**The Rutgers Corona Cohort Study:**

Developing a better and more complete understanding of the rates and risk factors for transmission of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) remains an absolute priority. Because of the potential for exposure, differences exist between the rates of infection among Healthcare workers (HCW) as compared to Non-healthcare workers (NHCW). The long term objective aims to protect the healthcare workforce caring for SARS-CoV-2-infected patients, their families, communities and the general population. To meet this aim, Drs. Reynold Panettieri, Jeffrey Carson, and Martin Blaser are leading a study, the *Rutgers Corona Cohort Study*, facilitated and implemented thanks to the expertise of the Biostatistics Core, the Clinical Trials Office and CRCs at RWJMS, NJMS and EOHSI, and the Biomarker Core.

“The global crisis we face in understanding and abrogating the threat of COVID-19 appears formidable however, evidence –based approaches in addressing the COVID-19 threat will serve as the foundation to address not only this pandemic but also those in the future,” says Dr. Panettieri, Vice Chancellor for Translational Medicine and Science.

Thanks to the incredible interest in the study, we completed enrollment and all baseline visits in 10 days on April 7th, and exceeded our recruitment targets, enrolling over 800 participants, two thirds of which are healthcare workers and one third, non-healthcare workers. The study involves collecting samples (blood, saliva and throat swabs) and health information surveys at baseline and every two weeks for six months, as well as daily temperature readings. Participant visits are at the study’s three command centers: the Clinical Research Center at RWJMS in New Brunswick, led by Deborah McCloskey; the Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute in Piscataway, led by Kathleen Black; and the Clinical Research Unit at New Jersey Medical School in Newark, led by Nancy Reilly. A team of staff and student volunteers are addressing participant questions, identifying needed supplies and ensuring the smooth performance of the project.

Outcomes of the testing are provided to participants. All samples and laboratory studies are provided by RUCDR, a CLIA- and CAP-certified core facility. The study is being supported by electronic consenting, on-line surveys and automated emails, developed by the NJ ACTS Biostatistics, Epidemiology and Research Methods Core, based at the School of public Health.

The Rutgers Corona Cohort Study has catalyzed additional studies and activities. One such project tested whether, and demonstrated that, saline solution could be used for transporting throat swabs for SARS-CoV-2 testing in place of much more expensive and difficult to obtain Viral Transport Medium. Another is a bioengineering project at NJIT which created a 3-D swab with a detachable tip, a safer way to add the swab to the transport medium.

“NJ ACTS and NCATS in partnership with Marken/UPS and df Young has provided the financial and in-kind support for this program that will likely shape our understanding of the risk and susceptibility of developing COVID-19 in US health care workers,” says Dr. Panettieri.