

Pulse

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Marshfield Clinic Health System

Research Institute receives \$4 million for rural community COVID-19 study

Researchers at Marshfield Clinic Research Institute recently received a \$4 million grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to study the occurrence and impact of COVID-19 in rural communities.

"This study will help us understand how the new coronavirus is affecting people in the Marshfield area. The findings will contribute to a more effective public health response, not only in central Wisconsin, but also potentially in rural communities elsewhere," said Huong McLean, Ph.D., research scientist at the Research Institute's Center for Clinical Epidemiology and Population Health and primary investigator on the study. "I am excited for our team and the great opportunity for our region to contribute to this landmark community study."

The Center for Clinical Epidemiology and Population Health has been deeply involved in influenza research for many years, including being a part of the CDC Influenza Vaccine Effectiveness

Network. This influenza research experience and the population health resources at the Research Institute contributed to CDC's decision to provide funding for this large COVID-19 community study.

The study will actively recruit and follow up to 1,500 people of all ages who live in Marshfield and surrounding areas. Enrollment, which begins in November, is by invitation only. Participants will be followed weekly for one year to identify new COVID-19 infections, assess risk factors for infection, and describe the spectrum of COVID-19 illness across the lifespan.

"We have an outstanding research team and the Marshfield Epidemiologic Study Area is an ideal setting for this type of study," said Ed Belongia, M.D., director of the Center for Clinical Epidemiology and Population Health. "We are happy to see that the CDC recognized the importance of studying COVID-19 epidemiology in a rural community."

Study participants will report illness symptoms online or by telephone every week for one year. All participants will collect a nose sample if they develop a COVID-19-like illness. Since the new coronavirus can cause infection without symptoms, about half of the study participants will collect a nose sample every week even if they are not sick. Participants will have three scheduled study visits for a blood draw during the first six months. The blood samples will be tested for antibodies to the new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) by University of Wisconsin-Madison to determine how much of the population has had COVID-19.

The goals of the study are to:



- Estimate the rate of new coronavirus infections in a rural community.
- Find out how often people are infected without symptoms.
- Understand how infection risk differs by age group.
- Compare the immune response in people with symptomatic vs asymptomatic infection.
- Learn more about behaviors that may protect people from getting infected.

Visit the study's website, <https://marshfieldresearch.org/pacc>, to learn more.

National leader in COVID-19 research

In July, Marshfield Clinic Research Institute announced that its Integrated Research and Development Laboratory received a \$22.5 million grant to serve as the sole central reference lab in the nation to support the CDC on several COVID-19 studies for the next year. CDC is collaborating with research partners in different states to conduct prospective cohort studies. They will look at the occurrence of coronavirus infections and learn more about how long people can spread the virus after they are infected.

Marshfield Clinic Health System also is offering expanded access to an investigational convalescent plasma treatment for COVID-19 patients. This novel approach treats patients with COVID-19 by transfusing plasma from people that have recovered from COVID-19. The Clinical Research Center at Marshfield Clinic Research Institute is providing regulatory support.

Security Health Plan again ranks among top Medicare Advantage plans

Security Health Plan has again been recognized among the nation's leading health plans by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for its Medicare Advantage HMO-POS plans for 2021. Security received an overall star rating of four out of five stars in the five-star rating system the federal agency uses to rank Medicare Advantage and Part D Prescription Drug plans.

"We are among an elite group of health plans," said Julie Brussow, Security Health Plan's chief executive officer. "Our rating demonstrates our commitment to providing the highest quality service to our members and to meet or exceed all CMS quality benchmarks. Our goal is always to attain the highest possible rating of five stars, and we are continuing our efforts to attain this goal."



Currently, Security Health Plan is hosting their Medicare Advantage enrollment period until Dec. 7. You can help refer patients to get information about the plan. Patients can call 844-267-9198 to arrange a personal appointment with a Security Health Plan team member.

Continuing improvement

Security Health Plan has employed a number of specific strategies and tactics during 2020 to improve future star rating measures for their plans, including:

- Expanded benefits for telehealth visits for all applicable products to promote access to care.
- Waived member out-of-pocket costs for primary and specialty office visit copayments for most Medicare Advantage plans from Aug. 1 through the remainder of the calendar year.
- Initiated novuHealth health and wellness and quality rewards programs.
- Encouraged expanded provider engagement in gaps in care reporting.
- Expanded provider and plan outreach to close member gaps in care.
- Initiated home collection testing kits (HgbA1c, kidney function, FIT).
- Promoted blood pressure monitoring equipment.
- Expanded flu vaccine campaign.

Chief Clinical Officer Melissa deGoede said the plan's four-star rating, while lower than desired, still demonstrates Security Health Plan's high-quality service. It reflects the first-rate care members receive from their doctors and other health professionals, the expertise members receive directly from Security Health Plan and their satisfaction with these services.

She added Security Health Plan encourages all members – no matter which plan they are on – to get the care they need to reach their best health.

Health System and WWWP partner to prevent breast cancer

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. In partnership with Marshfield Clinic Health System, the Wisconsin Well Woman Program (WWWP) helps provide preventive cancer screenings for women with little or no health insurance coverage in our service area.

The WWWP has helped nearly 500 women per year across the state, between the ages of 45 and 64, receive the proactive screenings to help prevent cervical cancer and breast cancer.

Keri Otte, WWWP patient navigator and Oncology social worker at the Health System, helps patients find available screenings close to home.

"Women aged 45 to 64 with an income within the program guidelines or who can't cover the cost of the screening are eligible for screenings under the WWWP," said Otte. "This includes if you do not have health insurance, your health insurance does not cover these health screenings or you are unable to pay the deductible," she said.

During Breast Cancer Awareness Month, WWWP and the Health System are extending breast screenings for an hour after business hours so women who work can get a mammogram through Marshfield Clinic's mobile unit and Wausau Center's mammography department. This offering will be available in Eagle River, Merrill, Stevens Point and Wausau.

"It's important to detect any abnormality early," Otte said. "Central Wisconsin has a higher incidence of breast cancer than the rest of the state and most of the country. Even if women don't think they can afford it, we encourage them to get checked."

It is important for women to take care of themselves and not meet barriers to health services.

"Especially during this time, women are carrying the load, while caring for other people," Otte said. "Women are notorious for always taking care of everyone else and ignoring their own self-care. We really want them to show up for themselves. We encourage women to go and set up future generations for success. Once one family member goes in, others will follow when they get older."

Otte works with providers to navigate women through the system and make health care accessible for women. She also encourages women worried about citizen status to get screened.



“We are trying to encourage all women regardless of citizenship, income or social status just to come and get screened,” Otte said.

Remaining dates for the extended mammogram screening from 7am-6pm:

- Oct. 22: Stevens Point
- Oct. 28: Wausau

Learn more about the [WWWP](#).

Granton Fire & Rescue receives new firefighting masks

Granton Fire & Rescue firefighters have new masks to protect them during fires and rescues following a helpful donation from Marshfield Clinic Health System.

Oxygen masks protect firefighters from smoke and other toxic chemicals during fires and post-fire clean up. These masks are used separately and with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), a type of respirator that contains breathable compressed air.

The department has lacked the funds in recent years to purchase individual masks for all their personnel. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this need more urgent as each firefighter needs their own mask. Firefighters would be responsible for protecting and cleaning their individual mask.



"We are so fortunate to live in a rural community with outstanding medical facilities in Marshfield and Neillsville caring for the people who live here," said Gary Eibergen, Granton fire chief. "This generous donation will help keep our firefighters safe and healthy."

Granton Fire & Rescue is a volunteer organization that fights fires, assists at crash scenes and farm accidents, and provides a First Responder unit for the townships of York, Fremont, Grant, Lynn, Sherwood and York, as well as the Village of Granton.

United Way food wars had a "Star Wars" winner



Marshfield Clinic Health System departments in East Division supported the United Way of Marathon County by bringing in canned or boxed food items for the United We Can event. To add to the creativity of the donation, departments could build a sculpture with their donations and take a picture.

Administrative Secretary Karen Singsheim collected the donations and photos of each entry. The East Division employees voted for their favorite picture, and the winner receives a lunch for their entire department donated by Dr. Swati Biswas.

The winner was Orthopedics/Podiatry/PM & R departments. The department was inspired with a Star Wars theme as the cans were shaped to make Yoda. (Shown).

In past years, the United We Can event has filled several semi-trailers. Because of COVID-19, less

employees were onsite for the event, but Marathon County was still in need of food now more than ever.

Singsheim said this was the first time the group has done a "virtual" event, but if need be, she hopes more join in the fun of the food war next year.

Diabetes Prevention Program available online

Marshfield Clinic Health System is now offering the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) free via online meetings through October.

The PreventT2 Lifestyle Change Program is a year-long program that meets for one hour once a week for the first four months, twice a month for two months, then once a

month for the rest of the year. The program has limited space, and participants will be accepted until Nov. 4.

In order to participate, you must have prediabetes or be at risk for developing type 2 diabetes, have a computer with internet access, along with a quiet, private place to attend each session and be willing to commit to this year-long program.



To find out if you are at risk for developing type 2 diabetes and eligible for the program, take this quiz [Could You Have Prediabetes Risk Test](#). If you score a five or higher, you may enroll in the DPP year-long lifestyle change program.

To learn how you can join this program, email wes.pred diabetes@marshfieldclinic.org.

If interested in more information, watch these videos about the program: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyAxnhLqzDw&feature=youtu.be> or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60W_8m_LTMI&feature=youtu.be.

***All of Us* coffee break: Breast Cancer Awareness**

Dr. Chady Leon, M.D., specializes in caring for people with cancer and blood diseases as a member of Hematology/Oncology at Marshfield Clinic Health System. Dr. Leon knew early in his life he wanted to care for people with cancer.

View his presentation with Health System's *All of Us* team members on breast cancer awareness during this Breast Cancer Awareness

Month: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=370847237442147>

Turkey trot held virtually in Park Falls

Marshfield Medical Center-Park Falls is sponsoring this year's Turkey Trot 5K run/walk virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

You can choose to run or walk from anywhere in the world by completing 3.1 miles this fall. The virtual event will be held Oct. 12 through Nov. 26.

Virtual Event: Turkey Trot



[Register online](#) and receive a 2020 long sleeve race shirt. All registrations include a \$5 donation to the Lord's Cupboard Food Pantry, online and Facebook posting of race results, and a \$5 off coupon toward the next Park Falls Chamber Virtual Race.

Social media spotlight: CLICKS for Babies purple hats donation

Editor's note: This section will highlight one of our weekly social media posts from MarshfieldClinic Health System. Follow Marshfield Clinic Health System on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#) for more posts and information.

Stacy Kaiser and Nicole Dilger, both Doctors of Physical Therapy at our Stettin Center, have been donating their time and talents to crochet purple baby caps for the Period of PURPLE Crying program.

The Period of PURPLE Crying describes a stage in a baby's life when he or she cries for long periods of time without an obvious reason. It is a time of prolonged crying in a baby's development – typically from three weeks to four months old and peaks during the second month – that is completely normal.



The purple knit baby caps will be distributed to newborns across Health System locations from November through January and serve as a visual reminder for parents. If anyone else is interested, you can donate and drop off caps at the front desk of any Health System location. [View Pulse article for more information.](#)