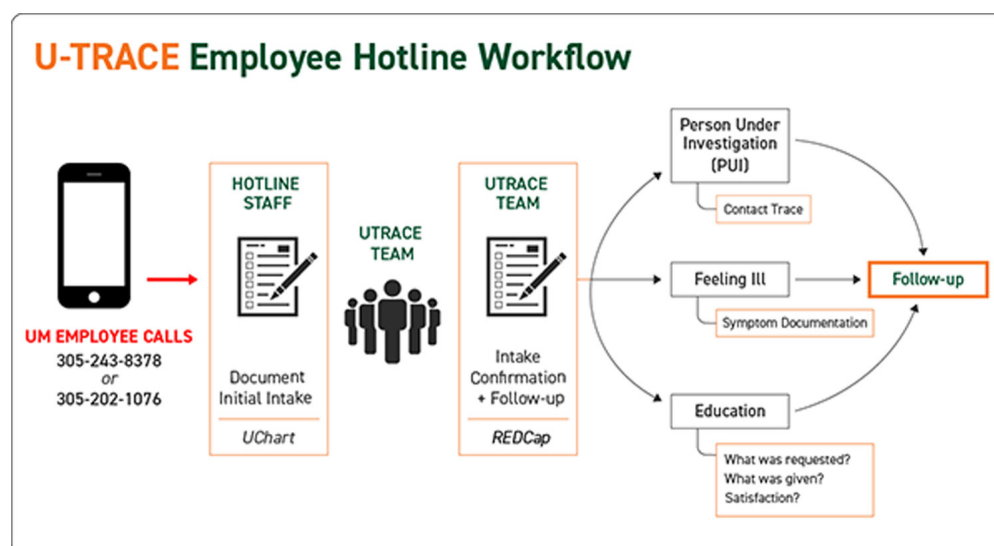




U-TRACE Initiative to Address COVID-19 Public Health Crisis

To help the University of Miami community address the health crisis related to the novel coronavirus, the Miller School of Medicine has launched a multidisciplinary initiative called U-TRACE for **UM Tracking, Resources, and Assessment of COVID-19 Epidemiology**.



“We are mobilizing our resources to respond to this unprecedented public health threat,” said Erin N. Kobetz, Ph.D., M.P.H.,

professor of medicine and public health sciences, associate director for population science and cancer disparity at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, and co-vice provost for research at the University of Miami. “Our goal is to identify and manage new cases, protect our clinicians on the front lines, and provide appropriate support and care to our students, faculty, and staff members.”

Dr. Kobetz is leading the collaborative U-TRACE program, which was established March 17 to bring together UM’s expertise in epidemiology, occupational health and safety, infectious



diseases, nursing, informatics, environmental exposure assessment, and public health education.

“Our focus is coordination, tracking and support for individuals with COVID-19 symptoms or positive contacts,” Dr. Kobetz said. “We also provide decision support and real-time information about COVID-19 contacts and cases within the UM/UHealth workforce to medical school leadership.”

With the U-TRACE program, any UM employees, students and trainees with coronavirus symptoms or exposure, should call the UM hotline at 305-243-TEST Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Individuals who feel ill are immediately directed to care. The hotline staff then informs the U-TRACE team, which follows up by identifying recent contacts, answering questions or providing education. Individuals can also email to: utrace@miami.edu.

Another pathway to care is through the UM employee drive-up COVID testing site near the Diabetes Research Institute (DRI) on NW 14th Street. “The National Guard team has been observing our drive-thru COVID-19 testing practices and algorithms,” said Alberto J. Caban-Martinez, D.O., Ph.D., M.P.H., assistant professor of public health sciences. “For example, individuals waiting in line must turn off their vehicles or recirculate the internal air to reduce the risk of virus-laden droplets being expelled by the air-conditioning system.”

Dr. Caban-Martinez added that the U-TRACE initiative provides a single source for identifying and tracing COVID-19 contacts throughout the university, including the Coral Gables and Rosenstiel School campuses.

“Now we have a standardized system in place to provide an



evidence-based guide to our response,” he said. “It is also providing learning opportunities for our M.D. and M.P.H. students, whose capstone experiences were canceled this semester. They are applying the skills they will need in public health and medicine by participating in the U-TRACE process remotely.”

The U-TRACE initiative involves the redirection of the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center’s Firefighter Cancer Initiative, a multidisciplinary team of scientists, clinicians and firefighters focused on cancer control and cancer prevention strategies.

“We are refocusing our efforts and sharing our knowledge with Miami-Dade’s first responders and other South Florida institutions to help them deal with COVID-19,” Dr. Kobetz said. “We want to help protect our emergency responders, clinicians and other health care professionals in order to maintain our community’s ability to address this growing public health crisis.”