

COVID-19 and Reproductive Effects (CARE) Study



DARTMOUTH



What we've been up to

What a year! We started this journey just over a year ago, thanks to all of you. In that time, we have published six papers (with another two currently in review), given numerous interviews, and generated a policy brief. Additionally, we helped organize and moderate a symposium session entitled "Building Intersections Of Covid-19 Scholarship, Health Inequities, And Systems Of Care In Pregnancy And The Postpartum" at the April 2021 meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists. We couldn't have done any of this without you generously sharing your time and insights with us. So thank you!

In this booklet, we highlight some of our recent work of potential interest. We also outline some of the next steps we have planned. Please continue to check our website for updates, and feel free to contact us with any questions or feedback.

With thanks,
Theresa & Zane

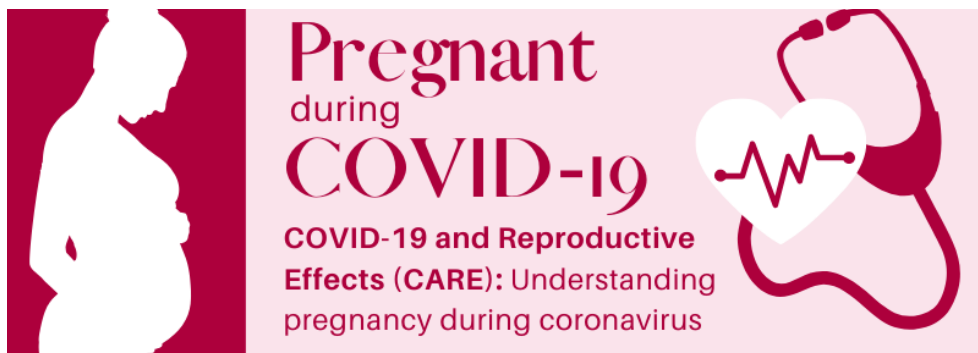
[*Links to other materials we've published*](#)

[Infographic on exercise and depression](#)

[Policy brief on changing maternity care preferences](#)

[Fear of childbirth poster](#)

[Wave 1 booklet](#)



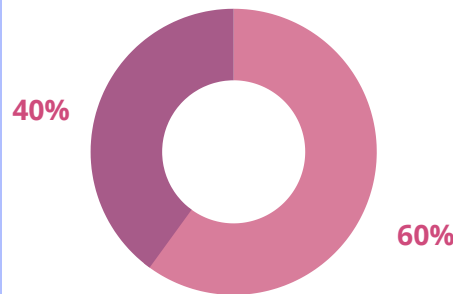
RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Exercise, Work-plan Change and Depression

Over the past few months, we've published a couple of articles on exercise routine changes and COVID-19 related work plan changes and their effect on women's mental health during the pandemic. In our exercise article, we found that **women who reported exercise changes during the pandemic exhibited significantly higher depression scores** compared to those reporting no changes. Similarly, in our work-plan article, survey results found that both **COVID-19-related work-plan changes and uncertainty about the nature of these changes were associated with significantly higher odds of a clinically-significant depression score.**

Exercise and Depression: Initial Findings

Individuals living in **metro areas of all sizes were approximately two times more likely to report exercise changes** compared to women living in non-metro areas.



60% of women in the survey reported that their exercise routine had changed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For a more visual breakdown of the data, follow this [link](#) to our infographic!

Maternal Depression Resources

[Navigating Postpartum Depression During the Pandemic](#)

[Postpartum Progress Blog](#)

[National Alliance on Mental Illness Guidebook for COVID-19](#)

[Postpartum Yoga](#)

[The Mindful Mamas Blog](#)

[Supporting Someone with PPD](#)

What we've been reading: related articles

- [Finding silver linings during lockdown in New Zealand](#)
- [Maintaining Exercise During Pandemic Aids Prenatal Mental Health](#)
- [VP Kamala Harris on addressing the Black maternal health crisis](#)

How to Proactively Communicate with your Physician

1. Ask open ended questions.
2. Ask about broad scenarios.
3. Consider bringing a trusted friend or family member.
4. Try to reserve judgement.
5. Listen and notice how your provider's answers are presented and feel, not just what they are saying.
6. Remember that you can always make a change in care provider, should you desire.
7. Jot down some notes before you go.
8. Be honest and accurate about how you feel.
9. Ask about the best way to get in contact with your care provider.

To read more on this topic follow either this [link](#) or this [link](#).

Information Sharing and Maternity Care Satisfaction Findings

38%

of study participants said their provider had not discussed how the pandemic would affect their care during pregnancy, labor, or delivery.

Check out Dr. Thayer's podcast!

In this podcast, Dr. Thayer discusses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on maternity care experiences drawing on information from the CARE study. Follow this [link](#) to listen in.



Breastfeeding Findings

Our Questions:

- 1) How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect duration of breastfeeding?
- 2) What COVID-19-associated stressors influenced these decisions?

Of those who planned to breastfeed for longer, 76.4% reported that they were primarily concerned with enhancing their baby's health by providing a boost in immunity and antibodies, especially protection from COVID-19.

90% of participants responded that neither their intended breastfeeding plan nor their intended duration of breastfeeding were altered by the pandemic. Of the 10% for whom it had changed, 8.5% indicated that they planned to breastfeed for longer while 1.8% intended to breastfeed for a shorter amount of time.



53% of participants who chose to shorten their time breastfeeding **did so because of a lack of lactational support and general lack of help and support at the home.** They were also afraid of exposing their infant to COVID-19.

WHAT COMES NEXT?



Our study team has created a survey for interested participants that covers a range of topics related to COVID-19. This survey includes questions about negative life events, breastfeeding, mental wellbeing, stress, and support during the later postpartum period as the pandemic continues. Additionally, we plan to collect biomarker samples (e.g., a small amount of hair) from a subset of interested participants to explore how pandemic-related experiences and anxieties relate to biological measures of stress (e.g., the stress hormone cortisol, which can be measured in hair). Lastly our team has been working on a paper testing associations between postpartum social support and mental wellbeing, as well as a study exploring the fear of childbirth and its impact on birth outcomes and experiences.

To learn more and keep up to date, please visit our [website](#).

Postpartum Resource Links

General COVID-19 Info

[WHO COVID-19 Guidelines and Advice](#)

[Breastfeeding and COVID-19 Q&A](#)

[Pregnancy, Childbirth and COVID-19](#)

[CDC Coronavirus Guidelines](#)

[CDC Pregnancy and COVID-19 FAQ](#)

Creating Community during COVID-19

During COVID, when face-to-face contact has been limited, new parents have found innovative ways to connect with others and create virtual support systems when in person may be lacking. Follow this [link](#) to read more on the subject, with a focus on the "Baby Buddy" app.

Breastfeeding and COVID-19 Vaccination

Did you know?

Researchers say **a COVID-19 vaccine given to someone who's breastfeeding can produce antibodies in breast milk within weeks.**

The antibodies can help provide protection for infants against the disease.

Have questions?

This [article](#) summarizes and provides context for the study.

This [fact sheet](#) provides clear, updated information on COVID-19 vaccines and pregnancy.

MEET THE STUDY TEAM

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS



Dr. Zaneta Thayer is an assistant professor of biological anthropology at Dartmouth College. She has spent the last 12 years investigating how maternal stress and wellbeing in pregnancy impacts maternal and child health. The majority of her work has been conducted in New Zealand, where the maternal care landscape differs substantially relative to the United States. This prior work has set her up well for the CARE study, since it has highlighted how patterns of maternity care, which are being greatly affected by the COVID pandemic, can affect maternal wellbeing and labor and delivery outcomes. Dr. Thayer is the 2020 recipient of the Michael A. Little Early Career Award for the Human Biology Association and mother to a vivacious toddler.

Dr. Theresa Gildner is an assistant professor of biological anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis. Her research focuses on the effects of human behavior and the environment on human health, particularly infectious disease. She is also interested in the various ways people respond to disease risk, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her work utilizes a biocultural approach to examine how interactions between social factors and individual biology shape health outcomes, with implications for the design of more effective medical care.

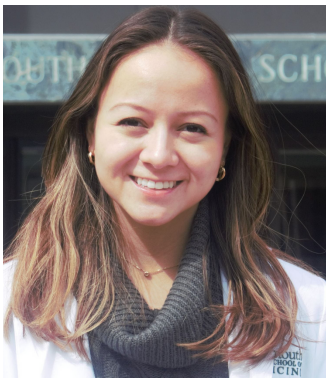


RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Dr. Glorieuse Uwizeye is a postdoctoral fellow for the Society of Fellows at Dartmouth College, with a primary appointment in the Department of Anthropology. She is interested in studying the intersecting impacts of political, socioeconomic, and environmental factors on development and adult health. Her research program focuses on health impacts of genocide and epigenetic mechanisms linking prenatal exposure to genocide and adulthood health outcomes. She enjoys socializing, listening to people, and seeing nature!



Maggie Sherin is a Dartmouth grad (Class of 2018) who majored in Biology and minored in Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies. After graduating, Maggie moved to New York City and worked as a pediatric research assistant at Northwell Health, focusing primarily on community breastfeeding education and promotion, and pediatric obesity prevention. In addition to her research with the CARE team, she has studied and written about long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARC) for adolescents and antepartum Tdap vaccination. She has also worked as a community birth doula for underserved women living in Manhattan and the Bronx.



Daniela Orozco Rendon was born in Tulua, Colombia. However, she spent the majority of her life in Houston, Texas with her parents. She attended the University of Houston and graduated in December 2019 with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a minor in Medicine in Society. As the daughter of immigrants and as she learned more about the surrounding community in Houston as well as the social determinants of health from her minor, she began to notice the struggles that many face with health care that arise from factors outside of the clinic. It was these experiences that turned her to the importance of social determinants and pushed her to seek out how she can better combat them as a physician.

Amanda Lu is a senior at Dartmouth (Class of 2021) majoring in Economics and minoring in Anthropology. She has traditionally pursued linguistic and cultural anthropology but became interested in biological anthropology due to its integration of social, cultural, and biological understandings of health and medicine. As a member of the CARE study, she is excited to use both quantitative and qualitative methods to help analyse the complex issues of healthcare and pregnancy during COVID-19.



Beldina (also known as Bel) Orinda is a sophomore at Washington University in St. Louis, studying Anthropology on the Global Health and Environment track and Psychology. Her interests lie at the intersection between race, culture, and public health, and the way that social determinants of health inform one's quality of life and access to care. As part of the CARE team, she is excited to assess how mothers navigate the new realities and challenges that Covid-19 brings to an already stressful experience, and how norms surrounding childbirth are upended and transformed by the pandemic. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with family, singing, writing anything from blog posts to essays, babysitting, and volunteering in her community.

Becky Milner is a senior at Dartmouth (Class of 2021) studying Anthropology, Global Health and French. She loves learning about how health and wellness are perceived and experienced by different communities and is especially interested in maternal healthcare and wellbeing. As a member of the CARE team, she is excited to investigate how the pandemic is affecting women's birth preferences and to work with her peers to support women across the country. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, paddle boarding and trying new breakfast foods.



Grace Alston is a junior at Dartmouth (Class of 2022) majoring in Anthropology and minoring in French. Motivated by both cultural and biological anthropology, her academic focus is human rites of passage concerning births and deaths. Grace joined the CARE study because of her interest in qualitatively analyzing cultural response to administering maternal care amidst crisis.