



Sarver Heart
Center

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Sarver Heart Center



November 1, 2021

Blood Pressure Medications Do Not Increase COVID-19 Risks



Researchers in the Churko Lab studied the use of blood pressure medication and susceptibility of infection that causes COVID-19. From left: Jared Churko, PhD, Tori Salem, Jessika Iwanski and Ben Stansfield.

A study led by researchers in the **Sarver Heart Center** addressed concerns about the use of blood pressure medications and patients' susceptibility to infection of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. They found that blood pressure medications do not increase the likelihood of SARS-CoV-2 infection, which is good news for people with hypertension, or uncontrolled high blood pressure. Heart and vascular disease remain the #1 killer of people in the U.S. and the world, despite

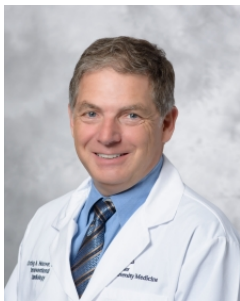
the pandemic.

“Throughout the pandemic, we have recommended that people continue to take their prescribed antihypertensive drugs. This is critical to reducing heart disease events, especially since people with heart disease are more susceptible to severe COVID-19 complications,” said **Nancy K. Sweitzer, MD, PhD**, professor of medicine and director of the Sarver Heart Center, who was not involved in the study. “The study is very reassuring to clinicians who prescribe these drugs to patients regularly, as it adds important evidence that they do not worsen SARS-CoV-2 infection.”

Jessika Iwanski, an MD/PhD candidate in the Gregorio Lab, is first author; and **Jared Churko, PhD**, assistant professor of cellular and molecular medicine in the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Tucson and director of the University of Arizona Induced Pluripotent Stem Cell (iPSC) Core in Sarver Heart Center, is corresponding author.

This research was supported in part by a **Sarver Heart Center Investigator Award**, funded by the **Steven M. Gootter Foundation**, and by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health.

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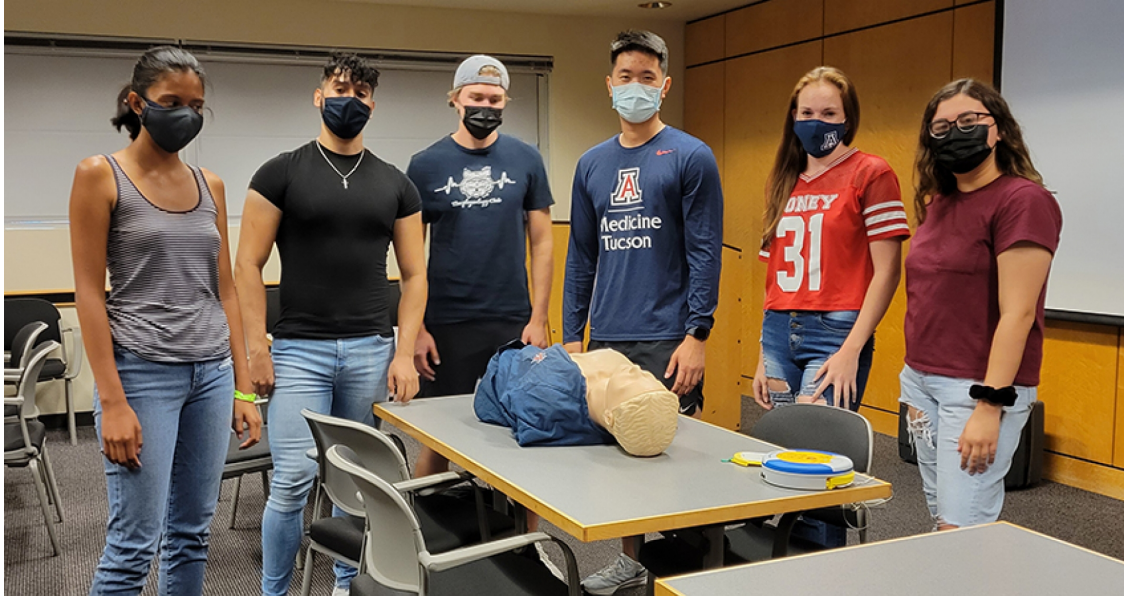
Welcome Dr. Craig Hoover

Sarver Heart Center welcomed **Craig Hoover, MD**, clinical assistant professor at the University of Arizona College of Medicine - Tucson, Division of Cardiology. He sees patients at Banner University Medical North Campus and Ina/Shannon locations. Dr. Hoover is board certified in Cardiovascular Diseases and Interventional Cardiology. He joined UArizona and BUMC in 2021 with more than 20 years of experience practicing interventional cardiology in Tucson.

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[Find Sarver Heart Center Clinical Faculty Member Profiles Here](#)

Student Volunteers Offer CCO-CPR Training



After a year of working online, in-person chest-compression-only CPR training resumed when Sarver Heart Center student volunteers provided a session for a group of students from the University of Arizona Physiology Club. Following UArizona COVID-19 safety protocols, masks are required. For information on training, please email heart@arizona.edu. Note: This is not CPR certification training.

[Find Training Resources Online](#)



FINEARTS-HF Clinical Study Investigates Treatment for Patients with Heart Failure

Sarver Heart Center is a site for a clinical study, led by **Preethi William, MD**, to evaluate the effectiveness of finerenone for treating patients with heart failure with preserved ejection fraction (HFpEF). Ejection fraction is a measurement of how much blood flow the heart pumps with each contraction.

HFpEF is a complex condition that affects about half of the 6.5 million people in the United States who are diagnosed with **heart failure**. HFpEF particularly affects people who have high blood pressure, diabetes or obesity. The prevalence of this type of heart failure is increasing as the population ages and has no proven treatments at this time.

[Learn More About This Study and Participating in Clinical Research](#)

Your Support Has Big Impact

Support from generous donors gives faculty necessary time to lift



up the next generation of health professionals. Faculty are encouraged to incorporate mentorship into their routines.

"It's part of our job, and if mentoring is done right it is truly rewarding from both the mentee and mentor perspective," said **Carol Gregorio, PhD**, co-director of the Sarver Heart Center and department head of cellular and molecular medicine at the College of Medicine – Tucson, who co-

mentors MD/PhD students along with **Nancy Sweitzer, MD, PhD**, director of the Sarver Heart Center. "If we do it right, we all benefit."

"When you get to a certain point in your career, your legacy is going to be those you helped, who are always smarter and more talented than you are. Science is super fun and I love it, but I really love helping others with their career development," Dr. Sweitzer said. "It's the No. 1 pleasure in my job."

Their roles as mentors were highlighted in a recent **Health Sciences Connect article**. Please consider a gift to support the Sarver Heart Center mission of innovating life-saving patient care.

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Sarver Heart Center
1501 North Campbell Avenue
Tucson, Arizona 85724
Phone: 520-626-2000
Toll Free: 800-665-2328

[Contact SHC Staff](#)

