



Weekly update

Through our research, community outreach and expert commentary, the University of Birmingham is taking an active role in the fightback against COVID-19. You can read our latest statements and follow our research updates at www.birmingham.ac.uk/coronavirus.

Through Birmingham Health Partners, a strategic alliance between the University and two NHS Foundation Trusts, we are working to support frontline healthcare professionals. For the latest updates visit their [website](#).

Research

Major COVID-19 drugs trial begins in Birmingham

A trial which will rapidly test new therapies for patients hospitalised due to COVID-19 opened last week.

It is hoped that by using drugs that target the most serious symptoms of the virus, the severity of the disease could be reduced leading to a reduction in the number of patients needing to be admitted to intensive care and ultimately, a reduction in virus related deaths.

In what could be a significant development in the fight against the virus the CATALYST trial will test a series of new drugs, including those already in use for patients with cancer and inflammatory diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis.

CATALYST is a team effort, designed by the Inflammation – Advanced and Cell Therapy Trials Team (I-ACT) at the University of Birmingham's Cancer Research UK Clinical Trials Unit, working in close partnership with University Hospitals Birmingham (UHB) and the Birmingham National Institute for Health Research Biomedical Research Centre (NIHR Birmingham BRC) to run the trial. It will be delivered in close collaboration with the Oxford and University College London NIHR BRCs.

The trial will initially test four drug and cellular therapies using an exciting new adaptive trial design to more rapidly assess their effectiveness, with up to 40 patients recruited to each arm. Patients with COVID-19 will be randomly computer allocated to either receive

their usual care or usual care with the addition of one of the trial drugs.

The effect of each drug will be measured by the amount of oxygen in the blood as well as other severity indicators of the disease (i.e organ failure). Drugs that show reductions in the amount of oxygen needed by the patient and in other severity measures will be recommended for further testing within large ongoing national trials. ([More information](#))

Researchers investigate role of social media on health and wellbeing during a pandemic

How are people using social media to support their health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic? Researchers at the University of Birmingham are launching new study to find out.

Designed by a team in the University's School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences, the survey will investigate the health-related uses of social media. The aim is to use the results to provide guidance to policy makers and practitioners, including anybody who posts material on social media. ([More information](#))



Sepsis and antimicrobial management

Clinical research update: sepsis and antimicrobial management

Researchers from across Birmingham Health Partners are collaborating to analyse and summarise the latest COVID-19 literature to help inform clinical colleagues.

The latest update focuses on sepsis, which may complicate COVID-19 or occur in patients incidentally colonised with SARS-CoV-2. It is often difficult to distinguish clinically between severe COVID-19 (+/- sepsis) and sepsis due to other infections. ([More information](#))

UK experts launch project with WHO offering insight into COVID-19's global effects on pregnancy

An online resource bringing together research on the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic on expectant mothers and their babies has been launched by maternal health experts from the University of Birmingham this week which could help to inform guidelines and treatment pathways. The PregCOV-19 project, led by the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Global Women's Health at University of Birmingham, aims to evaluate the rapidly emerging evidence on maternal and offspring outcomes and risks in women with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. ([More information](#))

Wuhan's lockdown cut air pollution by up to 63%

The COVID-19 lockdown in Wuhan, China, resulted in a 63% reduction in nitrogen dioxide concentrations, according to new research. Researchers calculated that this drop in air pollution may have prevented up to 496 deaths in Wuhan, 3,368 in Hubei province and 10,822 in China as a whole. ([More information](#))

COVID-19 outbreak: What are experts concerned about?

Across the University of Birmingham, 17 academics have contributed to the research syntheses produced by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology. ([More information](#))

Community

Home-based cardiac rehabilitation training offered free to cardiac teams affected by COVID-19

NHS staff are being offered free training to deliver a home-based cardiac rehabilitation programme to help support heart failure patients affected by restricted access to cardiac rehabilitation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Rehabilitation Enablement in CHronic Heart Failure (REACH-HF), a 12-week, evidence-based home-based cardiac rehabilitation programme was developed to help increase participation in rehabilitation therapies for heart failure patients and carers by bringing care into their own homes.

Researchers at the Universities of Exeter, Birmingham, and York and the Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust, in collaboration with the Heart Manual Department, NHS Lothian, brought together clinicians, academics, patients and caregivers to produce a suite of resources, including self-care education, a choice of exercise programmes and psychological support. ([More information](#))

Comment

Academics at the University of Birmingham express concerns over NHS's planned COVID-19 contact-tracing app

Academics at the University of Birmingham are among a group of 173 UK scholars to have signed an open letter expressing concerns over the NHS's planned COVID-19 contact-tracing app.

They have called on NHSX, the state-run health service's app-developing and digital policy body, to "publicly commit that there will not be a database or databases, regardless of what controls are put in place, that would allow de-anonymization of users of its system". ([More information](#))

Re-opening English Primary Schools Safely from 1st June: mission impossible?

Colin Diamond CBE, Professor of Education Leadership, writes about the difficulties of maintaining a socially distanced classroom with five and six year olds, and how introducing them to an artificially segregated classroom environment could make things worse for some children. ([More information](#))

Covid-19, Institutional Failure and the British Media

Professor John Bryson writes about the blame game that is going on around COVID-19 and how the one institution that is never blamed is the British media, which has had a key role in shaping the response to the virus but has no accountability. ([More information](#))

Contact us

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In partnership with

Living with the Pandemic in Low and Middle Income Countries

Webinar on Thursday 21 May (12:00-13:00 BST)

The spread of COVID-19 is one of the biggest challenges the global community has faced, and our research teams have a key role to play in the fight against it, to reflect on its impact on all aspects of our lives and to learn lessons from it and from past pandemics.

We would be delighted if you were able to join us for the first of a series of events 'Living with the Pandemic' where we will bring together panels of our experts who will give a short talk on their research and perspectives on different aspects of living with the pandemic, followed by a chance to ask the panel questions.

The panel will feature:

- [Professor Hisham Mehanna](#) (convenor)
- [Professor Adam Cunningham](#), Developing a rapid test for COVID-19
- [Professor Justine Davies](#), Global Health
- [Professor Stefan Krause](#), Water and sanitation

If you would like to join our webinar via Zoom, please [register here](#). The event will also be running live on the University of Birmingham's [Facebook page](#).

If you have any questions about this, future events or the work of The Institute for Global Innovation, please contact Sue Gilligan s.gilligan@bham.ac.uk.

Dates and times for future events will be announced with topics including:

- Easing the lockdown
- The new normal
- Doing things differently
- Commuting and COVID-19 pandemic
- The politics and economics of COVID-19 pandemic
- The past and the future of pandemics
- Societal effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

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