



UNC Family Medicine Patient Newsletter

Issue Date: February 26, 2021

Updates from the FMC

Urgent Care: We have extended our Urgent Care hours and are now open until 6:40pm. Please note that depending on the situation with COVID-19, we may need to revert back to shorter hours in the future.

It is still flu season! Please schedule an appointment to receive your flu shot if you have not already gotten one. If you have and it was not given at the FMC, please tell us via MyChart! Go to Menu > Preventive Care > Flu Vaccine (if we do not have record of your flu shot, this will appear as “overdue” and you can mark as complete.)

FMC Lab: Please note the lab does not open until 8:15am. If you have lab work scheduled, please do not arrive prior to then.

Updates on the COVID-19 Vaccine

The best place to receive the most recent updates from UNC Health about the vaccine is <https://www.yourshot.health/>. You can also learn more on this website about the safety of the vaccines, how they work, and when you will be eligible to receive one. We understand people are very anxious to get vaccinated, but please remain patient as we work to vaccinate as many as possible with the supply we receive. Appointments will continually be posted to the Your Shot website, and UNC Health recommends checking late afternoons on weekdays.

We will continue to keep our patients informed as we learn more information about the vaccine rollout process. Keep an eye out for future emails from us!

Let's Talk Health: Managing COPD

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a lung disease that affect millions of Americans. The condition is chronic, and cause difficulty breathing. It is also considered an underlying risk factor for serious illness caused by COVID-19.

Understanding the symptoms and triggers along with how to use an inhaler or other prescribed treatment can save patients unnecessary trips to urgent care or even the ER for COPD. If you notice an increase in sputum, coughing, or needing to use your inhaler more, schedule an appointment with us to discuss next treatment steps to prevent you having to go to the Emergency Room. The Family Medicine Center offers inhaler teaching if you need assistance - simply call the clinic to setup an appointment!

It is crucial that COPD patients receive their flu shot each year and are vaccinated against pneumonia. These viruses can cause serious complications. If you are due for one or both of these

vaccines, call the clinic a (984) 974-0210 to schedule your immunization.

COVID-19: A Mirror to Our Flaws

Family Medicine's Dr. Erica Pettigrew, who also serves as Medical Director for Orange County Health Department, wrote a thoughtful perspective piece for North Carolina Medical Journal on some of the hard lessons learned from the pandemic. You can [read the full article here](#).

"The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated many painful truths in our state. This commentary addresses some of them, including racism, lack of universal health care access, and defunded public health infrastructure, from the perspective of a local county health department medical director. We have an opportunity to fundamentally improve North Carolinians' collective health, but only if we are willing to reckon with past and current failings."

Celebrating Black History Month

February is Black History Month, and while it is important to realize we should acknowledge and honor Black history at all times, we do want to take this opportunity to celebrate the diversity of our department and share in our staff members' own words what Black History Month means to them.

"Black History month is a time to recognize, honor and celebrate contributions of members of the African diaspora, especially here in the US where we've faced enormous trials, but have overcome much in order to pave the way for all of us today. It is important to all races and cultures because all benefit from these contributions to our great and improving society." -Yvette McMiller, Assistant Practice Manager

"My name is Lisa Biggs. I am the heritage, legacy and the dividend of my Forefathers and Foremothers. That is what Black History means to me." - Lisa Biggs, MCH Program Coordinator

At UNC Family Medicine, we celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of our Black staff, faculty and patients today and every day. Thank you for joining us in honoring Black history!

Announcing New Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Leadership

We are thrilled to announce that Venus Standard and Alexa Mises Malchuk have been appointed as our department's new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion leadership! We look forward to developing new strategies under their leadership to ensure our department is taking the right steps to keep diversity and equity at the forefront of everything we do - internally as a department, and while serving our patients and community.



(Left to Right) Alexa Mises Malchuk & Venus Standard

[Alexa Mieses Malchuk, MD, MPH](#), is our new Director of Inclusive Excellence for Faculty. She will lead faculty development, from creating a new leadership program for junior faculty to developing more senior faculty so they can better serve as mentors. She will continue to serve as the department's diversity liaison to the UNC School of Medicine.

[Venus Standard, MSN, CNM](#), is our new Director of DEI Education and Community Engagement. She will use her considerable experience and entrepreneurship to engage our communities, both inside and outside the department, and lead DEI education and curricular initiatives for staff, residents, and faculty.

Very soon, our department website will feature information on our plans and goals for improving DEI initiatives, as well as how we are tracking our progress. We look forward to sharing this information with you and to receiving your input and feedback!

Let's Talk Health: Heart Health and Blood Pressure

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the entire world. In the United States, 1 in every 3 deaths is due to heart disease. Luckily heart disease is something you can help prevent.

Many forms of heart disease are caused by poor diet, lack of exercise, smoking, and even too much stress. Research has shown that watching out for these things can decrease your chance of heart disease. Add vegetables to your diet, eat less red meat, and exercise for 150 minutes a week. If you smoke, quitting will also help you avoid heart disease.

There are also medication options for those at risk of heart disease. Doctors often prescribe statins to patients with high cholesterol. If you are at risk for a heart attack or stroke, or if you have had one before, your doctor may suggest a low-dose aspirin every day.

High blood pressure can also be a significant factor in cardiac problems. Did you know that 1 in every 3 Americans has high blood pressure? High blood pressure, or hypertension, is a leading factor for death across the world, causing heart attacks and strokes.

Hypertension occurs when your blood pressure stays higher than a normal level for a long period of time. This puts a continuous strain on your heart. The condition does not usually present any signs or symptoms, and some people go years without realizing they have it. That's why it is so important to have your blood pressure checked by your provider.

Keeping your blood pressure at a normal level helps prevent against dangerous cardiovascular events. Fortunately, you can lower your risk for serious health problems by controlling your blood pressure. There are several medications available to treat high blood pressure. You can work with your doctor to figure out if and what medication might be right for you. If you have been prescribed blood pressure medication, taking it regularly will help you stay healthy and avoid heart attack and stroke.

There are changes you can make at home to control your blood pressure, or to avoid having high blood pressure in the future:

- Eating a diet that is low in salt, fat and cholesterol, and high in fresh fruits and vegetables
- Being active
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Getting adequate sleep
- Avoiding tobacco use and quitting smoking if you are a smoker

Medication Management

Medications like aspirin and statins can save lives. That being said, medications can be difficult to remember to take. Many patients have concerns over side-effects. Some have trouble keeping track of different medications. It's easy to forget something as small as a pill!

Here are a few suggestions to help you deal with your medications.

- Talk to your provider about the medication you have been prescribed. Ask about the benefits, side effects, and the best time to take it.
- If you are on multiple medications, organize them and make a schedule to not confuse what you are taking and when. Taking medications is easiest when you stick to taking them at the same time every day.
- Set reminders for yourself. Place your medication somewhere visible. Use smartphone apps that will send a reminder notification or text message. Make use of pillboxes!
- If you have a lot of concerns, talk to our pharmacist! Your provider can help connect you.

Meet Our Pharmacist!



Sarah Weddle is a Clinical Pharmacist Practitioner (CPP) at the Family Medicine Center. She is able to meet one-on-one to help patients manage their medications. She can also work with your provider to help manage chronic disease. CPPs help to ensure patients are on the most-effective, affordable, and safest medications. They can also help to ensure a medication list is up to date (especially after a hospital visit), discuss cost and access to medications. And, CPPs help you find ways to remember and take medications! This service is typically covered by insurance, and may have a copay similar to visits to your primary care provider.

Talk with your doctor if you are interested in meeting with a pharmacist.

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