



Weekly update

Through our research, community outreach and expert commentary, the University of Birmingham is taking an active role in the fightback against COVID-19. You can read our latest statements and follow our research updates at www.birmingham.ac.uk/coronavirus.

Through Birmingham Health Partners, a strategic alliance between the University and two NHS Foundation Trusts, we are working to support frontline healthcare professionals. For the latest updates visit their [website](#).

Research

University of Birmingham joins COVID-19 genome sequencing alliance

The COVID-19 Genomics UK Consortium (COG-UK) comprised of the NHS, Public Health Agencies and academic institutions including the University of Birmingham will deliver large scale, rapid sequencing of the cause of the disease and share intelligence.

Understanding viral evolution is important for understanding how the virus is spreading in local, national and international settings. It provides valuable epidemiological information revealing the chains of transmission that must be stopped in order to stop this outbreak. We will also be able to observe how the virus adapts to a human host over time, and how drug treatments – and eventually vaccines – exert pressure on the virus. ([More information](#))

COVID-19 research synthesis updates

The Birmingham Acute Care Research Group at the University of Birmingham and local hospitals in the Birmingham Health Partners alliance are producing weekly updates on the latest research into COVID-19. This briefing details the viral biology, disease progression and therapies based on recent literature published on the virus. ([More information](#))

Additionally, Richard Lehman, Professor of the Shared Understanding of Medicine, will also be reviewing COVID-19 literature on a weekly basis for the British Medical Journal (BMJ) blog. ([More information](#))

Improving facemasks for frontline NHS staff

Scientists at the Healthcare Technologies Institute, University of Birmingham and King's College London are working on a solution to improve the seal and fit of facemasks used in hospitals during the COVID-19 crisis. ([More information](#))

Community

University technicians produce hand sanitiser to support Birmingham City Council frontline staff

At the request of Public Health England, a team of technicians have been working at the University's flagship Collaborative Teaching Laboratory (CTL) to produce urgently needed hand sanitiser for Birmingham's social care workers. ([More information](#))



(Above) Technicians at the University of Birmingham producing hand sanitiser for Birmingham City Council workers.

Students volunteer to help NHS

Our medical students have set up a number of volunteering groups to support hospital trusts in the West Midlands and frontline NHS staff. Already, more than 1,000 students have signed up. ([More information](#))

Supporting the NHS

Among our activities, we are co-ordinating the collection of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) to donate to the NHS, our Edgbaston Park Hotel is providing accommodation for NHS staff, and one of our nurseries is supporting key workers by caring for up to 30 children daily. We are also working to bring forward qualification for our final-year medical students, allowing them to work as fully fledged doctors by the end of April. ([More information](#))

Catering teams donate food supplies

Staff working in the catering team at the University of Birmingham have donated food supplies to local food banks and homeless charities to help the most needy. ([More information](#))



(Above) University staff pack food supplies to donate to the local community.

Guangzhou hospital donates protective equipment to Birmingham healthcare professionals

The University of Birmingham has a long-standing partnership with the First Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-sen University, located in Birmingham's sister city Guangzhou. Their medics are sending PPE kits to Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham, which includes 2,000 particulate filter respirators, 10,000 surgical masks, 20,000 examination gloves and 500 protective coveralls. ([More information](#))

New video helps Asian rheumatology patients stay safe from COVID-19

Experts from the Universities of Birmingham and Oxford have joined the National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS) in reaching out to Asian people whose first language is not English and who are living with inflammatory forms of arthritis. Dr Kanta Kumar and Dr Shirish Dubey recorded a video in Hindi to help people protect themselves from the threat of COVID-19. ([More information](#))

Comment

Prepare now to sustainably deliver the COVID-19 vaccine (Professor Pawanexh Kohli)

We must plan an efficient deliver mechanism for a future COVID-19 vaccine to ensure that it will be provided to everyone on earth. ([More information](#))

Dealing with Coronavirus: how can we learn from Africa's experience? (Professor Richard Black)

What lessons can we draw from earlier humanitarian emergencies in Africa, such as Ebola or the Rwandan genocide? ([More information](#))

Economic exposure to COVID-19 (Part I): the situation in the West Midlands region – Closing the Borders (Dr Andre Carrascal Incera)

In a series of blogs examining the economic effects of the disruption caused by COVID-19, Dr Incera identifies three different ways in which the virus could impact the West Midlands economy. ([More information](#))

Contagion: the economic and social impacts of Coronavirus (Covid-19) on the West Midlands (Professor Simon Collinson)

The West Midlands is particularly at risk given the structure of our economy and an already low level of average household income. ([More information](#))

Urgent government action needed to avoid debt explosion (Professor Karen Rowlingson)

While Government has taken unprecedented action in recent weeks, it is nowhere near enough to avoid a future debt explosion. More support is needed urgently for people with rent and council tax payments; those in debt; the self-employed and those laid off or on reduced hours; and families with children. ([More information](#))

The Coronavirus could topple governments around the world (Professor Nic Cheeseman)

The coronavirus pandemic might not disrupt politics in wealthy Western democracies, but it is likely to unleash political instability—and even regime change—in developing countries already suffering from an economic crisis. ([More information](#))

Auto industry hit from Coronavirus could be even bigger than latest forecast (Professor David Bailey)

Shut downs will weaken firms and push them further to merge and consolidate. Auto firms will review investments and what models they produce, and where. That poses further big questions over the position of some UK plants which anyway face uncertainty over the nature of the UK's trading relationship with Europe at the end of 2020. ([More information](#))

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