

# Research and Education

2020 Highlights



## A year like no other

The challenges of 2020 brought to light the value of research and education embedded within an integrated health system. The Institute supported research for prevention as well as treatment of COVID-19, studied vaccine safety, and supported our clinical professionals with education and tools to prepare for pandemic-specific patient care. We also addressed a multitude of health and well-being concerns, considerations, and questions for the people we serve, the organization of which we are part, and the communities in which we live.

We are proud of the way our teams responded. Not only did we adjust the way we worked, we also found new and

creative ways to support our colleagues and our communities. While challenging, this unique year fostered innovation and resourcefulness—learnings we will carry forward.

Our 2020 Highlights provide a glimpse into the past year.

We hope you enjoy the update.

### **Nico Pronk, PhD**

President, HealthPartners Institute  
Chief Science Officer, HealthPartners

### **Jen Augustson**

Executive Director,  
Operations

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## The enduring value of research and education

As COVID-19 spread furiously across the world, we rapidly adjusted to focus our research and education expertise on helping curb the deadly pandemic. Our Office of Health Professional Education coordinated more than 20 case conferences for HealthPartners' clinicians to share the most up-to-date information about treatments, trends and infection prevention. Meanwhile, our Clinical Simulation program trained nurses and clinicians as they adapted their practices for COVID-19 and prepared for patient surges. Our researchers quickly began studying potential COVID-19 therapies, like inpatient and outpatient convalescent plasma, and various drugs that have potential to decrease inflammatory responses caused by the virus. Notably, we were a top-enrolling site for multiple national clinical trials. Beyond treatments, our teams helped create a COVID-19 tracking app that could tell users where the virus was spreading, allowing them to avoid hotspots of transmission. And, our investigators shared their knowledge of vaccine development, surveillance and safety to help build confidence in the preventive shots. While the COVID-19 pandemic tested our resolve in many ways, it showcased the value of research and education in advancing care for our members, patients and communities we serve.

## Vaccines vital in stopping pandemic

Vaccines are the world's best hope for overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic – and HealthPartners has played a critical role in bringing one to market. Partnering with Oxford University and AstraZeneca in a phase 3 COVID-19 vaccine trial, we enrolled 804 people who are at high risk for contracting COVID-19. We are among the top enrolling sites across the nation. Thirty percent of our participants are people of color who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, another nation-leading benchmark. While results are forthcoming, similar trials in the United Kingdom and Brazil show effectiveness of 70% in preventing symptomatic disease and 100% in preventing severe disease.

## Fellowship builds expertise, confidence and relationships

The Advanced Practice Clinician (APC) Primary Care Fellowship program launched in 2020, providing a structured approach to training our physician assistants and nurse practitioners. The program offers a comprehensive 12-month didactic and clinical learning experience for physician assistants and nurse practitioners interested in primary care. Upon completion of the system-wide program, APCs will have expertise, confidence and relationships built across our system that will allow them to enter into practice at an accelerated rate. The APCs will be prepared to provide high-quality, patient-centered care in a manner consistent with our core values. This is HealthPartners' fourth post-graduate training program for APCs, positioning us as a leader in education and innovation.

## Which is more effective? Continuous glucose monitoring or traditional finger stick?

International Diabetes Center (IDC) received a \$3.6 million grant from the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute to find out if new wearable technology that continuously monitors blood glucose is more effective than the conventional finger stick approach to monitoring glucose in a primary care setting. Patients will be recruited from 20 primary care clinics in the HealthPartners system. If the continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) devices prove to be more effective, IDC researchers say they could also expand remote diabetes care strategies because clinicians can access patients' blood glucose data remotely. And the CGM devices could be a less burdensome way for patients with type 2 diabetes to monitor glucose.

This past year, we began tracking many different student learner types across HealthPartners. We work with schools to find safe and meaningful experiences to train our future workforce of health care professionals. Our SharedSpace4Learning (SS4L) application helps us do that by allowing students to take an active role in creating, tracking and evaluating their learning experiences.

OHPE Unplugged is a new faculty development series for clinician educators. The monthly event offers opportunities to connect, build community and share best practices in the areas of teaching and learning, scholarship, professionalism, leadership, well-being, and diversity and inclusion.

## Alignment of clinical simulation programs comes at perfect time



Combining our simulation programs at Regions Hospital and Methodist Hospital this past year proved to be great timing. This new system-wide program maximizes resources and supports organization-wide initiatives for the long run. It also set us up to respond to the pandemic in real time.

With our front-line clinicians facing challenges and unknowns, we knew we could help. What is essential for our essential colleagues? Access to tools, resources and education to provide quality and safe patient care. We served as personal protective equipment (PPE) coaches. And staged simulations for physician training in extubation procedures and safe end-of-life care. We hit the road to train teams on current best practices for COVID-19 treatment and stabilization like high flow O2 administration, proning (situating) patients and administering Remdesivir. And we continued to support clinical teams in customized learning opportunities on a variety of topics using highly realistic equipment and simulations, including computer-driven human patient simulators and other experiential learning.

This past year taught us the importance of adapting and innovating to provide just-in-time education and resources. Cornerstones that will support our new system-wide program.

## Suicide prediction model helps save lives

A suicide prediction model that uses real-time updates to electronic health records to assess suicide risk is helping to identify potential tragedies before they happen. Developed by Institute researchers and others, the Suicide Risk Calculator algorithm examines 313 demographic and clinical characteristics from health records for up to five years to determine the potential for suicide. This work builds on our Health Plan's years-long efforts to predict behavioral health hospitalization among members. We saw this new tool as a way to strengthen critical support for members. The combination of experienced and knowledgeable case managers and this algorithm's real-time alerts creates a powerful intervention that can make a crucial difference. It's an excellent example of how we can collaborate across HealthPartners to improve patient care.

## Electronic Health Record Consortium finds inequities in COVID-19 vaccine distribution

Our researchers are supporting a new partnership that is measuring COVID-19 vaccine equity and informing vaccine distribution policies. The partnership is called the Minnesota Electronic Health Record (EHR) Consortium and it consists of 10 large health systems and the Minnesota Department of Health. Currently, every participating health system is creating a standardized summary report for their patients who have received a COVID-19 vaccine. All of this data is then sent to a central site for aggregation and analysis, giving our state a more comprehensive view of which populations are getting vaccinated. This first-of-its-kind model has already identified stark inequities, which HealthPartners and other systems are working to address. In the future, this collaborative model will be used to glean other important health insights. Our researchers are already planning studies that will leverage this innovative approach.

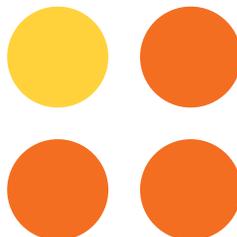


## The myth of the obese firefighter

When the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published a 2014 study suggesting the majority of firefighters were obese, it grabbed more headlines than a five-alarm fire. It also called into question whether a large number of these first responders were fit for their jobs. But several Institute investigators, along with other colleagues, had a hunch that the study's analysis using body mass index (BMI) wasn't the most accurate way to judge firefighters' physical fitness. They recruited 52 firefighters for a study that included additional tests and a high-tech body scan that analyzed fat, muscle and bone densities for more insights. The data showed that BMI was not well correlated to firefighters' fitness, and that fat mass percentage was a better predictor of their fitness.

## Bringing treatment for rare form of melanoma to the Midwest

Currently, there are only 19 clinical trials for uveal melanoma available in the United States – almost all at health care systems on the coasts. Uveal melanoma is a type of melanoma found in the iris, ciliary body, or choroid of the eye (collectively referred to as the uvea). It is a relatively rare disease that is always fatal when it becomes metastatic (spreads to other parts of the body). We recently launched a new study for uveal melanoma at Regions Hospital and Fraumshuh Cancer Center. Using a combination of two experimental drugs – PAC-1 and entrectinib – we are looking to find the most effective doses with the least amount of side effects in patients who have metastatic uveal melanoma. Our study will be one of only three available in the Midwest. Patients from the Twin Cities and surrounding areas and states now have more opportunity to receive this unique potential treatment close to home.



In 2020, we conducted more than 350 studies and published 356 articles, books and book chapters.

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## AUDITED FINANCIALS 2020

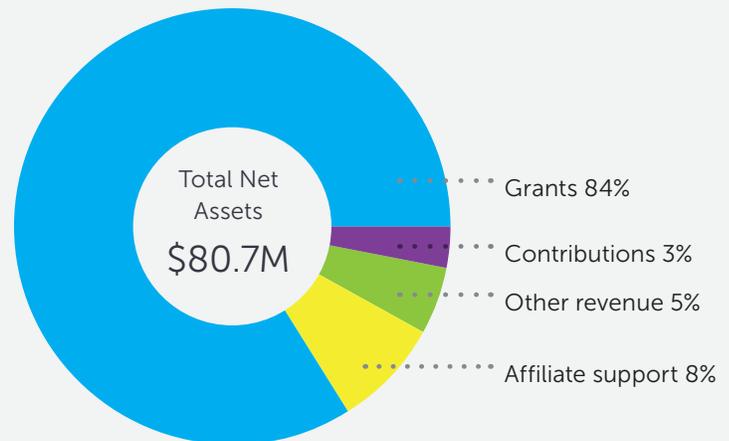
Operating Revenue

\$41.6M

Operating Expenses

\$41.3M

## Operating Revenue Sources



99% of our net assets are unrestricted

Mission: To improve health and well-being in partnership with our members, patients and community.

Vision: Health as it could be, affordability as it must be, through relationships built on trust.

Visit our [website](https://www.healthpartnersinstitute.org) to learn more about the Institute.

## Institute's role in advancing health equity

HealthPartners' commitment to advancing health equity has become even more critical as events in our community and country have exposed the depth of disparities and systemic racism. The Institute is proud to engage in efforts to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and health and well-being for all.

In research, study populations include immigrants, American Indians, Black and Hispanic women, those with limited English proficiency and many others. Recently, we've focused on overcoming vaccine hesitancy in communities of color. Our education programs incorporate curriculum on cultural humility, justice and racism. Didactics feature topics such as health care disparities, implicit bias, human trafficking, health equity and medical ethics. Training programs partner with our community to learn more about our most vulnerable patient populations and social determinants of health.