



UHealth Plasma Program Honored by Miami-Dade County

The Miami-Dade County Board of Commissioners bestowed special recognition on Heroes Helping Heroes, the UHealth – University of Miami Health System plasma program, during its board meeting on July 7. The collaborative UHealth program collects donated plasma from patients who have recovered from COVID-19, and transfuses the units to sick patients who are still fighting the virus.

YanYan Wu, M.D., Ph.D., professor, chief of laboratory medicine, and director of transfusion medicine at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, attended the event, along with several individuals representing UHealth's collaborative partners in the program. Jose "Pepe" Diaz, chairman of the Miami-Dade County board, recognized Heroes Helping Heroes as Mayor Daniella Levine Cava presided.



At its July 7 meeting, the Miami-Dade County Board of Commissioners honored the UHealth plasma program Heroes Helping Heroes.

“It is a such honor to work alongside with these incredible heroes and to finally meet them in person,” Dr. Wu said.

Hope for Treating Severe COVID-19 Cases

Convalescent plasma treatment rapidly evolved as one of the first hopes to help treat severe COVID-19 cases. UHealth implemented its plasma program in 2020, establishing Heroes Helping Heroes with solid support from Stephen D. Nimer, M.D., director of Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, Oscar de la Renta Endowed Chair in cancer research, and executive dean for

research at the Miller School; Roy E. Weiss, M.D., Ph.D., chief medical officer, ambulatory services for UHealth and chair of the Department of Medicine; and UHealth leadership.

Also credited as instrumental in the program's success are Merce Jorda, M.D, Ph.D., M.B.A., chair of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine; Shweta Anjan, M.D., assistant professor of clinical medicine; Susanne Doblecki-Lewis, M.D., professor of clinical medicine and chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases; and Lilian Abbo, M.D., professor of clinical medicine.



Miami-Dade County commissioners with members of Heroes Helping Heroes

In addition to UHealth personnel, Heroes Helping Heroes features collaborations from the Miami-Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works (DTPW), OneBlood Inc., and Jackson Health System. The first-of-its-kind conceptual partnership began its efforts by supporting the collection of convalescent plasma, then expanded to include recruitment for



clinical trials, community support, and education on COVID-19 vaccines and treatment.

The program initially reached nearly 4,000 employees of the DTPW, then was made accessible to the entire 30,000 Miami-Dade County employee community. UHealth and Jackson Health System blood banks supported numerous convalescent plasma clinical trials, despite facing multiple challenges including short staff, trial complexity, and increased workload.

“Coordinating the efforts of the Miami-Dade government, Jackson Health System, UHealth, and our heroic employees with our commercial partner OneBlood Inc. was quite an undertaking, but the chance to provide hope to patients and their families was the aspiration,” Dr. Wu said. “For that, I know we, as a team, made a difference.”

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