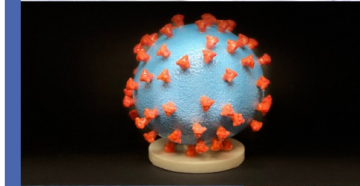


Communication in the Time of COVID

URMA 2021
Wednesday, July 14, 2021

Renate Myles
Acting Director
NIH Office of Communication and Public Liaison



National Institutes of Health

The nation's **biomedical research agency**

Largest public funder of biomedical research in the world:

\$42B+ annual budget

80%+ of the NIH budget goes to institutions outside of NIH

27 Institutes and Centers

45,000+ staff

Conduct our own research with about **6,000** scientists



NIH Clinical Center

Nation's largest hospital devoted entirely to clinical research

870,000 ft² research center with 240 inpatient beds

10,000+ new patients

6,000 inpatient admissions

95,000 outpatient visits each year

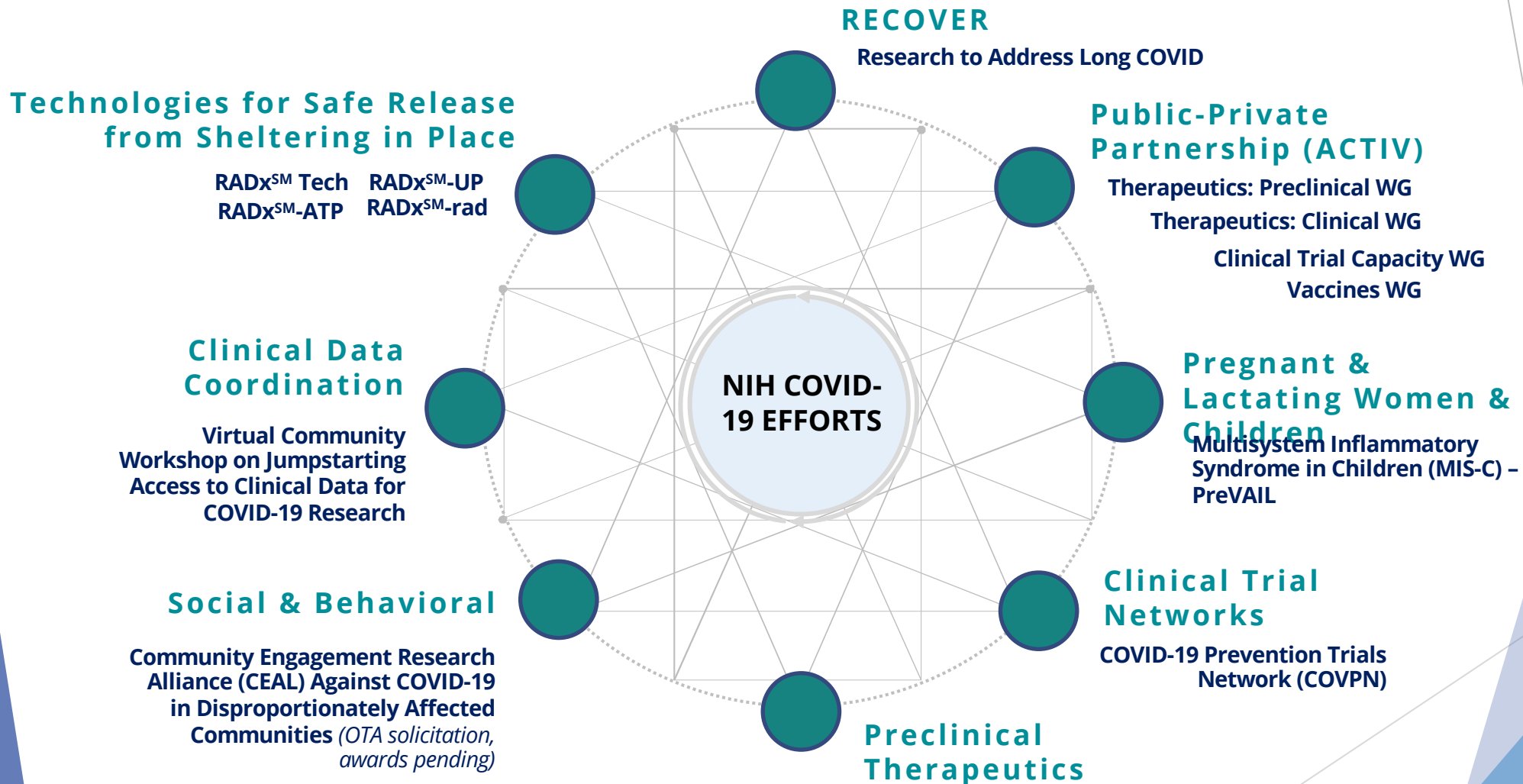
Every patient is on a research protocol





NIH COVID-19 Response

In response to COVID-19, NIH led and coordinated the national research strategy on **COVID-19 vaccines, treatments, and tests**, with **multi-IC collaborative** efforts to address interdisciplinary challenges associated with the pandemic



Role of NIH in COVID-19 Pandemic

- Ensure safety of ~45,000 NIH staff while continuing mission critical work
- NIH Clinical Center still treating research participants
- Implement safety protocols, COVID-19 testing, and vaccination plan
- Implement Return to the Physical Workplace planning

Role of the NIH Office of Communications and Public Liaison

Within NIH Office of the Director

Serves as the central or corporate communication office of agency

Serves on NIH Coronavirus Response and Recovery Team

Led communication strategy and implementation for all major COVID research programs

Led NIH staff communication

External Communication

Developed communication strategy: NIH would own announcements of clinical trial launches and results:

- **Launched websites** for each key program:
 - ❖ **ACTIV** - made vaccine protocols public (posted)
 - ❖ **RADx**
 - ❖ **CEAL**
 - ❖ **RECOVER**
 - ❖ **Central NIH COVID-19 website**
 - ❖ **Combat COVID**
- **Held media telebriefings** for each announcement/results:
 - ❖ NIH, Operation Warp Speed, Company Representatives
- **Held social media events** for each announcement for public



Building Public Trust

NIH vaccination kick-off event:

- ❖ NIH leadership, including Drs. Collins and Fauci, and select staff publicly vaccinated on live television

VPOTUS vaccination event

National Cathedral Faith Communities vaccination event

Outreach to hesitant groups



Challenges on External Communication



- Building the plane while flying it
- Communicating in a highly politicized environment
- Responding with speed while also ensuring accuracy
- Managing consistency in our communication across the agency
- Explaining speed in trials while also building trust
- Technology, technology, technology

Internal Communication

Established a **COVID-19 Communication Response Team:**

- Office of Communications and Public Liaison
- Immediate Office of the Director
- Office of Human Resources
- Office of Research Services/Office of Research Facilities
- Office of Intramural Research
- Clinical Center



**Communication activities vetted by the
NIH Coronavirus Response and Recovery Team**



Central Intranet Page

Launched *NIH Guidance for Staff on Coronavirus* Intranet Site on March 8, 2020

- Highly viewed:
 - Generally, around 90,000 a month
 - NIH staff highly engaged
- Weekly staff coronavirus case numbers and regional numbers
- Vaccination plan for NIH staff
- Guidance
- More than 150 Frequently Asked Questions

NIH GUIDANCE FOR STAFF ON CORONAVIRUS

Coronavirus Guidance

Vaccination Plan

Return Efforts

Your Health Guidance

Campus Services

Events & Presentations

Notices

Francis Collins: Home Edition

FAQs

Contacts

Related Resources

Print Materials

NIH Workplace Mask Guidance

Report Vaccinations Received in the Community

Schedule Asymptomatic Testing

NIH Staff COVID-19 Surveillance

Beginning June 28, 2021, these charts will be updated every other Monday.

Weekly/Cumulative Positive Cases

Cumulative NIH/County Cases

NIH Testing and Positivity Rates

Download raw data (XLS)

Download raw data (XLS)

Download raw data (XLS)



Central Staff Coronavirus Query Box

- Established central inquiry email box: CoronavirusStaffQuery@od.nih.gov
- Curated and responded to thousands of questions from staff
- Questions informed content for the intranet page, all staff emails, and other communication products



Regular Staff Communication

- 7 NIH-wide Town Halls
 - ❖ Live viewership ~20,000
 - ❖ Solicit questions from staff and respond to most frequently asked
 - ❖ Post responses on FAQ page
- 90 All Staff Emails from the NIH Director
 - ❖ Posted on a central Notice page
- 16 Francis Collins: Home Edition
 - ❖ NIH Director interviews NIH leaders on topics of interest to staff



Lessons Learned

Technology and how to use it

Accessibility

Set expectations at the outset

Pick the right messenger for the audience

Not everyone is wired or desk-based

Reach audiences where they are

Ensure communication is at the table

Use technologies to ensure wide access