



# Overview

## Women's Health Overview

## Losses from COVID-19 and Impacts on Your Psyche

*"The stress and emotions the pandemic has inserted into our daily lives can be overwhelming on multiple levels."*

On a Saturday afternoon in August, countless numbers of birthday parties and weddings were scheduled to be large extravaganzas. Due to the pandemic, these events transformed into socially distant affairs requiring guests to wear masks.

Last week, one of our departments held a virtual retreat using our new best friend, Zoom – an online video/ phone conferencing program. Many of us have succumb to ordering groceries online to limit the need to literally "face" individuals who fail to grasp the understanding of how the virus is spread. Meeting a new employee for the first time no longer means greeting them with a warm handshake. The impulse to

cordially shake one's hand is still present, but awkwardly avoided.

These drastic changes in how we live, and the sense of loss related to COVID-19, have been significant and impactful in our local, national and international communities. The memories of this past season will be forever imprinted in our minds, and the stress that we have experienced will continue to shape our past, present and future. How one perceives this loss is relative to one's previous experiences with loss, one's resources to manage the loss and the ability to cope with it. Oftentimes, grief stems from a single event. With COVID-19, there have been a series of events over a span of months that we are all still trying to process. For many of us, our whole lives have changed in a very traumatic way due to the loss of a job, the demise of sustainable income, death of a loved one or the loss of physical safety. Others may not have experienced the

see Grief pg 4

## Finding Meaning in Grief

Feeling grief is not a simple process. Even admitting we are grieving makes us uncomfortable.

Not everyone experiences grief the same way. Imagine you're riding a roller coaster for the first time. Your friends are telling you it's not so bad, some people say it's the scariest ride in the park. How you are feeling is just as important.

Finding meaning in grief is not easy. We want recovery to be simple and straightforward, but it's more like a roller coaster in the dark. You are on this track and it's moving, but you don't know if you'll start banking or take a steep drop.

Instead of fighting back, allow the emotions to be experienced. When riding a roller coaster, once the ride is in motion, there is not a lot you can do to stop it. At first, it's terrifying. As we get more comfortable, we can see the tracks laid out before us. The ride will end. We have to give it time.

source: [nebraskamed.com](http://nebraskamed.com)



# From the chairman

In our last issue of Women's Health Outlook, COVID-19 occupied most of our time and energy. Although we hoped for a more rapid resolution of the virus, that has not happened. The pandemic has altered how we work, play, do our jobs, interact with friends and family, where we eat and many other activities of daily life that we previously took for granted. This has created an unpleasant looming cloud over our very existence.

We are constantly bombarded with media content that is alternatively fact or fiction. Health care issues that used to be considered matters of science have become matters of freedom of choice. The science that demonstrates the effectiveness of mask wearing is being ignored in deference to personal freedom. While I support freedom I do so only if it does not endanger the health of others. This is similar to the argument that freedom of speech does not allow you to yell "fire" in a crowded theater.

The final disconcerting fact about COVID-19 is how it disproportionately affects persons of color. There are many reasons for this, including unequal access to health care; social determinants of health such as economic standing, social norms and attitudes, quality of education, public safety, and language barriers; multigenerational housing situations and systemic/institutional racism. Our country cannot permit COVID-19 to win, nor can it allow the evil of racism to triumph over good. Paraphrasing a quote of uncertain origin: "All that is necessary for evil to triumph over good is for good women and men to do nothing." For all of our sakes, please do something.

**Carl V. Smith, MD, FACOG**  
Chairman  
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology  
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## overview

### Women's Health Overview

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# research news

## COVID-19 Update: UNMC in Action

After a peak in May and early June, the number of coronavirus cases in Nebraska began falling. Recently, however, the number of positive cases and hospitalizations are on the rise again. It's important that we work to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our state by following proven and effective measures for protecting ourselves, such as:

- Social distancing and staying at home as much as you can
- Wearing a mask (required in Omaha until Sept. 15)
- Handwashing and avoiding touching your face

Please remember that you do not have to have symptoms to transmit the virus. Transmission can occur from those who have COVID-19 but do not have any symptoms or before their symptoms start.

While the majority of complications and deaths occur in older people and those with underlying medical problems, young and otherwise healthy individuals can get sick and possibly die, too. In Nebraska, 40 percent of hospitalizations

are people 54 years of age or younger. We should all act responsibly to avoid putting others in harm's way.

To date, we have limited treatment options for COVID-19, which makes preventative measures such as masking even more important. Proven medications for COVID-19 include the antiviral medication remdesivir, which is used to treat severe COVID-19 in the hospital. UNMC and Nebraska Medicine are participants in the Adaptive COVID-19 Treatment Trial (ACTT clinical trial) that led to emergency use authorization of remdesivir by the Food and Drug Administration. This trial continues to enroll and will soon begin its third phase. In addition, the anti-inflammatory medication dexamethasone has been shown to decrease risk of death to very ill hospitalized COVID-19 patients and is currently being used in hospitals. There are many more drugs in the pipeline to treat mild, moderate and severe COVID-19, some which are being studied at UNMC.

Researchers around the world are working diligently to find a vaccine

for COVID-19. There are currently over 150 vaccines under development, three of which were chosen by the US government to fund for phase 3 clinical trials in humans, in which scientists give the vaccine to thousands of people to test how effective it is in preventing infection. As of Aug. 11, the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation approved one vaccine, Sputnik V – formerly known as Gam-COVID-Vac. However, experts have raised concerns about the Russian vaccine's safety and effectiveness, as it was not studied in phase 3 clinical trials. UNMC hopes to have a vaccine trial by mid-October.

Information is key for making good decisions about how to protect yourself and your loved ones from COVID-19. For accurate, up-to-date information on COVID-19 visit:

- [NebraskaMed.com/Covid](https://NebraskaMed.com/Covid)
- [unmc.edu/coronavirus](https://unmc.edu/coronavirus)
- [dhhs.ne.gov/coronavirus](https://dhhs.ne.gov/coronavirus)

**Contributed by Nada A. Fadul, MD**  
*UNMC Division of Infectious Diseases*



## Grief *continued from pg 1*

harm in a direct way; but one cannot overlook the devastation for black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The losses for BIPOC are widespread and have destroyed communities.

“New normal” is a phrase that furthers our sense of longing for the way things used to be. When the new normal consists of a constant stream of bad news paired with a lack of consistent answers for how to overcome the tragedies among us, some feel helpless. Others feel hopeless. Many of us feel other strong emotions such as fear, depression or anger. It is important to understand that what you are feeling is normal. It is imperative that you can label these emotions, and it is important to realize that you are not alone because many of us are grappling with these intense emotions.

The stress and emotions the pandemic has inserted into our daily lives can be overwhelming on multiple levels. Former First Lady Michelle Obama expressed that she has experienced symptoms of depression during the pandemic. When someone who is well known and admired by many addresses their own emotional health, it helps to decrease the societal stigma of mental illness. Tackling our own psychological well-being ensures that we can continue to function optimally.

As women, it is important that we care for ourselves emotionally, physically, spiritually and socially, as we are often called to care for others' well-being. As health care professionals, we cannot pour from an empty cup; therefore, prioritizing self-care is integral to our ability to care for other human beings. We must help ourselves before we can help our patients, our families, our employees and our communities.

Highlighting self-care during the pandemic entails handling our losses by safely climbing the ladder of grief, while recognizing that these emotions can be triggered easily because we are all still losing and grieving. What a great time to revisit some of our basic human needs for love, belonging and connection – while our worlds have slowed down. Now is the time to examine dimensions of wellness and ways to cope with grief. To grieve is to take an active role in caring for the emotional wounds that have been caused by our significant losses. Grief can become pathological, masking the symptoms of clinical depression. One may feel surreal in their existence and be in denial that anything has occurred. Others may wish that things were different. Having hope is the expectation that things will get better. Like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated, “We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.” This quote is paramount to the current state of our world, as we must maintain hope while being inundated with reasons to lose hope. Coping while grieving is the biggest task among us.

To hear more about this topic from Dr. Strong, our keynote presenter, plan to attend the Omaha Women's Health and Wellness Conference on Oct. 9. See page 5 of this newsletter for more details.

**Contributed by Sheritta Strong, MD, DFAPA**

*UNMC Department of Psychiatry  
Director of Inclusion, UNMC*

### *Mission Statement*

The mission of the Olson Center for Women's Health is to provide a national comprehensive health science center at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC). Based in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the center enables UNMC to make distinctive strides in education, research, and service through innovative approaches to women's health issues.

### *Want More Information?*

Visit our website: **OlsonCenter.com**

Learn more about our health care providers, services, and programs available at the Olson Center for Women's Health. Our website also offers women's health information. Here are a few topics:

- Breastfeeding
- Breast health and disease
- Cardiovascular health
- Gastrointestinal health
- Gynecologic health
- Reproductive endocrinology/infertility
- Pregnancy
- Wellness
- Incontinence

### *Newsletter Committee*

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# Omaha Women's Health & Wellness Conference

**Friday, Oct. 9, 2020  
Virtual Conference**



## 2020 Conference Agenda

- 9 a.m. Sheritta Strong, MD, DFAPA  
"Losses Due to COVID-19: What Stages of Grief Are You In?"
- 10 a.m. Break
- 10:15 a.m. Meghan McLarney, MS, RDN, LMNT  
"The Power of Plants: How Eating 'Plant-based' Can Fight Disease"
- 11:15 a.m. Break
- 11:30 a.m. Ashley Farrens, MSN, MBA, RN and Charity Evans, MD  
"Understanding Trauma Informed Care, Resiliency, and Your Health"
- 12:30 p.m. Lunch
- 1:30 p.m. Breakout Session (choose 1, 2, or 3)
  - 1. "Cancer Risk and Prevention: What Do Women Need to Know?"  
- Rachael Schmidt, DNP, FNP-C, AOCNP and Gwen Reiser, MS, LCGC
  - 2. "Midlife Mood Swings: Connecting Perimenopause and Mental Health"  
- Dana Raml, MD
  - 3. "Pouring From an Empty Cup: Can CAM Help You to Help Others?"  
- Ally Dering-Anderson, PharmD, RP, FAPhA
- 2:30 p.m. Break
- 2:45 p.m. Breakout Session (choose 4, 5, or 6)
  - 4. "The Nourished Life – Finding Health at Every Size"  
- Emily Estes, MS, RDN, LMNT
  - 5. "This is Not What I Expected: When Depression Affects Pregnancy and Postpartum" - Marley Doyle, MD
  - 6. "Technology for Women, by Women" - Christine Allmon, BS
- 4:10 p.m. Closing Session: Chad Boukal, husband, father, caregiver of wife during breast cancer
- 4:30 p.m. Adjourn

## Registration Deadline: Friday, Oct. 2

We are committed to your safety. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's conference will be an online-only event. *Please note: A valid email address is required to attend this online conference.*

General attendance for the conference is free. ANCC contact hours will be available for select sessions; cost is \$30.

You may register online with a credit card at [OmahaWomensHealthAndWellness.com](http://OmahaWomensHealthAndWellness.com)

Please note: There is a 2.75% fee for credit card transactions.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening phone: \_\_\_\_\_ RN/LPN License Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

First Breakout Session (choose one) 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ Second Breakout Session (choose one) 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_ 6 \_\_\_\_\_

The University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Nursing Continuing Nursing Education is accredited with distinction as a provider of nursing continuing professional development by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

**Make check or money order to:** University of Nebraska Medical Center

**Mail check and registration form to:**

Omaha Women's Health and Wellness Conference  
Olson Center for Women's Health  
989450 Nebraska Medical Center  
Omaha, NE 68198-9450

Questions? Call the Olson Women's Health Resource Center at 402-559-6345.



## OLSON CENTER FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH

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[olsoncenter.com](http://olsoncenter.com)

## welcoming new providers



**Kelsie Cabrera, DO**, completed her medical school training in Kansas City, Missouri, at the Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences. After graduating medical school, she came to Omaha, Nebraska and completed her residency training at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Early in her medical school training, Dr. Cabrera became passionate about women's health care, leading her to pursue a career in obstetrics and gynecology. A major factor in her decision was the ability to develop long-term and trusting relationships with

her patients. She feels this trust is paramount as she walks women through some of the biggest moments of their lives.



**Leslie Karas, APRN-NP**, is a nurse practitioner in the Transgender Care Clinic and the Olson Center for Women's Health. She received her bachelor's from Clarkson College and master's from the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska. Karas provides transgender, OB-GYN and early pregnancy assessment care. She developed a passion for working with patients with health care disparities while working at a community-based health center. Karas is a major advocate of patient education and rights. Her goal

is to create a welcoming and safe place for patients of all races, gender and sexual orientations to receive care. She brings more than 25 years of nursing experience with her.

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examines the ways we are experiencing loss and grief from the pandemic.

**page 3** Research News

UNMC is on the cutting edge of COVID-19 research, including treatments and vaccine development.

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Register now!

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Medical Center