

Greetings/salutations

My name is Chris DeFrancesco, and I'm a nearly 14-year employee of UConn Health. I am a communications specialist, which admittedly is low on the spectrum of importance when compared to the life-saving health care many of my colleagues provide daily. Still, one of my responsibilities is to communicate the good – if not great – that takes place at the state's only public academic medical center.

For example, did you know, last summer, providers from **UConn Health's Multiple Sclerosis Center** were out in the community, leading an effort to get food and supplies to shut-in patients with a disability or suppressed immune system, and [arranging for mobile COVID-19 testing onsite](#) at a supportive housing complex? (This was before testing had become widely available.)

By the way, one of those providers, the head of our MS Center, Dr. Jaime Imitola, was chosen by the National MS Society to help [come up with the guidelines for the COVID-19 vaccine for MS patients](#).

A few months earlier, one of UConn Health's leading physician-scientists, Dr. Cato Laurencin – who by the way brings in an extraordinary amount of grant funding for his work in biomedical engineering – came out with what we're pretty sure was the [first study published in a peer-reviewed journal that showed communities of color are more vulnerable to coronavirus](#) infection and mortality.

I should also mention, Dr. Laurencin's **Connecticut Convergence Institute for Translation in Regenerative Engineering**, submitted a patent application for a method of using facial recognition and 3D printing to [fabricate custom mask frames](#), giving conventional masks the optimal protective qualities of N95 respirators. Six weeks later came a [licensing deal with a Connecticut manufacturer to produce them](#).

One of the many things put on hold last year was the New Britain EMS Academy's one-year training program for its next class of paramedics. The trainees needed an emergency department to shadow doctors and nurses, and the **UConn John Dempsey Hospital ED, which never shut down, welcomed them** and [enabled the students to complete their training in the fall](#). If you're familiar with the need for paramedics in our state then you'll understand the importance of this.

Really it's only fitting, if you think about it – As UConn Health was where the **first class of paramedics in New England** trained, in 1975.

And it almost goes without saying, UConn Health's role in testing for – and [vaccinating against](#) – COVID-19. By the end of this week, UConn Health will have administered **more than 25,000 doses**.

These of course are just a few examples of the value UConn Health brings to the people of Connecticut. The reality is, not all aspects of UConn Health's missions of patient care, education,

and research are lucrative, but they're necessary and people in our state depend on them... Ask yourself how much of what I just shared with you would take place at a *private* hospital that might focus a little less on patients and people, and a little more on profits?

I ask you to keep this in mind and please consider prioritizing our state's only public academic medical center, keeping it public, and addressing the unfunded liability that weighs on the institution's finances.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today, and thank you for your service to our citizenry.

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