

There are health care challenges like never experienced across Pennsylvania and the world. While the COVID-19 pandemic brings challenging times, cancer care and control activities continue to operate in Pennsylvania. This is a brief summary of activities submitted by PCC members.

Don't see your organization represented here? Articles of interest can be submitted 24/7 for insertion in the news section of pacancercoalition.org. Email your submission to monfisher@pa.org.



The Pennsylvania Cancer Registry (PCR) Continues its Vital Mission

During the pandemic the PCR continues to extract detailed information from the medical records of cancer patients. The initial challenge was getting staff set up to work from home but now Wendy Aldinger, PCR Manager reports connection issues are resolved, and cases are being processed as normal. Work is slightly slower without the conveniences of the office, like dual monitors, but staff are keeping up the best they can. The 2018 and 2019 cases remain the priority. As of the beginning of the month, the 2018 file is 85% complete and the 2019 file is 24% complete. We thank Wendy and the entire PCR for its dedication for providing us with the data we need for cancer control.



Improving Genetic Testing for Prostate Cancer Among African American Men

Veda Giri, MD and Amy Leader, DrPH, MPH from the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center at Jefferson announce the award of a 3-year DOD grant to evaluate a community-based peer education initiative for African American (AA) males about prostate cancer genetics. The project will explore barriers to genetic testing and opportunities for intervention among AA males who live in low-resource communities through focus groups with AA men and interviews with key stakeholders. The project will also implement and assess competency of a peer health educator-based PCA genetics education and testing program for AA men who live in low-resource communities. AA male peer health educators will be trained in PCA genetics and competency in PCA genetics and genetic assessment will be evaluated. The Jefferson research team hope to disseminate findings from the study across the state, possibly through the PCC and livehealthypa.com to connect them to others in PA doing similar work. To learn more, contact Veda Giri at veda.giri@jefferson.edu or Amy Leader at amy.leader@jefferson.edu.



Masking to Reduce the Spread of COVID-19

On April 15, 2020, Dr. Rachel Levine, Secretary of the Department of Health signed an order directing protections for critical workers who are employed at businesses that are authorized to maintain in-person operations during the COVID-19 disaster emergency.

Members of the public are being asked to use a scarf or some type of face covering and save surgical masks and N95 respirators for health care workers and first responders. Here is the link to the Department's website explaining how to make a mask. Feel free to share this information with the public:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/Homemade%20Mask%20Guidance.pdf>

CONNECTIONS CONTINUED



Peer Education in the Age of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed many things and has shown us that we may not be in control. However, one of the constants in both cancer control and the COVID-19 pandemic is the critical role of peer-educators. The scientific literature on the impact of peer-educators is clear –when trained and equipped with resources and knowledge, peer-educators have a positive impact upon the health of their community.

In late February, Penn State Cancer Institute began to hear from community leaders about their growing concern for COVID-19. We realized that these same community leaders, originally focused upon dissemination of cancer prevention and control, needed information, resources and tools to guide their community’s response to COVID-19. Thus, we reviewed the public health preparedness literature and trusted sources, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, for information, resources and tools that could be used by community members in central Pennsylvania.

We trained our community advisors, community health workers, promotoras, and navigators in public health preparedness strategies such as home emergency plans, social pledges of support, face masks, sanitation, and home isolation. These same community leaders, once focused upon leading their community to be cancer-free, are now leading their community to be COVID-19 – free. We are thankful to these community leaders to serve their communities in this unanticipated event.

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The Pennsylvania Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (PA-BCCEDP) operational during the pandemic

Most PA-BCCEDP healthcare providers continue to provide services to symptomatic women needing follow up from abnormal screenings and those needing referral to treatment during the COVID-19 emergency. Routine breast and cervical cancer screenings have been suspended. The program has been authorized by the CDC to use telehealth to help women see a doctor safely for the duration of the pandemic. Kathy Makara, acting PA-BCCEDP program manager at the Department of Health stated: “It’s really a testament to our contractors and providers across the state that we are able to continue to provide services through this pandemic. It is their commitment to the health of Pennsylvanians that have made this program so successful year after year.”



New leadership in the Bureau of Health Promotion and Risk Reduction

Kelly Holland is the new Director of the Bureau of Health Promotion and Risk Reduction at the Pennsylvania Department of Health. In this role, she is responsible for the oversight of the four divisions in the Bureau including the Division of Cancer Prevention and Control, Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control, Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity and, the Division of Violence Prevention. Prior to assuming this role, Kelly was the Director of the Division of Child and Adult Health Services in the Bureau of Family Health. Kelly has 22 years of experience in state government, the last 15 years in various public health programs. Kelly has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Pittsburgh and resides in Hummelstown, Pennsylvania with her husband and daughter.

CONNECTIONS CONTINUED



C.A.S.U.A.L. Day 2020 at the Northeast Regional Cancer Institute

The Northeast Regional Cancer Institute (NRCI) implemented its 17th annual C.A.S.U.A.L. (Colon cancer Awareness Saves Unlimited Adult Lives) Day on Thursday March 26 despite the pandemic. As part of colon cancer awareness month, the NRCI implements C.A.S.U.A.L. Day, an initiative to raise awareness about colon cancer in northeastern Pennsylvania and the importance of screening and early detection.

Participants dress C.A.S.U.A.L. while wearing a specially designed pin and/or custom t-shirt to promote awareness about colon cancer and the importance of screening. Donations are \$5 for a pin and wristband and \$20 for a t-shirt. Proceeds support colon cancer screening through NRCI's Community-based Cancer Screening Navigation Program as well as community outreach efforts coordinated by the Cancer Institute. Teams include regional businesses, schools, healthcare facilities, nonprofits and individuals.

While implementation always has logistical challenges, this year that was especially true with many offices closed due to COVID-19. C.A.S.U.A.L. Teams sent photos taken remotely and others created collages of staff, sent selfies or group photos. Participants were thanked via a video sent on social media and the day was deemed "extra casual" due to the unusual circumstances.

NCRI is a local nonprofit organization that has been easing the burden of cancer in Northeastern Pennsylvania for over 25 years. Focusing on the areas of surveillance, community and patient services, and survivorship; the Cancer Institute invests 100% of its resources in this region.



Defending Against Future Respiratory Virus Pandemics

The American Lung Association (ALA) launched a \$25M initiative to end COVID-19 and defend against future respiratory virus pandemics. The COVID-19 Action Initiative intends to serve as the convener of government, private industry and public health organizations to form a coalition that ensures better preparedness to meet the virus outbreaks of the future. To learn more, visit this link: <https://bit.ly/2wsntEh>

ALA's **LUNG FORCE Advocacy Day** on March 25, 2020 was a resounding success. 115 participants made this year's event impactful despite the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching 98 Senate offices and 84 House offices through 172 total phone calls. With everyone's help, the American Lung Association asked members of Congress to support \$44.7 billion in funding for NIH in Fiscal Year 2021 and to pledge that current healthcare protections continue, including those for patients with pre-existing conditions

Free American Lung Association Programs are available:

COVID-19 and smoking/vaping - <https://www.lung.org/blog/smoking-and-covid19>

COVID-19 and Chronic Disease webinar series with Lung Association Chief Medical Officer – Dr. Rizzo - <https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/covid-19/webinars>

COVID-19 Resources for the Public: for all the latest, including: general information, health education, access to one-on-one support, blog posts and FAQs.

Asthma Educator Institute (AEI) Virtual Event

Date: April 22-23, 2020

Time: 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Central Time

Visit the course page to see agenda details.

Registration link: <http://action.lung.org/StPaulAEI>

This training is for school health office personnel, community health workers, public health professionals, and others not on the front lines of this crisis. It will be recorded for additional future opportunities.



Radon, a Continuing Lung Health Problem

Members of the radon industry, mostly small operations have been deemed non-essential during the COVID-19 outbreak creating financial hardship for most. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection is working to help by seeking approval to give a one-time exemption of their first quarter mitigation fees.

Radon Mitigation Fee

Due to the hardship the COVID-19 pandemic is causing the certified community, The Department of Environmental Protection can consider a one-time exemption from submitting the first quarter (January 1st through March 31st) of 2020 Radon Mitigation Active System Fee only. In order to take advantage of this exemption, you must complete the “Requesting Suspension of Regulation or Permit Condition” form. You may find this form by visiting this link:

<https://www.dep.pa.gov/Pages/AlertDetails.aspx>

Please note: The link will direct you to the “Alert Details” page. If you scroll towards the bottom of the webpage, just before “Governor’s Goals”, you will see “Requesting Suspension of Regulation or Permit Condition”. Clicking on this will take you to the page displayed below. Click on “fill out this form”. The only question you may have difficulty with is under “Background”, letter “D”. Please enter the following under letter “D”: Title 25 Pa Code Chapter 240.309 – Radon mitigation system fee, and Appendix A – Radon Certification Fee Schedule.

Requesting Suspension of Regulation or Permit Condition

In accordance with Governor Wolf’s Proclamation of Disaster Emergency of March 6, 2020 and the Governor’s powers pursuant to the Emergency Management Code, 35 Pa.C.S. §7301, the Governor has authority to suspend regulatory obligations and other legal obligations within his jurisdiction where strict compliance will prevent, hinder, or delay necessary action in coping with the COVID-19 emergency.

To request a temporary suspension of regulatory requirements and/or permit conditions, [fill out this form](#) and submit to RA-EPCOVID19SuspReq@pa.gov.

*If you are requesting suspension of a Federal requirement, under only Federal authority, please contact US EPA Region III and refer to the US EPA March 26, 2020 Memorandum (COVID-19 Implications for EPA’s Enforcement and Compliance Assurance Program). To the extent the request relates to a federal program delegated to Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania will review requests submitted in this format.

In other news, our Targeted Survey Project, done in partnership with Kevin Stewart from the American Lung Association, is currently on hold due to the pandemic. We have contracted with six municipalities to offer free test kits. This program will be a top priority once we return to normal operations.

These stories are just a few examples of the great work that continues to occur during the coronavirus epidemic. Contact us at monfisher@pa.gov if you have updates or important news to share. Please visit pacancercoalition.org on a regular basis for news, resources and the latest comprehensive cancer control program projects.