

Vibrent Health digging into pandemic's long-term impact with latest data partnership

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Praduman "PJ" Jain is founder and CEO of Fairfax-based Vibrent Health.

Fairfax health data firm Vibrent Health Inc. is joining forces with a Virginia university and health care organization to dig into a major unknown at the heart of the health crisis: the long-term effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

The fast-growing local company — with Fairfax neighbor [George Mason University](#) and the Norfolk-based [Eastern Virginia Medical School](#) (EVMS)-Sentara Healthcare Analytics and Delivery Science Institute (HADSI) — said this week it plans to launch a national study looking at the current and future impact of the health emergency on individuals, families and communities.

The partners intend to recruit people this month “from all walks of life across America” for the study, called CovidSmart, they said.

“The need for more research on how Covid-19 is affecting us all is urgent, and we are fortunate to have the means to gather crucial data for CovidSmart virtually using technology, so that anyone and everyone can participate in this invaluable health study, without having to leave their homes,” Praduman Jain, founder and CEO of Vibrent, said in a statement.

This research will focus on diverse populations affected disproportionately by the pandemic. Specifically, the team plans to recruit “a diverse cohort of ethnic, racial and cultural minorities to reflect the U.S. population’s diversity and to include groups that have historically been underrepresented in biomedical research,” the partners said in their announcement.

The study aims to give public health policy leaders the data and insight needed to identify the communities most dramatically affected by Covid-19 — to inform resources

and services now, and new protocols for future health crises. That's in addition to sharing results with its volunteers, to help them understand the dynamics at play and what they mean for them. The goal, they said, is to collect longitudinal data for the duration of the pandemic to assess the economic, social, emotional and other impacts of enduring the crisis.

Sunita Dodani, professor of internal medicine at EVMS and director of HADSI, is the study's lead principal investigator. Jain is co-principal investigator of the study.

GMU and HADSI researchers developed the study's survey methodology and content. Both institutions are spearheading recruitment through social media campaigns and community outreach. The study will use Vibrent's digital health platform, which collects data from many sources including genomics, electronic health records, body sensors, environment and wearable tech.

The [National Institutes of Health](#) is separately using the platform for a major precision medicine research initiative. That decadelong initiative, called [All of Us](#), is building a diverse patient database of sequenced genomes and other health data for more than 1 million people — to help researchers identify disease patterns and, ultimately, improve diagnoses and treatment. Vibrent [received \\$39 million in September](#) from the agency following [a \\$75 million grant](#) the company secured in 2016 for that work.

“Our goal is to keep participants invested and active in this research, so they can help their communities while they also derive the benefit of knowledge about Covid-19 that can help them cope with the pandemic,” Jain said in a statement, “until we can all return to a semblance of normalcy.”

Jain started Vibrent — one of the WBJ's [Startups to Watch of 2017](#) — in 2009. It was “the proverbial: used my 401(k) to start the company” story, he said, and it's since evolved into a profitable and expanding business, with tools for study participants, researchers seeking access to data and sponsors looking for accountability as they fund studies. Its customer base comprises a combination of government and commercial clients in the health research market.



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