message from the scientific community, including ACOG (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists), evolved to say the vaccine is almost certainly safe for mothers and unborn babies.”

Rachel did register to be notified when the group she was in became eligible to be vaccinated. “I was in the group that would

I went from being nervous to get the shot when it first debuted to not even being concerned at all.”

become eligible in early February,” she says. “I was now in a race against time, because my due date was just a few weeks away.”

When she did become eligible, she searched high and low trying to find where she could get a vaccine. “I spent a lot of time checking Sam’s Club and Walmart websites,” she says. “I was searching in areas almost two hours from my home.”

She lucked out and was able to get an appointment and a vaccine, but she had to travel to St. Joseph, Missouri to get it. “I was 39 weeks pregnant when I got the first dose of the Moderna vaccine,” she explains. “My arm was extremely sore for a couple of days and I had some mild body aches that didn’t last. No other problems.”

“I also consulted with my doula, who happens to have a background in microbiology and has done a ton of research about COVID-19 and the vaccines. She was incredibly helpful in guiding my decision. She pointed me toward evidence-based research and easy-to-understand study summaries. We discussed how even though studies hadn’t been done, everything that’s known about this type of vaccine indicates it should be fine for our health. So, I went from being nervous to get the shot when it first debuted to not even being concerned at all.”

Nine days after she got her shot, she gave birth to a healthy baby boy, Daniel, with zero complications. “My baby and I are perfectly healthy and doing great!” •

CANDICE BROOKS JOINS THE BLUFORD HEALTHCARE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

The Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute (BHLI) continues to do important and meaningful work to address disparities in healthcare by cultivating a pipeline of diverse talent for healthcare leadership. Albeit a lofty goal, the BHLI strives to increase the diversity of leadership positions and access to the c-suite, and the Institute's new Director Candice Brooks is ready to meet the challenge.



Brooks served the last 16 years at Truman Medical Centers (TMC)/University Health in a variety of roles, most recently as Senior Director of Corporate Guest Services. In that role, she was responsible for directing all operations for Guest Services, including Concierge Services, within TMC's two acute care hospital locations (Health Science District and Lakewood), Behavioral Health, Long Term Care, and several free standing clinics. She also served as the organization's knowledge expert on patient rights and responsibilities and customer service.

Brooks joined the BHLI at the first of the year and immediately immersed herself in two major projects, one of which is the Institute's pivot to a virtual program as a response to COVID-19. This year the BHLI scholars will engage in a virtual, two (2) week intensive, didactic networking experience with local and national leaders from various fields.

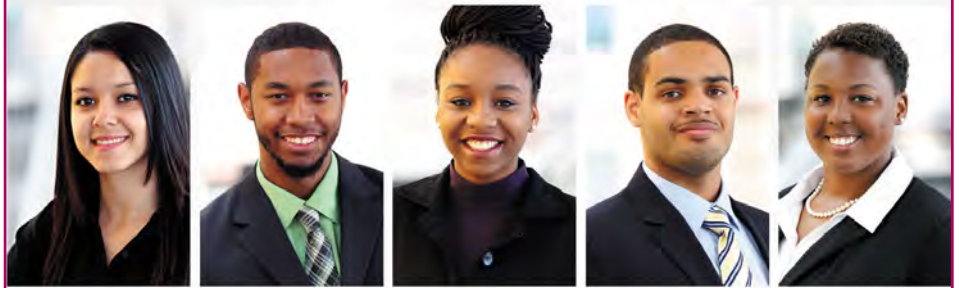
Under Brooks' direction the Institute is also expanding its impact with the development of a synchronous/asynchronous Health Career Pathways program for local high school students. Brooks is also increasing the Institute's social media visibility and continuing to de-

velop career and graduate school pathways for BHLI alumni scholars.

Brooks is excited to work with the Institute's President and Founder John Bluford, the BHLI staff, partnering colleges and uni-

versities, health systems, and private Investors both locally and nationally to create a pipeline of talent focused on eliminating health disparities among minority and vulnerable patient populations. •

TEAM DIVERSITY = PATIENT SATISFACTION




At the Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute we develop culturally competent, underrepresented scholars for future leadership roles.

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In 2020 a record 53% of Missouri voters approved the constitutional amendment for Medicaid Expansion which will provide insurance coverage to approximately 217,000 low-income Missourians. Stay tuned to learn how advocates are mobilizing and preparing to overcome opposition to the expansion.

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COVID UPDATE

FACE COVERINGS ARE MOST ESSENTIAL IN TIMES WHEN PHYSICAL DISTANCING IS NOT POSSIBLE.

Everyone should frequently be reminded not to touch the face covering and to wash their hands frequently. Establish policies and practices for social distancing. Alter your workspace to help workers and customers maintain social distancing and physically separate employees from each other and from customers, when possible.

**FOLLOW OUR HEALTH MATTERS COVID-19 UPDATES
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