

The Translator:

The Bi-annual Newsletter of the Doctoral Program in Clinical & Population Health Research
Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, University of Massachusetts Medical School

FIRST FOUR CPHR GRADUATES BEGIN NEW CAREERS



Dr. Mary Jane Bentley

The Clinical and Population Health Doctoral Program has graduated its first four students, all of whom have found post-doctoral positions in research settings. Two of the students have left UMMS for other research institutions, while two have remained here and have added to the growing pool of clinical research talent at UMMS.

Dr. Mary Jane Bentley has accepted a position as a Postdoctoral Fellow at Yale University School of Medicine in New Haven, CT. She will be involved in a number of research projects as part of a NIMH Sponsored Research Training Program in Childhood Neuropsychiatric Disorders, under the direction of Dr. Elena Grigorenko, Dr. James Leckman and Dr. Joseph Chang. The two year program focuses on identifying disease-relevant genes, key environmental factors, disease biomarkers (using genomics, proteomics, neuroimmunology, and neuroimaging techniques), and developing novel treatments and preventive interventions relevant to childhood-onset neurobiological disorders.



Dr. Virginia Briggs

Dr. Virginia Briggs joined the UMMS Department of Family Medicine and Community Health as a Post Doctoral Fellow in January 2010. She will be working with Dr. Chyke Doubeni on colorectal and cervical cancer screening comparative effectiveness research studies. This work is affiliated with the Cancer Research Network, 14 geographically dispersed integrated health care delivery systems in the US, funded by the National Cancer Institute and the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality. She will be focusing on colorectal cancer health disparities and working on a proposal for a K-award to pursue research on individuals with disabilities or chronic conditions and the transition from pediatric to adult health care.

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“I just want to take this opportunity to thank CPHR...for help during my study and job-hunting. CPHR is really set up elegantly and provides us a great opportunity to systematically learn the essential knowledge and skills, making us well-prepared to meet the challenges in public health research. As I mentioned in my dissertation, I firmly believe that CPHR will obtain national and international reputation in the near future. Thank you!

— CPHR Graduate, Hongliu Ding, MD, MPH, PhD

QUALIFYING PAPERS AND THESIS TOPICS DEFENDED

Student: Mary Jane Bentley

Mentor: George Reed, PhD

Dissertation Exam Committee Chair: Sybil Crawford, PhD

Dissertation: Development and Evaluation of Disease Activity Measures in Rheumatoid Arthritis Using Multi-Level Mixed Modeling and Other Statistical Methodology

Student: Yong Chen

Mentor: Becky Briesacher, PhD

Thesis Research Advisory Committee Chair: Jeroan Allison, MD, MPH

Qualifying Paper: Use of Instrumental Variables in Prescription Drug Research with Observational Data: A Systematic Review

Student: Yendelela Cuffee

Mentor: Jeroan Allison, MD, MScEpi

Thesis Research Advisory Committee Chair: Lee Hargraves, PhD

Qualifying Paper: Exploring the Association between Discrimination and Hypertension among African Americans and the Role of Medication Adherence and Coping: A Systematic Review

Student: Patrick McCabe

Mentor: William Fisher, PhD

Thesis Research Advisory Committee Chair: Carl Fulwiler, MD, PhD

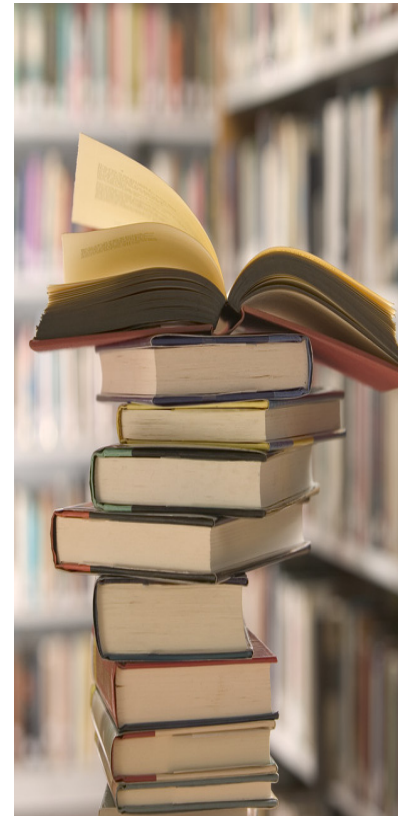
Qualifying Paper: Cannabis Use and Bipolar Disorder

Student: Hilary Placzek

Mentor: Lawrence Madoff, MD

Thesis Research Advisory Committee Chair: Alan Rothman, MD

Qualifying Paper: Registry-Based Data in Vaccine Effectiveness Studies: A Systematic Review



“When UMMS first started planning the CPHR Doctoral Program, one of the goals was to ‘grow our own’ junior investigators and add depth to clinical research capacity on campus. I am very pleased to see that two of our recent graduates will be launching their careers here at UMMS. I am equally pleased to see that our graduates are finding post-doctoral positions at some of our prestigious sister institutions elsewhere in Massachusetts and other states.”

-Dr. Carole Upshur, CPHR Program Director and Associate Dean

FIRST FOUR CPHR GRADUATES BEGIN NEW CAREERS

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Dr. Hongliu Ding



Dr. Mayra Tisminetzky

Dr. Hongliu Ding joined Dr. Clemens Scherzers neurogenomics group at Brigham and Women's Hospital/Harvard Medical School as a genetic epidemiologist in the fall of 2009. He is focusing on analyzing and conducting genetic, gene expression, integrative genomic, and laboratory biomarker studies nested in the Harvard Neuro-Discovery Center Biomarker Study (HBS). He will be using his statistical skills gained at CPHR and his prior basic science background to analyze large-scale, cross-sectional and longitudinal SNP data sets, mRNA and microRNA gene expression data sets, and clinical data. By using innovative integrative genomics approaches, these analyses will identify much-needed univariate or multivariate biomarkers of risk, disease progression, and predictors of prognosis for Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease.

Dr. Mayra Tisminetzky became a Project Director in the Dissemination and Implementation Unit at the Center of Health Care Policy and Research, in Commonwealth Medicine, at UMMS, in July 2009, and also received an appointment as an Instructor in the Department of Pediatrics. She is working on projects and publications involving medical care for persons with mental disorders with Dr. Thomas McLaughlin, and is writing a K-award on neuropsychological and psychiatric outcomes following percutaneous coronary intervention.

CPHR STUDENT, JAMES POTTS, MPH, AWARDED PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH DISSERTATION GRANT FROM THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION



James A. Potts, MPH, is a fourth year student in the CPHR program with an interest in infectious disease research. He was recently awarded a public health research dissertation grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to support his dissertation research on dengue illnesses in a Thai pediatric cohort. Alan L. Rothman, MD, Professor in the Department of Medicine and Assistant Director for the UMass Center for Infectious Disease and Vaccine Research, is James' mentor. James will use 12 years of systematically collected clinical data from Thai children to describe, classify, and predict severe dengue illnesses. The cohort consists of children aged 6 months to 15 years who presented to the Queen Sirikit National Institute of Child Health in Bangkok, Thailand within 72 hours of fever onset and were suspected of dengue illness. The children were hospitalized and followed daily with routine clinical manage-

ment until 24 hours after their fever subsided. Patients with dengue virus infections will typically have either dengue fever (DF), which is often a self-limited febrile illness, or dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF) where patients will develop severe symptoms, such as plasma leakage and thrombocytopenia, in the later stages of illness. Being that dengue is endemic in tropical/sub-tropical resource-poor regions, predicting those who will develop a more severe dengue illness, such as DHF, could help in the clinical management of patients with suspected dengue infection in areas with limited hospital resources.

“It was very exciting to get my first grant, like winning a marathon. It’s so rewarding to have your ideas be recognized. Now I really know why people find research so rewarding.”

- CPHR Student, James Potts, MPH

STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Harrold, LR, Greenberg, JD, Curtis, JR, **Bentley, MJ**, Reed, G, Harrington, J. Rheumatologists Prescribing Patterns for Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients with Active Disease [abstract]. *Arthritis Rheum* 2009;60 Suppl 10 :1009.

Libraty, D, Acosta, L, Tallo, V, Segubre-Mercado, E, Bautista, A, **Potts, JA**, Jarman, RG, Yoon, IK, Gibbons, RV, Brion, JD, Capeding, RZ. Prospective Nested Case-Control Study of Dengue in Infants: Rethinking and Refining the Antibody-Dependent Enhancement Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever Model. *PLoS Med* 2009;6:e1000171.

Ockene, IS, **Salmoirago-Blotcher, E**. Varenicline for Smoking Cessation in Patients with Coronary Heart Disease. *Circulation* Jan 19 2010;121(2):188-190.

Salmoirago-Blotcher, E, Crawford, S, Jackson, E, Ockene, J, Ockene, I. Abstract 864: Constipation and Risk of Cardiovascular Events in Menopausal Women. *Circulation*. November 3, 2009. 2009;120(18_MeetingAbstracts):S408.

Salmoirago-Blotcher, E, Ockene, IS. Methodological limitations of psychosocial interventions in patients with an implantable cardioverter-defibrillator (ICD) A systematic review. *BMC Cardiovasc Disord*. 2009;9:56.

Yong, C, Briesacher, B, Field, T, Tjia, J, Lau, D, Gurwitz, J. Unexplained variation across US nursing homes in antipsychotic prescribing rates. *Arch Intern Med*. 2010 Jan 11;170(1):89-95.

CPHR FAST FACTS

Our students are from:

Argentina
China
Egypt
Italy
United States
Vietnam

Our students have varied advanced degrees:

MA Environmental Science
MA Public Policy
MD
MPH
MS Biology & Biotechnology
MS Epidemiology
MS Nutrition & Public Health
MSW

Our students have worked at:

Bayer Diagnostics
Harvard Medical School
Massachusetts General Hospital
National Institutes of Health
National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology, Hanoi, Vietnam
National Organization for Vaccination and Biological Products, Cairo
New York State Psychiatric Institute
NH Department of Public Health and Human Services
Shanghai CDC
University of Massachusetts Medical School

PROFILE: HILARY PLACZEK – US SCHWEITZER FELLOW

Hilary Placzek, a second year CPHR student, was selected as one of four UMMS students for a US Schweitzer Fellowship in 2009-2010. The US Schweitzer Fellows Programs provide community service fellowships for graduate students in health professional fields to: 1) address health-related needs of underserved communities, 2) promote professional development of students to strengthen commitment to public service, 3) influence the culture of professional schools to address needs of surrounding disadvantaged communities, and 4) create a lifelong learning community of health professionals as role models dedicated to the health of underserved communities. Hilary's interest was on issues of physical activity and healthy eating for underrepresented populations in Worcester. She first focused on an existing family exercise program at the YWCA, building on the work of a prior Schweitzer Fellow, promoting functional gain and increased physical activity. She also initiated health behavior interventions for a group of newly relocated Iraqi refugees, which will be passed on to a new Fellow at the end of her year.



“THE ASF Program is a unique way to address the needs of specific ethnic groups in the City of Worcester. Coupled with the support of Suzanne Cashman at UMMS/Dept. of Family Medicine and Community Health, and Patty Flanagan at YWCA of Central Massachusetts and Clara Savage at Common Pathways of Greater Worcester as community partners, this program has been an exceptional opportunity to develop and implement a community service project using some of my skills learned about health behavior change models.”

– CPHR Student, Hilary Placzek, MPH



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&
Population
Health Research

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ABOUT CPHR

The Clinical & Population Health Research (CPHR) doctoral program is one of the few in the country that was specifically designed to address the new challenges in biomedical research. These include speeding the translation of knowledge from the explosion in basic sciences to patient care interventions, and assuring that new evidence-based medicine reaches the populations that can benefit from it. The CPHR program promotes an interdisciplinary approach to conducting research and provides a strong focus on addressing the needs of vulnerable populations. Currently the program has more than 70 affiliated faculty representing 31 departments and centers at UMMS.

The CPHR core courses provide cutting-edge research training in all areas of NIH-defined clinical research: from initial translation from lab to clinic, and from clinical trials to population health. Our students will graduate with the advanced skills and knowledge in biostatistics, epidemiology, and the genetic, behavioral, social, and health service predictors of individual health status needed to be successful clinical researchers.

The program currently has an enrollment of 18 PhD students one MD/PhD student and admits a group of 4-6 new students each year. Most students have master's degrees in Public Health or related disciplines from such institutions as: Boston University, Columbia University, Georgia Tech, Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, New York Medical College, Oxford University (UK), University of Alabama, University of Oklahoma, University of Massachusetts, University of Michigan, and University of New Hampshire.

Learn more: www.umassmed.edu/cphr