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Operational Changes in the UCLA-Westwood Clinical & Translational Research Center during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Abstract or Artist Statement Text: The COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed the way clinical research is conducted at the UCLA-Westwood Clinical & Translational Research Center (CTRC). The UCLA CTRC supports and supervises human clinical trials in all therapeutic areas and within all age groups, including Phase I clinical trials. The aim of this study was to determine why and how the UCLA CTRC changed its operational guidelines and infrastructure to accommodate COVID-19 clinical research studies, including a large-scale COVID-19 vaccine study of healthy volunteers, while also continuing all other ongoing clinical trials in a capacity-constrained multiple resource environment. In order to better understand these changes in their context, the study team examined the new infrastructure built on-site, reviewed the new operational guidelines to ensure researcher and patient safety, and conducted interviews with CTRC leadership and staff. Outdoor mobile treatment pods were constructed to separate suspected COVID-19 positive patients from healthy patients, drastically reducing viral transmission within the CTRC. Changes to the layout of the research unit were implemented to maintain workplace efficiency and patient safety amidst the pandemic. Preliminary findings from this study offer innovative solutions and operational transformations that clinical research units might follow in future pandemics or healthcare crises in order to continue research operations successfully and efficiently in the midst of a rapidly changing clinical research portfolio.