

Center on Aging

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From the Director

Hello everyone,

Welcome to 2021! We are hopeful that the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccines will allow us to stay healthy and resume the pre-pandemic activities that we have all missed.

We have included information in the next pages about who is eligible, how to schedule, and why we encourage getting vaccinated.

In addition to the vaccination information, you will read about the AFIB and some of the latest treatments, as well as the 2020 Student Research Day winners. Lastly, you may be interested in a research study for caregivers being conducted by the MUSC College of Nursing.

Wishing you a safe and happy year ahead!

Heather Boger, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Interim Director
Center on Aging



**65 OR OLDER?
IT'S YOUR TURN.
TIME TO GET YOUR
COVID-19 VACCINE.**

Call **1-866-365-8110**
or visit scdhec.gov/vaxlocator
to find a vaccine location.

THE COVID-19 VACCINE



The COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan in South Carolina

Who can get vaccinated now?

- staff and residents at long-term care facilities such as nursing homes and assisted living communities;
- health care workers who are at high risk of COVID-19 exposure or are critical to the state's coronavirus response; and
- state and local government employees and their contractors who are critical to COVID-19 immunization and testing.

AARP recommends that you talk to your doctor about the safety, effectiveness, benefits and risks of the COVID-19 vaccine. Older adults, especially those with underlying medical conditions such as heart disease and diabetes, are at increased risk for hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

When can all adults get vaccinated?

Phase 1b of the state vaccine plan, scheduled to start in early spring, focuses on police, firefighters, teachers and other frontline essential workers.

Phase 1c, which is expected to begin in late spring, includes people age 16 to 64 with underlying medical conditions such as cancer, heart disease and type 2 diabetes that put them at high risk for severe complications from COVID-19; and essential workers not covered in Phase 1b.

The remainder of South Carolinians age 16 and over are in Phase 2 and are slated for vaccination over the summer and fall.

AARP is fighting for older Americans to be prioritized in getting COVID-19 vaccines because the science has shown that older people are at higher risk of death.

Where can I get a vaccine?

Residents and staff at long-term care facilities are being vaccinated at their facilities through a federal partnership with CVS and Walgreens. For other eligible populations, shots are being sent by the state to medical facilities, local health agencies and retail pharmacies, including those at select Costco, Ingles, Kroger, Publix and Walmart stores.

In addition, 17 CVS pharmacies across the state are set to start providing vaccines to eligible South Carolinians Feb. 12. Registration for CVS appointments opens Feb. 11 through the company's COVID-19 vaccine page or the CVS Pharmacy app. Initial supplies are limited and time slots for shots may not be immediately available.

Check the health department's online vaccine locator or call its vaccine information line at 866-365-8110 to find contact information for vaccination sites near you. You cannot schedule an appointment via the map or phone line; you must contact a vaccine provider directly. Bring documentation to your appointment to confirm you are eligible to get vaccinated on the basis of age (for example, a driver's license or other government ID) or employment (such as a badge or a personalized letter from your employer).

Veterans and their families can learn more about the Department of Veterans Affairs' COVID-19 immunization process by calling 800-698-2411 or checking the VA's vaccine website.

Source: [aarp.org](https://www.aarp.org); Andy Markowitz



**NEED INFORMATION
ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINES?**

Call the Vaccine Info Line.

1-866-365-8110

**Staff are answering calls
7 a.m. – 7 p.m. every day.**

MUSC Black and Hispanic/Latino faculty urge communities of color to take the COVID-19 vaccine

Given the devastating impact of the COVID-19 virus on communities of color, the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) Black Faculty Group (BFG) and the MUSC Hispanic/Latino faculty encourage Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos in South Carolina and across the nation to take the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as they can schedule an appointment.

“Our lives depend on it,” said Marvella E. Ford, Ph.D., professor in the Department of Public Health Sciences, and director, Population Sciences and Cancer Disparities at the MUSC Hollings Cancer Center. A leader of the MUSC BFG for nearly 16 years, Ford stated the group’s perspective, noting that “The vaccine is needed in these communities for three reasons. First, COVID-19 has caused more deaths in the United States than in any other country in the world. Second, COVID-19 infection rates are much higher among Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos than among whites. Third, COVID-19 death rates among Blacks are double in comparison to the death rates among whites.”

Due to many systemic stressors such as employment issues, lack of health insurance, racism and discrimination, many Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos were in poorer health than whites long before the pandemic began. Unfortunately, chronic health conditions, like diabetes and heart disease, place Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos at greater risk of experiencing more severe COVID-19 symptoms once infected.

“The vaccine gives us a measure of hope,” said James H. Tolley, M.D., MUSC Assistant Professor Emeritus, Emergency Medicine. “This hope translates into children being raised by their parents instead of other family members or the foster care system; grandparents living to

see their grandchildren graduating; parents being present during their children’s weddings; and uncles and aunts being available to provide advice and guidance to their nieces and nephews.” A former emergency department physician, Tolley has been part of the MUSC community for more than 30 years.

The COVID-19 vaccines that are now available were developed with tens of thousands of volunteers who participated in clinical trials across the nation and around the world. Many of the trial participants were racially

and ethnically diverse and the trials used the most sophisticated and scientifically rigorous methodologies. The vaccines are safe and highly effective at protecting against the most severe consequences of the virus.

COVID-19 vaccines, like all vaccines, undergo very rigorous testing and safety assessments before the federal Food and Drug Administration approves their use. Close safety monitoring continues even after a vaccine obtains FDA approval.

“The vaccine gives us a measure of hope,” said James H. Tolley, M.D., MUSC Assistant Professor Emeritus, Emergency Medicine.

“The stakes are high,” Ford said. “If there is not significant uptake of the vaccine in our communities, members of these communities will continue to die in large numbers from this deadly disease. The people who are dying represent a tremendous loss to their families, their communities, and to the United States.”

Established in 2004, the MUSC Black Faculty Group includes educators, administrators, health care providers, researchers and staff members who work in all areas of the institution. The MUSC Hispanic/Latino Faculty embrace a similar broad variety of members who serve in education, research and health care careers. The two groups have created a professional network that addresses and supports a variety of community initiatives.

Understanding AFIB, Stroke Risk and Treatment Options

How Does AFib Increase Stroke Risk?

The average person with atrial fibrillation (also called AFib) is five times more likely to have a stroke than someone with a regular heartbeat. Because blood isn't pumped out of the heart normally, it's easier for blood cells to stick together and form clots. In people with atrial fibrillation not caused by heart valve problems (the most common type of AFib), more than 90% of stroke-causing clots that come from the heart are formed in the left atrial appendage (LAA). When a blood clot escapes from the LAA and travels to another part of the body, it can cut off the blood supply. When a clot cuts off blood supply to the brain, it causes a stroke.

Reducing AFib Stroke Risk

Blood thinners, also called anticoagulants, are an effective way to lower the risk of stroke in people with atrial fibrillation.

Some people need an alternative to blood thinners because they can increase the risk of bleeding or they have trouble taking their blood thinners effectively. Some bleeding events are minor and easily treated, like a cut taking longer than normal to stop bleeding. In other cases, the bleeding can be life-threatening, such as when bleeding in the brain causes a stroke.

If you have a history of bleeding or a lifestyle, occupation or condition that puts you at risk for bleeding, your doctor may consider an alternative to blood thinners, such as the WATCHMAN Implant.

An Alternative to Blood Thinners

MUSC now offers the latest advancement in LAA closure technology, the WATCHMAN FLX device. Implanted via a minimally invasive procedure, the WATCHMAN FLX device is designed to permanently close off the LAA, keeping blood clots from escaping. This device allows many patients to discontinue blood thinners and avoid the bleeding and lifestyle challenges associated with them. In a clinical trial, 96% of people were able to stop taking blood thinners just 45 days after the WATCHMAN FLX procedure.

Contact us:

Dr. Lacy Sturdivant, Dr. Michael Field and Dr. Nicholas Amoroso make up the team of physicians who implant the WATCHMAN FLX device at MUSC. Be sure to talk with your doctor so that you thoroughly understand all the risks and benefits associated with the implantation of the WATCHMAN FLX Device. You may also contact MUSC's structural heart center at 843-876-0940 or learn more at www.WATCHMAN.com.



Research: Student Research Day 2020

2020 Student Research Day Center on Aging Award for Excellence in Aging Research

The 2020 Perry V. Halushka Research Day (RD) was held virtually on Friday, November 6th. RD is run like a major meeting and gives presenters a chance to practice delivering oral or poster presentations in a “safe” environment.

MUSC RD is open to all undergraduates (high school, college), students in all six colleges, postdoctoral fellows, clinical fellows and residents, as well as staff scientists and research specialists who performed research in the year leading up to RD.

RD is a great opportunity to practice presentation skills and receive constructive criticism. Awards are also given in special categories including the Center on Aging’s award for aging-related research.

Congratulations to this year’s CoA Award winners:

1st Prize Poster: **Stephanie DiLucia**

Tau-spiracy- A developing Mechanism for Cardiac Dysfunction

2nd Prize Poster: **DeMarcus Woolfork**

AGE:RAGE Signaling Pathway as a Target in Neuroendocrine Prostate Cancer

1st Prize Presentation: **Luke Watson**

Brain Microvascular Insulin Receptor Dysfunction may Underly Increased Risk for Early Onset Dementia During Obesity

2nd Prize Presentation: **Bryant Seamon**

Revisiting the Concept of Minimal Detectable Change for the Activities-Specific Balance Confidence Scale with Individuals Post-Stroke



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Department of
Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery

Hearing Research Study

Healthy adults
Ages 50 to 89 years

**Needed for a research study at the
Medical University of South Carolina
involving speech understanding and
the brain**

Study involves two to four visits
Scheduling is flexible
Must be able to complete an MRI

Payment for Participation Provided
For more information or a screening appointment
Call 792-5916 or email: glaze@musc.edu





Partners at Meals

Researchers at MUSC College of Nursing are seeking Caregiver volunteers for a research study aimed at improving nutrition and quality of life among Caregivers and their loved-ones with dementia.

EACH MONTH FOR SIX MONTHS

Caregivers are asked to:

- Take a before and after photo of three meals per month (one breakfast meal, one lunch meal and one dinner meal) and complete a monthly meal log.
- Attend a brief meeting (15 to 20 minutes) with your MUSC staff member to answer questions. This meeting can take place over the phone or in your home and can be scheduled at your convenience.

Loved ones will:

- Have a monthly weight check performed by their MUSC study coordinator.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Data collected and analyzed will help us better understand ways that may improve future care for individuals with dementia and resources for caregivers.
- As a participant, you can obtain information and resources on caregiving for people with dementia from MUSC experts.
- All collected information is kept confidential.
- Participation is completely voluntary. You can stop participating in the study at any time.
- No invasive procedures.
- Compensation for your time and effort will be provided.

TO LEARN MORE

Ask your in-home care companion to contact the MUSC study coordinator, Melissa Butcher, at 843-224-2115 or butcherm@musc.edu, to provide your name and contact information.



280 Calhoun Street, MSC 140
Charleston, SC 29425
Phone 843-792-0712
Email dillonk@musc.edu

MUSC Center on Aging
musc.edu/aging

THE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Founded in 1824 in Charleston, The Medical University of South Carolina is the oldest medical school in the South. Today, MUSC continues the tradition of excellence in education, research, and patient care. MUSC educates and trains more than 3,000 students and residents, and has nearly 13,000 employees, including approximately 1,500 faculty members.

The Center on Aging is a research, service, and education center at the Medical University of South Carolina. The center was approved by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education December 3, 1987, giving it the status of the oldest research center at the University.

Under the leadership of Interim Director, Dr. Heather Boger, the Center on Aging is committed to promoting health, longevity and improving the quality of life for South Carolina's seniors.

Changing What's Possible