

**\*\*Text of E-mail message, or “touchpoint,” for Northwestern Memorial Foundation gift officers to download, personalize as they wish, and send to current and potential donors (Written in November 2020)**

As we continue to experience the many changes and challenges that COVID-19 has brought to our daily lives, Northwestern Medicine remains committed to learning more about the illness and to providing exceptional, compassionate care and support to COVID-19 patients and their loved ones. Equally important, our physicians, scientists, nurses, and other healthcare team members are dedicated to supporting, protecting, and empowering *one another*.

Inspired by these goals, Northwestern Medicine’s John T. Wilkins, MD, MS, FAHA, associate professor of both Medicine (Cardiology) and Preventive Medicine (Epidemiology) is leading a fascinating study of COVID-19—specifically, risks for and prevalence of the virus—among Northwestern Medicine healthcare workers. The catalyst for Dr. Wilkins’s study was his recognition of the fact that healthcare workers are at risk for SARS CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) infection, and that their exposure may occur both within the hospital environment and outside of it.

Moreover, because generous donors like you have enabled Northwestern Medicine to offer antibody testing (for SARS CoV-2 antibodies) to *all employees*, Dr. Wilkins saw an excellent opportunity to provide this testing to many healthcare workers *and* to explore some essential COVID-19-related questions. Since launching their groundbreaking study in June, Dr. Wilkins and his research team have been evaluating whether study participants have SARS CoV-2 antibodies in their blood—indicating that a person has had the SARS CoV-2 virus at some point in the past—in order to determine which healthcare workers have been affected by the virus.

More than 6,500 male and female healthcare workers (including physicians, nurses, and individuals who serve in administrative and other healthcare-related roles) have enrolled in the study, with participants representing all ages (between 18 and 60+) and a wide variety of racial backgrounds. To date, Dr. Wilkins and his team have gathered a vast amount of data and have arrived at several pivotal conclusions. Among the most significant findings is the fact that, among healthcare workers, *community exposure*—as compared to exposure to COVID-19 patients in the hospital setting—appears to be more strongly associated with SARS CoV-2 infection risk. In addition, the team has found that Northwestern Medicine’s infection control policies are very effective, although some risk persists for healthcare workers who have long-term exposure to the SARS CoV-2 virus.

Underscoring the importance of protecting our healthcare workers—and, more broadly, the public at large—Dr. Wilkins notes, “Infection control vigilance in healthcare settings and outside [of healthcare settings] is needed.”

***These insights, and this study as a whole, have taken shape, because of the generosity and vision of our donors.*** By supporting antibody testing at Northwestern Medicine, caring people like you enabled this study—rooted in the importance of antibody testing—to move from an intriguing idea to a full-fledged mission of exploration and discovery.

Dr. Wilkins and his team join me in thanking you for your partnership and for helping to provide the spark that fuels great progress!

If you would like to read the “pre-print” summary of the team’s study and conclusions, please click here: <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.09.11.20192385v1.article-info>