

# Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health Newsletter

Volume 4, No. 1, Spring 2014

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# sustainability

Volume 4, No. 1 SPRING 2014

*Jiann-Ping Hsu*

**COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH**



*Ten Years*



JPHCOPH '14

The mission of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH) is to enhance health and eliminate health disparities of rural communities and underserved populations in Georgia and the southeastern region, the nation and the world through excellence in public health workforce development, research, professional service and community engagement.

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*Special thanks to Lindsay Cox, an Alumna of Georgia Southern University's Graphic Design program. She provided custom hand-lettering work for our cover and center spread. See more of her design and photography work at [www.lettersandlightco.com](http://www.lettersandlightco.com).*

## A Message from the Dean

April 1 marks two years since I joined Georgia Southern University as Dean of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health. I recall both the excitement and apprehension I felt at taking a position with such a new school. Today, I am more relaxed and also more excited about the possibilities for the College. I have a tremendous faculty and staff to work with, and a fantastic group of students who have a passion for public health. I have also hired, or am hiring, department chairs as we continue to grow and thrive, and have appointed an associate dean for research who will all help move us forward.



Moreover, the College has embarked on a series of new initiatives. We have created an Assessment Committee that has done a yeoman's job at establishing procedures and carrying out major assessments of our various programs and courses. We have a group of faculty, staff and students working on revising our Dr.P.H. in Leadership degree to make it more responsive to the needs of our students. This program will also be offered entirely online, so that future public health leaders across Georgia, and around the country, have access to a quality doctoral program. We are developing an online generalist M.P.H. degree that will help employed workers improve their public health skills without having to leave employment. Both online programs will partner with the Centers for Teaching and Technology and use the latest technology and distance education pedagogy to ensure these programs are the best in the state.

In addition, we are revising the Master of Health Administration (M.H.A.) degree to make it reflect the current needs of health administrators. We are also developing an undergraduate minor in addiction studies that will be useful to students in various health-related majors. We have established committees to work on revising the promotion and tenure guidelines to enhance their objectivity, and revising the annual faculty evaluations so they will be more useful for mentoring faculty members. The new Teaching Committee will provide ongoing activities to help our faculty and teaching assistants maximize their teaching abilities, while the Diversity Committee is undergoing revitalization to help maximize diversity and develop policies that enhance a culture of diversity within the College.

Efforts that the faculty, staff and students have all put forth over these past two years will, I believe, lead to the continuing improvement of what is already a strong and prestigious College of Public Health. I look forward to taking these next steps forward with all of you.

Sincerely,

Greg Evans,  
Dean



## *Dr. Stuart Tedders Protecting Georgia's Rural Populations*

A native of Perry, Georgia, Dr. Stuart Tedders attended Georgia Southern College where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in biology in 1987. After graduating from Georgia Southern, he earned a master's degree in medical

entomology from Clemson University (1989) and a doctorate in public health from the University of South Carolina (1994). Tedders accepted a job as an assistant professor at Mercer University Medical School (MUSM) teaching concepts of public health to undergraduate medical students. During his time at MUSM, he also developed a keen interest in working with rural Georgia communities and was named Georgia Rural Health Researcher of the Year in 1999 by the Georgia Rural Health Association. In 2000, he was hired at Georgia Southern University and one of the original members of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health, when it was founded on January 1, 2006. With the JPHCOPH, Tedders has served in numerous faculty and administrative capacities, including Director for the Center for Rural Health and Research and the Director of the Office of Public Health Practice and Community Service. Currently, he is a full professor in epidemiology and has served as the associate dean of academic affairs since September 2012.

Tedders has worked with rural and underserved communities in Georgia for nearly 20 years and describes himself as an "applied epidemiologist." His community interactions have involved the application of epidemiologic principles, including public health surveillance, to improved population health status. Specifically, Tedders has worked with communities to design and evaluate health programs and to assess risk factors, with a particular interest in the social, economic, and educational factors that influence the overall health risk of populations. He has also worked extensively in understanding factors associated with perceived cancer risk, cancer screening practices, and issues affecting maternal and child health in rural communities. At present, Tedders has authored 30 peer reviewed manuscripts, nine non-peer reviewed manuscripts, 10 research monographs, 40 community assessment reports and 26 technical/evaluation reports. He also has numerous community and research presentations to his credit. Tedders has served on health-related boards throughout the state including the Georgia Rural Health Association (Secretary, Treasurer), the State Office of Rural Health Advisory Board (Secretary), the Statewide

Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Advisory Council, and Morehouse School of Medicine AHEC Advisory Board. Dr. Tedders currently serves as chair of the Magnolia Coastlands AHEC, located at Georgia Southern University.



## *Dr. Gulzar Shah Named First Associate Dean for Research*

Gulzar H. Shah, Ph.D., M.Stat., M.S., has been appointed the first associate dean for research for the College. Dr. Shah joined Georgia Southern University in January 2012 with 18 years

of interdisciplinary training and multi-sector work experience, including appointments in both academia and public health practice agencies, both nationally and internationally. Prior to Georgia Southern, he served as the lead research scientist for the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) from 2008 to 2011, and the director of research and grants at the National Association of Health Data Organizations (NAHDO). Shah also served at the Utah State Department of Health for six years in various capacities, contributing significantly to patient safety projects, maternal and child health research, health informatics initiatives, and health services and systems research. Through his work with the two national level public health organizations, Shah has built an impressive network of collaborative relationships with colleagues and led public health organizations as well.

Shah is an experienced investigator with funding from NIH, CDC and multiple foundations. He serves on the editorial board of three peer reviewed journals, including biostatistics consulting editor for the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*. Shah has published more than 60 peer reviewed research articles and book chapters in a number of research areas, including practice-based public health systems and services research, e-Health and public health informatics, public health finances, quality improvement and public health accreditation, patient safety, and health-care quality.



## *Dr. Joseph Telfair Named First Karl E. Peace/Jiann- Ping Hsu Endowed Eminent Scholar Chair*

In 2008, the Jiann-Ping Hsu/Karl E. Peace Eminent Scholar Chair of Public Health was established to significantly enhance the development of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College

of Public Health by providing resources for the College to recruit an outstanding scholar/teacher to serve as a mentor for junior faculty, as well as students within the Master of Public Health (M.P.H.) and Doctorate of Public Health (Dr.P.H.) programs. An endowed chair in the JPHCOPH provides leadership for the advancement of instructional, research, and service/outreach activities and to achieve accreditation as a College from the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). In addition, an endowed chair develops grant/contract proposals for research and service, and serves as mentor to junior faculty in the external funding process.

Dr. Joseph Telfair recently joined the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health as the Department Chair of Community Health and Behavior Education and Environmental Health. He is the first recipient of the Karl E. Peace/Jiann-Ping Hsu Endowed Eminent Scholar Chair in Public Health. Telfair is a professional with more than 25 years experience in the health care field. He comes to us from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) School of Health and Human Performance, where he served as a professor of public health research and practice in the Department of Public Health Education, as well as director of the UNCG Center for Social Community and Health Research and Evaluation.

As a distinguished expert, Telfair has served on a multitude of panels and advisory boards. Throughout his career, Telfair has published extensively in the areas of sickle cell disease, maternal and child health, HIV care, practice of evaluation-based research, cultural and ethnic diversity, community-based research, and adolescent health. He is the recipient of numerous awards and grants. Telfair received his Doctor of Public Health with an emphasis in sociology, health issues of children, families and people of color from Johns Hopkins University. He also holds a Master of Social Work and Master of Public Health, specializing in children and families and behavioral science, both from the University of California at Berkeley.



## *Dr. Robert Vogel Becomes Chair of Both Biostatistics and Epidemiology*

Dr. Robert Vogel joined the faculty at Georgia Southern University in August 2003 as the first Karl E. Peace Endowed Chair for Biostatistics to help build a program in biostatistics. He is one of six founding faculty members of the

Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health. Since 2006, Vogel has served in various roles, including director of the Karl E. Peace Center for Biostatistics, director of JPHCOPH Public Health Research, director of the JPHCOPH Survey Sampling Center, and director of the Division of Biostatistics. On July 1, 2014, Vogel became chair of the Department of Biostatistics and chair of the Department of Epidemiology. Prior to his initial appointment at Georgia Southern University, Vogel was director of family medicine research at the Medical Center of Central Georgia, where he was also a professor in the Departments of Family Medicine and Internal Medicine. Vogel received his doctorate in biometry and statistics from Emory University, master's in mathematics from the University of Louisville, and bachelor's in mathematics from Hanover College.

As a professor of biostatistics, Vogel has been very active in training both M.P.H. and Dr.P.H. students. His teaching interests are in experimental design, longitudinal data analysis, statistical methods for missing data, and complex sample surveys. He has supervised multiple M.P.H. Capstone Projects and Dr.P.H. Dissertations. He has served as a collaborator of many medical research problems in the areas of endocrinology, cardiology, obstetrics, anesthesiology, breast cancer and surgery. His work in modeling insulin pulsatility was used to support the notion of an insulin pump. His current work involves non-invasive cardiovascular measures on pre-term infants in the NICU. Vogel has more than 100 peer reviewed publications in medical and statistical journals. He is a member of the American Statistical Association, the International Biometric Society, International Society for Clinical Biostatisticians, Society for Clinical Trials, American Public Health Association, and American Association of Public Opinion Research.

## Faculty Awards



### *Dr. Karl E. Peace Presented Sellers-McCroan Award*

Dr. Karl E. Peace, professor of biostatistics, was presented with the Sellers-McCroan Award for his lifelong commitment to improving public health through academia and laboratory advancements. The award was presented during the Sellers-McCroan luncheon, as part of the 85th Annual

Meeting and Conference of the Georgia Public Health Association in Atlanta on Monday, March 10.

Peace provided the leadership and endowments to create the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health at Georgia Southern University, which was named in honor of his late wife. Peace is also a recognized authority on clinical trials methodology, measurement and analysis. He currently serves as professor and a Distinguished Georgia Cancer Coalition Scholar in the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health.

Peace was introduced by Dr. Wade Sellers, district health director of the Northwest Georgia Health District. "He's enabled folks who've heard the calling to go into public health to become educated, get their degrees and go out and be launched and supported," said Sellers.

Peace's contributions were further outlined in the program. "His national leadership has raised the visibility of both Georgia and Georgia Southern University, and his life's work and contributions have been a great credit to both the state and University. His commitment to battling cancer, not just in a laboratory or library but in practice, has resulted in many more south Georgians being screened. And his longtime work in biopharmaceuticals has helped create many of the lifesaving and life-improving drugs we can access today."

The program went on to say, "He has shown many that a poor boy from a small farm in southwest Georgia can accomplish great things."



### *JPHCOPH Faculty Accepted as National Scholars*

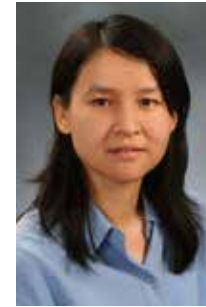
Dr. Simone Charles, associate professor of environmental health sciences, and Dr. John Luque, assistant professor of community health were accepted as scholars for the NIH National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) Translational Health Disparities

Course: "Integrating Principles of Science, Practice and Policy in Health Disparities Research" that took place August 5-16, 2013 in Bethesda, Maryland, at NIH Campus. The program was offered through joint sponsorship between NIH/NIMHD and the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

The course was a two-week intensive research program that provided specialized instruction on the concepts, principles, methods, and applications of health disparities science, evidence-based practice, community engagement, and policy. Nationally and internationally recognized experts in health disparities science led the individual sessions.

The selection process for the course was extremely competitive. NIMHD selected only 20 percent of all applicants from across the nation. Drs. Charles and Luque's acceptance is testament to their excellence in health disparities scholarship and their potential to continue to address the issue. This program will help facilitate their work towards reducing health disparities and advancing the health of rural, underserved and minority communities of southeast Georgia.

Charles' research includes the elimination of environmental health disparities in pediatric chronic disease prevention and management, healthy housing, and engaging youth in promoting healthy communities through behavioral and social change. Luque's research includes Latino immigrant and migrant health, cancer prevention and control, and the use of social marketing in health disparities work.



*Dr. Lili Yu*



*Ms. Ruth Whitworth*

### *Dr. Lili Yu and Ms. Ruth Whitworth Awarded Special Citations from ICSA*

Dr. Lili Yu, associate professor of biostatistics and Ms. Ruth Whitworth, IT expert and webmaster, were awarded a Special Citation by the President of the International Chinese Statistical Association (ICSA) in recognition of their contributions to the growth of the ICSA.

Yu joined the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health as an assistant professor in 2007, immediately after she earned her doctorate in biostatistics from the Ohio State University. She serves as the ICSA Faculty Advisor, which is housed in the JPHCOPH at Georgia Southern University. In addition to advising students on the office's daily work, she communicates with different committees in ICSA and provides assistance to local committees for each ICSA symposium. Yu was a member of the ICSA Archive Committee from 2008 to 2012, and served as the chair of this committee in 2013. She has been a reviewer for the Jiann-Ping Hsu Pharmaceutical and Regulatory Sciences Student Paper Award for several years. Yu also served on the ICSA/ISBS Symposium Student Award Committee in 2013. Yu's area of research is mainly focused on survival analysis. She works on semi-parametric linear models for heteroscedastic survival data in various aspects. She is also interested in logistic regressions for categorical data with missing values.

Ruth Whitworth joined the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health as an academic professional in 2004. She is a liaison between the College and IT Services, as well as the College webmaster. She has an M.P.H. in biostatistics from Georgia Southern and an M.B.A. from the University of Memphis. Whitworth has worked with Karl E. Peace on the Biopharmaceutical Applied Statistics Symposium (BASS) as a webmaster/registrar since 2004 and has helped with the International Chinese Statistical Association server since 2007. Whitworth says she enjoys working at the University, as it provides her an opportunity to help people and learn each day.



### *Dr. John "Juan" Luque Receives Award for Excellence in Contributions to Research*

For Dr. John "Juan" Luque, professor of community health, research is much more than his job – it is an "integral part of his identity as a scholar." The Maine native,

who arrived at Georgia Southern University five years ago, is the recipient of the 2013-14 Award for Excellence in Contributions to Research/Creative Scholarly Activity, which recognizes faculty who excel in their research efforts as they fulfill full-time teaching responsibilities.

"It is an honor to receive this award," said Luque. "I enjoy sharing my research with others at conferences, collaborating with fellow scholars, and training undergraduate and graduate students in research methods."

Luque is currently leading three research projects funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). "The Barbers Against Prostate Cancer Research Subproject" is one of two research projects that are part of the NIH-funded Center of Excellence on Health Disparities in Rural Populations. It aims to refine and test a prostate cancer screening educational program, and to train barbers to deliver the program among rural African-American men. It also intends to test the impact of the information on informed decision-making.

Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in men in the United States. "Moreover, African-American men have the highest incidence rate for prostate cancer and are twice as likely as white men to die from the disease," said Luque. He added that many black men do not have access to or do not regularly visit doctors or health centers, depriving themselves of readily available prostate cancer information.

"The barbershop is a natural meeting place for black men to talk about a range of issues. Barbers are known as business leaders and opinion shapers in the community, and they have an important role to play as lay health educators," Luque said.

With research sites in Statesboro and Milledgeville, Georgia, Luque and a graduate assistant are currently revising and refining the training curriculum.

# Milestones

'98

June 10 - BOR approves establishment of the M.P.H. and M.H.S.A. degrees at Georgia Southern University



'99

First Graduate of the M.P.H. Program

'01

First Graduates of the M.H.S.A. Program

'04

January 14 - BOR establishes the Jiann-Ping Hsu School of Public Health (JPHSOPH), first school of public health in the University System of Georgia (USG). School made possible by a generous gift (endowment) from Dr. Karl E. Peace, in memory and honor of his wife, Dr. Jiann-Ping Hsu. The JPHSOPH was housed in the College of Health and Human Sciences.

'06

January 1 - Jiann-Ping Hsu School of Public Health elevated to Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health - free standing College (JPHCOPH). Dr. Charles J. Hardy, Dean of the Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies appointed as founding dean.

'07

January 16 - Doctor of Public Health (Dr.P.H.) with program concentrations in biostatistics, community health behavior and education, and public health leadership approved by the BOR of the USG

'08

Center for Addiction Recovery established through generous gift and endowment pledge from the Willingway Foundation

First Fulbright Scholar enrolls in the M.P.H. (Epidemiology) program - Ahmed Dehal, M.D.

'12

April - JPHCOPH welcomes Dr. Gregory Evans of Saint Louis University School of Public Health, as the new dean of the College.

April - Dr. Jacob Warren, assistant professor of epidemiology at the JPHCOPH at Georgia Southern University and Dr. Bryant Smalley (Department of Psychology), co-Executive Directors of the Rural Health Research Institute, are awarded a \$450,000 federal grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration to fund Project ADEPT (Applied Diabetes Education Program using Telehealth).

'11

December - JPHCOPH receives a \$100,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to support quality improvement initiatives within Georgia's system of health districts and county health departments. The grant is received on behalf of the Georgia Public Health Practice-Based Research Network (GA PBRN).

July - JPHCOPH is fully accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH).

'10

September 9 - Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for Hendricks Hall - new home for the JPHCOPH

First graduate of the Dr.P.H. program - Dr. Sara Plaspohl

First Community Health Behavior and Education Committee Members - Dr. Charles J. Hardy (major professor), Dr. Robert Vogel and Dr. Stuart Tedders

'09

First Awards for Excellence presented to JPHCOPH faculty: Teaching - Dr. Laura Gunn (Biostatistics); Scholarship - Dr. Mondy Masson; and Service - Dr. Cassandra Arroyo

Governing body of Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) formally acts to approve JPHCOPH's request to begin the accreditation process. JPHCOPH is accepted as Associate Member in the Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH).

August - Dr. Stuart Tedders named Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

September - Dr. John S. Luque and other researchers from JPHCOPH are awarded a \$297,185 grant from the National Institutes of Health to refine and test a cervical cancer education program in the Latino/Hispanic community. The researchers are also partnering with Georgia Health Sciences University's Gynecological Cancer Prevention Center and Department of Medical Illustration.

'13

April - JPHCOPH alumni, Drs. Raymona H. Lawrence, Nandi A. Marshall and Krista D. Mincey, are accepted into the 2013 cohort of the Health Equity Leadership Institute (HELI).

August - Dr. Joseph Telfair is named the first recipient of the Karl E. Peace/Jiann-Ping Hsu Endowed Eminent Scholar Chair in Public Health and the first Department Chair for Community Health and Behavior Education and Environmental Health.

'14

Dr. Gulzar Shah named Associate Dean for Research

Dr. Robert Vogel named Department Chair for Biostatistics and Epidemiology

## Faculty Research



### *Collaboration Expands Algebraic Statistical Model*

A collaborative study including Dr. Daniel Linder, assistant professor of biostatistics, expanded the algebraic statistical model for biochemical network dynamics inference. With modern molecular quantification methods, such as high throughput sequencing, biologists can

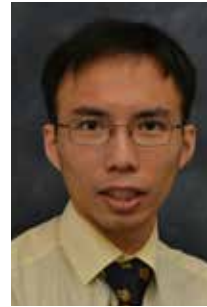
perform multiple complex experiments and collect longitudinal data on RNA and DNA concentrations. Such data is then used to infer cellular-level interactions between the molecular entities of interest. One method, which formalizes such inference, is the stoichiometric algebraic statistical model (SASM) of Ref. [2], which allows analysis of the so-called conic (or single source) networks. Despite its intuitive appeal, up until now the SASM has been only heuristically studied on a few simple examples. The current paper provides a more formal mathematical treatment of the SASM, expanding the original model to a wider class of reaction systems decomposable into multiple conic subnetworks.



### *Dr. Helen Bland Studies Rural Women's Exercise Self-efficacy*

A collaborative study including Dr. Helen Bland, professor of community health and behavior education, examined *American rural women's exercise self-efficacy and awareness of exercise benefits and safety during pregnancy*. Though the positive link

between physical activity and maternal health is well documented, physical activity declines during pregnancy and, internationally, rural mothers are less likely than urban mothers to engage in some form of recreation or exercise. Evidence suggests that self-efficacy is related to sustained engagement in physical activity. The purpose of this study was to examine self-efficacy, perceived benefits, and catalogue safe exercise among 88 pregnant women in a rural southeastern region of the United States. Results confirmed a need for education to improve women's knowledge about health benefits and safety information related to physical activity during pregnancy.



### *Dr. Isaac Fung Examines Cholera Transmission Dynamic Models*

Dr. Isaac Fung (formerly of the CDC), assistant professor of epidemiology, examined cholera transmission dynamic models for public health practitioners. Tremendous progress has been made in mathematical models of cholera

transmission dynamics in recent years. However, little impact, if any, has been made on public health decision-making and day-to-day routine of epidemiologists. This paper provides a brief introduction to the basics of ordinary differential equation models of cholera transmission dynamics. It discusses a basic model adapted from Codeço (2001), and how it can be modified to incorporate different hypotheses, including the importance of asymptomatic or unapparent infections, and hyper-infectious *V. cholera* and human-to-human transmission. The paper also highlights three important challenges of cholera models: (1) model mis-specification and parameter uncertainty, (2) modeling the impact of water, sanitation and hygiene interventions, and (3) model structure. Published models, especially those related to the 2010 Haitian outbreak, are used as examples. The choice of models should be dictated by the research questions in mind. Ultimately, more collaboration is needed between policy-makers, epidemiologists and modelers in public health.



### *Effectiveness of Mass Media in Increasing Flu Vaccination*

A collaborative study including Dr. Renee Hotchkiss, associate professor of health policy and management, described the effectiveness of a mass media campaign in increasing the rate of college student influenza vaccine obtainment. Research showed that nearly a 30 percent increase

was observed in flu vaccination rates in fall 2011 over fall 2010. The main campus website portal was the most visualized media source among students. The majority of responses indicated that the source of information visualized had a moderate to strong influence over their decision to get vaccinated. The researchers in this study concluded that various communication channels should be utilized to increase influenza vaccination rates on a university campus. Use of mass media to influence college students to perceive, retain and act on the message of obtaining the influenza vaccine did produce a noteworthy outcome.



### *Dr. Gulzar Shah Explores Reasons Behind Health Travelers*

A collaborative study including Dr. Gulzar Shah, director of research, analyzed Internet narratives by health travelers to Turkey. Patients regularly travel to the West for advanced medical care, but the trend is now shifting in the opposite

direction. Many people from Western countries now seek care outside of their country. This phenomenon has been labeled medical tourism or health travel. Information regarding health travelers' actual outcomes, experiences, and perceptions is lacking or insufficient. The objective of this research was to identify the important individual characteristics of health travelers, outline the push and pull factors for seeking health care in Turkey, identify satisfaction with the outcomes and the results of these individuals' treatments, and note positive and negative factors influencing their perceptions and overall experiences about patients' health travel.

This analysis provides an understanding of the insights of medical tourists through the words of actual health travelers. This non-

intrusive methodology provides candid insights of common themes for health travelers and may be applied to study other patient experiences.



### *Perceptions of Overweight and Obesity in Children*

A collaborative study including Dr. Yelena Tarasenko, assistant professor of health policy and management and epidemiology, examined the accuracy of children's, their guardians', and health care professionals' (HCPs) perceptions of

overweight and obese children, the degree of agreement between their perceptions, and relationships with weight loss attempts. Results of the study indicate children, their guardians, and HCPs underestimated a child's actual overweight or obesity status. Little agreement existed between overweight or obese children, their parents, and HCPs on whether these children were overweight or obese. The study concluded that accurate and shared perceptions of adiposity in children and adolescents between children themselves, their guardians, and HCPs are positively associated with weight loss attempts among overweight or obese children in the United States.

# Student Research



## *Rates of Chlamydia, Gonorrhea and Genital Herpes During College Breaks*

A collaborative study including Dr. Macaulay Okwuokenye, alumni, Dr. Karl E. Peace, professor of biostatistics, and Dr. Gulzar Shah, director of research, examined

rates of Chlamydia, Gonorrhea and Genital Herpes before and after spring break and homecoming at a southeastern American university. This study estimates the rates of chlamydia, gonorrhea and genital herpes simplex virus before and after spring break and homecoming week (and during summer terms) at a southeastern American university. Participants were comprised of students who used the campus student health center from January 1, 2006, to December 31, 2008. Retrospective de-identified participants' data were extracted using the specific diagnoses codes for each illness via the on-campus student health center's electronic medical record and practice management system. Enrollment data were obtained from the university's catalogue on the registrar's website. The rates of the three illnesses and average times to diagnoses from the first date of infected participants' enrollment are estimated. Research showed that the rates of these illnesses at this campus' student health center were higher after spring break, homecoming and summer Term A. Infected participants were, on average, diagnosed within their first two years of enrollment at the university.

## *Studying Social Contacts and Depression Links*

A collaborative study including Lindsey E. McKenzie, Ram Polur, Cholrelia Wesley, and Jessica Allen, M.P.H. examined social contacts and depression in middle and advanced adulthood. The report is co-authored by Dr. Jian Zhang, associate professor of epidemiology. The aim of the study is to assess how social contacts are associated with depression among the general population. Depression was determined using the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ), a nine-item screening instrument that charts the frequency of depression symptoms over the past two weeks. A PHQ score of 10 or higher was defined as depression. The findings of the current study are of great importance for both public health and clinical practices. Although digital technology

has been changing almost every aspect of modern society, the current study provides additional evidence that traditional social contacts, through religious activity and marriage, remain strongly associated with a reduced risk of depression. The interventions based on family, neighborhood, church or community might have a greater impact and relevancy in the treatment or prevention of depression, in particular among men.



## *Relationship Between Cardiac Events and Coronary Artery Disease*

A collaborative study including Dr. Ryan Butterfield, Dr.P.H. alumni, and Dr. Phillip Habib, now of the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, examined the association of cardiac events with coronary artery disease detected by 64-slice or greater

coronary CT angiography: a systematic review and meta-analysis. The value of  $\geq 64$ -slice coronary CT angiography (CCTA) to determine odds of cardiac death or non-fatal myocardial infarction (MI) needs further clarification. The researchers performed a systematic review and meta-analysis using publications reporting events/severity of coronary artery disease (CAD) in patients with suspected CAD undergoing CCTA. At date of publication, this is the largest meta-analysis conducted on this subject. Patients were divided into no CAD, non-obstructive CAD (maximal stenosis  $< 50\%$ ), and obstructive CAD ( $\geq 50\%$  stenosis). Odds ratios with 95 percent confidence intervals were calculated using a fixed or random effects model. Heterogeneity was assessed using the I(2) index. Increasing CAD severity detected by CCTA is associated with cardiac death or MI, all-cause mortality, and composite major adverse cardiovascular events. Absence of CAD is associated with very low odds of major adverse events, but non-obstructive disease significantly increases odds of cardiac adverse events in this follow-up period.



## *Adults Attitudes Toward Teen Pregnancy*

A study conducted by Krystina Johnson, M.P.H., examined Adults Attitudes toward Teen Pregnancy. The report is co-authored by Dr. Helen W. Bland, professor in community health, and Dr. Bridget F. Melton, associate professor of community health. This study sought to fill gaps in the existing research by gathering input from adults in a community affected by a high teen pregnancy rate. The purpose of this

study was to determine if adults in a rural community in Georgia thought about teen pregnancy, and if the current sex education offered at the local high school was sufficient to prevent teen pregnancy and promote responsible sexual practices. This study determined that while abstinence is the main teen pregnancy prevention method taught in a rural Georgia county high school, most adults in the community did not think abstinence programs were sufficient in preventing teen pregnancy or teaching responsible sexual practices. Since the adults did not believe that people waited until marriage to have sex and thought that more people should be aware of the importance of contraceptives, one can assume that the community would largely support the inclusion of comprehensive sexual education.



## *Chinese Social Media Reactions to Flu Outbreaks*

A collaborative study including Dr. Isaac Chun-Hai Fung, assistant professor of epidemiology, and biostatistics students Braydon Schaible and Yi Hao, examined "Chinese social media reaction to the MERS-CoV and avian influenza A(H7N9)

outbreaks." As Internet and social media use have skyrocketed, epidemiologists have begun to use online data such as Google query data and Twitter trends to track the activity levels of influenza and other infectious diseases. Capitalizing on the wealth of public opinion data contained in posts on Weibo, this study used Weibo as a measure of the Chinese people's reactions to two different outbreaks: the 2012 Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) outbreak, and the 2013

outbreak of human infection of avian influenza A(H7N9) in China. Results show that the Chinese people reacted significantly to both outbreaks online, where their social media reaction was two orders of magnitude stronger to the H7N9 influenza outbreak that happened in China than the MERS-CoV outbreak that was far away from China. These results demonstrate that social media could be a useful measure of public awareness and reaction to disease outbreak information released by health authorities.

## *MHA Student Selected as ACHE Intern*

Alisha Gosh, a first year Master of Healthcare Administration student at the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health, has been selected to intern for the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) this summer. The ACHE Diversity Internship program provides an opportunity for a student to rotate through all the major ACHE divisions, including Communication and Marketing, Executive Office, Finance & Administration, Health Administration Press, Management Information Systems, Professional Development and Regional Services. Gosh will be working directly with the CEO/President of ACHE Deborah Bowen and COO/Vice-President Elizabeth Summy. She will also have the opportunity to participate in the Institute for Diversity in Health Management's Summer Enrichment Program, which will provide more exposure to the healthcare management field.



## Alumni News



### Alumnus Appointed to State Public Health Office

Chris Rustin, Dr.P.H., a recent graduate of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH) doctoral program, has been appointed the director of environmental health for the Georgia Department of Public Health (GDPH).

Rustin's new role officially began on May 1. Drs. Simone Charles, John Luque and Robert Vogel guided his dissertation work, titled "Evaluating the efficacy of a childhood lead poisoning risk model as an accurate predictor of lead exposure," and will be critical to implementation of future environmental health and wellness policies for Georgia. Rustin will oversee approximately 12 environmental health programs, and a staff of more than 400 environmental health professionals at the state, district and county boards of health level.

"This is a well-deserved appointment for Chris," said Charles, dissertation chair and associate professor in the Department of Environmental Health Sciences. "Having one of our alumni as the head of a state level office, who is also an advocate for environmental health issues, the health of our rural communities and health equity is phenomenal. I am extremely pleased at his appointment."

Prior to being appointed director, Rustin served as deputy director of environmental health at GDPH for nearly five years, while completing his doctoral studies at JPHCOPH. He brings a wealth of rural and urban public health experience to the position.

"I am very excited to accept this position and look forward to continuing the great work of my predecessor by collaborating across programs, focusing on quality improvement, and ensuring our programs continue protecting the environmental health of the citizens and visitors of Georgia. The JPHCOPH doctoral program prepared me for the current challenges facing our public health system today, and I am grateful for the dedication of the professors and guidance provided to me over my academic career," Rustin said.

In addition to holding a Doctorate of Public Health, Rustin is a registered environmental health specialist with the Georgia Board of Registered Environmental Health Professionals. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from Armstrong Atlantic State University and a master's degree in safety and environmental compliance from Georgia Southern University.



### Alumni Named HELI Scholars

Georgia Southern University Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health alumni, Drs. Raymona H. Lawrence, Nandi A. Marshall, and Krista D. Mincey, have been accepted into the 2013 cohort of the Health Equity Leadership Institute (HELI). Sponsored through a partnership with the Maryland Center for Health Equity at the University of Maryland School of Public Health and the Collaborative Center for Health Equity at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, HELI selects 30 Scholars (15 from within/15 from outside of Wisconsin) to participate in a week long research "boot camp" focused on increasing the number of investigators engaged in health disparities/health equity research.

Dr. Raymona H. Lawrence, who graduated in December 2010, plans to focus her research on health inequities and disparities in rural, African American communities—especially as they relate to chronic diseases, such as sickle cell disease.

Dr. Nandi A. Marshall, who graduated in December 2012, plans to focus her research on community-based participatory research, public health services research, and their roles in addressing the social determinants of health.

Dr. Krista D. Mincey, who graduated in December 2011, plans to focus her research on the elements that affect Black men's health such as masculinity, female influence, and the doctor/patient relationship.

## Events

### Night of Awareness

The Public Health Student Association (PHSA) hosted multiple fundraisers to support a local family affected by Breast Cancer. A "Night for Awareness" was a celebration organized to present the family with all of the gifts collected, including a monetary donation.



### AIDS Walk

JPHCOPH Students joined other Georgia Southern University students in a walk to raise awareness and support for HIV/AIDS. World AIDS Day, observed each year on December 1,

provides an opportunity for people around the globe to unite in the fight against HIV and AIDS, as well as show their compassion and support to those already living with the disease.

### BUMC Spring Fling

JPHCOPH students volunteered at the annual Brooklet United Methodist Church Spring Fling, where they educated local families about public health. Meri and Seme (pictured) had a great time and even joined in on the festivities.



### Alzheimer's Walk

JPHCOPH joined in the Walk to End Alzheimer's. The mission of the Alzheimer's Association is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease

through advanced research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.



### APHA

JPHCOPH sends students each year to participate in APHA's Annual Meeting & Exposition, which provides public health professionals with a place to convene, learn,

network and engage. Each year more than 12,000 public health professionals come together to share information, promote best practices and advocate for public health issues.



### Faculty vs. Student Basketball Game

JPHCOPH, in conjunction with PHSA, hosted an annual faculty vs. student basketball game. The event is a fun, entertaining evening for faculty, staff, students and their families to cheer on our public "healthletes." To date, faculty holds a 2 and 1 record against the students.

### End of the Year Social

The JPHCOPH and PHSA host an annual end of the year social. The gathering allows faculty, staff and students a chance to wind down from a busy academic year.





## *Jiann-Ping Hsu*

The Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health is named in honor of Dr. Jiann-Ping Hsu, a scholar-scientist whose distinguished service in her life's work and devotion to quality and caring in all her endeavors represent the touchstones of learning and leadership in the health professions. The Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health is endowed by Dr. Karl E. Peace as a tribute to his wife and an enduring celebration of her life characterized by "a zeal for excellence, consideration of others, intelligence and scholarship, honesty, kindness and humility." Dr. Peace is an alumnus of Georgia Southern College, a Georgia Cancer Coalition Distinguished Cancer Scholar, the architect of the M.P.H. in Biostatistics, and the founder of the Karl E. Peace Center for Biostatistics at Georgia Southern University.

## *Georgia Southern University*

Georgia Southern University, a Carnegie Doctoral/Research University founded in 1906, offers 125 degree programs serving more than 20,500 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of academic achievement. Georgia Southern is recognized for its student-centered approach to education and is a top choice of Georgia's HOPE scholars.

GeorgiaSouthern.edu

[jphcoph.georgiasouthern.edu](http://jphcoph.georgiasouthern.edu)

Email: [jphcoph@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:jphcoph@georgiasouthern.edu)