

# Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences

## Weekly Newsletter

DECEMBER 8-12, 2025



UMass Chan  
MEDICAL SCHOOL

## CONGRATULATIONS



Carla McDonald

### Congratulations to Carla and Supriya!!

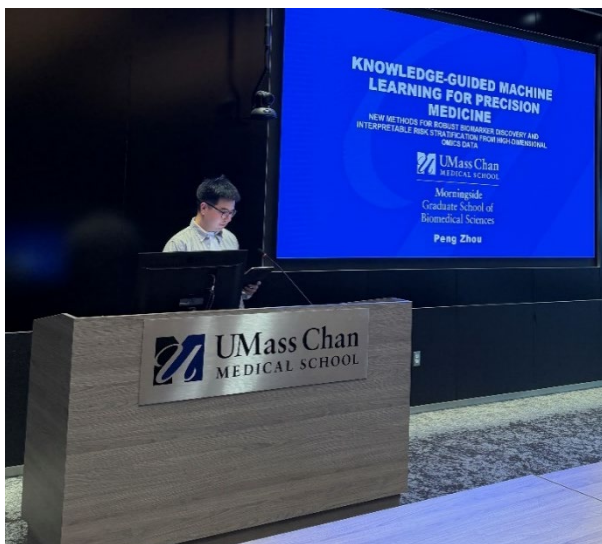
Carla McDonald was promoted to Executive Assistant to the Chair. She will be moving to the executive suite on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor to support Jeroan Allison and Sharina Person.

Supriya Puranik was promoted to Academic Administrator II.



Supriya Puranik

**Congratulations Billy!** - Peng (Billy) Zhou, PhD Student- GSBS Population Health Sciences Program, successfully defended his dissertation on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, titled “Knowledge-guided machine learning for precision medicine: new methods for robust biomarker discovery and interpretable risk stratification from high-dimensional omics data.”



Left to Right:

Peng (Billy) Zhou

Prof. Chan Zhou  
(Mentor & PI of  
Chan Zhou Lab)

Zixiu Li  
(Postdoc of Chan  
Zhou Lab)

EuiJin Kwon  
(Lab Mate of Chan  
Zhou Lab)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Wednesday, December 17, 10:00 – 11:00 AM**



### Research Methods Meeting

**Presenter:** Randall P. Ellis, PhD

**Title:** Pooling Cross Product Matrices to Maintain Confidentiality While Enabling Data Sharing and Enhanced Linear Predictive Models

**Abstract:** • Sensitive big data is often summarized by frequencies, means, and standard deviations of outcomes by univariate categories of interest. Privacy is maintained by requiring  $N > 10$  subjects for each statistic. This univariate approach precludes the use of data for linear multivariate regression models for hypothesis testing, prediction or verification. We

demonstrate how information can instead be summarized in  $Z'Z$  matrices of cross products of dependent and independent variables, with the privacy protected trimming the  $Z'Z$  matrix diagonal and off-diagonal cell statistics to zero when  $N \leq 10$ . Sharing  $Z'Z$  matrices permits a broad set of multivariate linear models to be estimated, enables external validation, enables pooling or comparison across distinct samples without requiring any sharing at the individual level, speeds up linear model estimation, and can potentially be used within Machine Learning (ML) iterations to speed up estimation. Trimming small cells causes only minor degradation of results in the  $N > 60$  million Risk Adjustment models estimated.

**Bio:** Dr. Randall P. Ellis is a professor in the Department of Economics at Boston University where he focuses on health economics, spanning both US and international economics topics. In 2024 he received the Victor Fuchs “Lifetime Achievement Award in the Field of Health Economics,” the highest award offered by the American Society of Health Economists. He was one of three original architects of the Hierarchical Condition Category (HCC) models

currently used to risk-adjust payments to Medicare Advantage (Part C), Part D prescription drug plans, and the ACA (Obamacare) Health Insurance Exchanges. This paper is a spinoff from a recent project building even better predictive models for risk-adjusted plan payments and performance evaluation. Click [here](#) to join.

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### New England ATTC Presentations

#### Wednesday, December 10, 2025, 1:00-2:30 PM

Register: [Gambling Disorder: Relationship to Suicide and Resources for Help](#)

Kristen Beall is offering a second training on a critical topic: Gambling disorder, which is recognized by the American Psychiatric Association as a behavioral addiction with the highest rate of suicide risk. This session provides crucial information on identifying warning signs using DSM-5 criteria, understanding co-occurring disorders, and initiating life-saving conversations. Leave equipped with essential resources and mitigation strategies to address this public health concern in your community.

#### Tuesday, December 16, 2025, 1:00-2:30 PM

Register: [Impact of the Games We Play](#)

Ted Hartwell is back to the impact of the games we play. Digital gaming has become one of the most dominant forms of entertainment worldwide—surpassing the movie and music industries combined. But with growing popularity comes growing concern. This training explores the line between healthy and problematic gaming, highlighting features in video games and social media that can quickly lead to harm, especially among younger users. Participants will gain insight into how gaming and gambling behaviors intersect, learn to identify warning signs, and discover practical resources to address gaming-related harms.

Please feel free to share this with anyone who may be interested. We hope to see you there! Keep checking our [website](#) and our [LinkedIn](#) page for updates!

The New England ATTC Team

New England ATTC  
Population and Quantitative Health Sciences  
UMass Chan Medical School  
New England ATTC - Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC) Network  
[NewEnglandATTC@umassmed.edu](mailto:NewEnglandATTC@umassmed.edu)

### FYI

#### UMass Chan Two-Day Holiday Market

Wednesday and Thursday, December 10 and 11, 10:00 - 2:00

Albert Sherman Center

Multi-Purpose Room - East

Shop for unique gifts and seasonal treats while supporting small and local businesses, all without leaving campus!



### DIVERSITY

#### Working Wisdom: Celebrating Diversity in How We Work

Diversity shows up in many ways — not just in our backgrounds, but also in our **behaviors, communication styles, and energy sources**. Some of us thrive in bustling group settings, others prefer quiet reflection, and many move between both.

This new *Education Corner* in the **Diversity Digest** will offer **short, engaging insights** into how personality and behavior shape our workplace experience. Each installment will highlight a different angle — from introversion and extroversion to communication, decision-making, and well-being — with quick takeaways and fun polls to spark reflection.

Together, we'll explore the **full spectrum of diversity in how we work** — and celebrate the strengths each style brings to our community.

## Week 7

### *Working Wisdom: Celebrating Diversity in How We Work*

## Pulling It All Together — Celebrating How We Work

Over the past several weeks, we've explored the spectrum of personalities in our workplace — from introverts and extroverts to the flexible middle ground of ambiverts. Along the way, we looked at:




- ✓ Where we fall on the spectrum
- ✓ How we recharge our energy
- ✓ Communication styles
- ✓ Approaches to risk and decision-making
- ✓ Expressions of happiness and well-being
- ✓ The strengths of ambiverts

Together, these snapshots remind us that **diversity isn't just about who we are — it's also about how we show up, think, and work**. Each style brings value, and our department is stronger when we recognize and celebrate these differences.

### Department Results

*(Insert your poll/mini-survey results here — e.g., “In our department, 42% identified as introverts, 28% as extroverts, and 30% as ambiverts.” You can also add a short reflection on what these results mean for team dynamics.)*

### The Takeaway

- **Extroverts**  energize us with momentum and enthusiasm.
- **Introverts**  ground us with reflection and depth.
- **Ambiverts**  balance the two, flexing where needed.

### Final Reflection Question

What have you learned about your own style over the course of this series? And how might recognizing the spectrum of behaviors help us support one another more fully at work?

### Practical Tip

As we move forward, remember: there's no “right” way to be. The best teams make space for every voice — those that speak up quickly, those that reflect quietly, and those that bridge both worlds.

As we conclude *this* series, we want to thank each of you for reading, reflecting, and participating in our polls and discussions. Together, we've learned that diversity is not only about who we are, but also about how we work, communicate, and thrive. Recognizing and honoring these differences helps us build a more inclusive, supportive department.

A very **special thanks to Gwen Hadden** for her invaluable contributions to our training and to the Diversity Action Committee. Her insight and dedication have strengthened our efforts and enriched the conversations we've shared through this series.

Though *this* series is wrapping up, the dialogue continues. We invite you to keep reflecting on your own style, listening for the strengths in others, and celebrating the many ways we contribute to our shared success.

## UMASS CHAN REMINDERS

### A Reminder from Payroll Services: 2026 Personal Time Schedule

- Employees have until 1/10/2026 to use 2025 personal time
- 2026 personal time will be granted on 1/13/2026
- Employees may begin using 2026 personal time after 1/13/2026 for the week beginning 1/11/2026

### Remaining Holiday Schedule for 2025:



- Christmas Eve – Wednesday, December 24<sup>th</sup>
- Christmas Day – Thursday, December 25<sup>th</sup>

*PQHS Weekly will be sent to all members of PQHS on Monday mornings. The intent is to provide a snapshot of what is going on that week in PQHS and to share our faculty and staff activities with the department. We depend on you to provide the items we need to share. Please send suggestions of events, faculty invited seminars & talks, honors, student thesis presentations, and news – new babies born! – to Judi ([judi.saber@umassmed.edu](mailto:judi.saber@umassmed.edu)) & Sarah ([sarah.yeboah@umassmed.edu](mailto:sarah.yeboah@umassmed.edu)) by Friday each week.*