

# Watcher' tracks coronavirus in Cincinnati and beyond

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Benjamin Wissel, an MD/PhD student at the University of Cincinnati. Credit: Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center Marketing and Communications

Two University of Cincinnati students have developed an interactive dashboard which shows COVID-19 cases and deaths in Greater Cincinnati and other major U.S. cities. Known as [the COVID-19 Watcher](#), it joins a list of options available to the public to track the

novel coronavirus.

Benjamin Wissel, a student in the UC College of Medicine's Medical Scientist Training Program, and Pieter-Jan Van Camp, MD, a doctoral student in the Biomedical Informatics Graduate program, developed their app during the spring when there were no options for tracking city data. Since then the New York Times has added this feature to their dashboard as well.

"People are connected and viruses spread through city infrastructures," says Wissel. "Our app is especially relevant in places like Cincinnati, whose metro area is split between three different states. The public benefits from additional sources that can provide up-to-date COVID-19 data for the country, state, county and city level."

Wissel and Van Camp published research on their dashboard recently in the *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association*. Their dashboard is also listed on the Centers for Disease and Prevention Control website under the heading Cincinnati Children's Hospital's COVID-19 Watcher.

The COVID-19 Watcher displays data from every county and 188 [metropolitan areas](#) in the country. Features of the dashboard include ranking of the worst affected areas and auto-generating plots that depict temporal changes in testing capacity, cases and deaths. The COVID-19 Watcher can provide the public with real-time updates of outbreaks in their area.

"The New York Times has been tracking COVID-19 since January, and they released their data to the public in late March of this year," says Wissel. "Our app pulls in their data, merges it with sources from the U.S. Census Bureau to map cases for each county to metropolitan areas, and then visualizes the data."

Wissel says users of the dashboard can compare their city with others.

"Outbreaks started at different times in different cities, so it is insightful to compare the progression of the virus spreading in your city compared to other cities who started before you," explains Wissel. "It is very hard to think of things in terms of exponential growth, but seeing case numbers from a city that is, for example, five days ahead of you can give you an idea of where your [city](#) might be in five days."

Van Camp says users can explore the interactive dashboard's possibilities.

"I think one of the [dashboard](#)'s more interesting features is the option to adjust the data by the size of the population per capita," says Van Camp. "This way, you can compare the outbreak in different regions, regardless of high or low population, on a relative scale."

**More information:** Benjamin D Wissel et al. An Interactive Online Dashboard for Tracking COVID-19 in U.S. Counties, Cities, and States in Real Time, *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association* (2020). [DOI: 10.1093/jamia/ocaa071](https://doi.org/10.1093/jamia/ocaa071)

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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