

# Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences

## Weekly Newsletter

MARCH 30 - APRIL 3, 2026



**UMass Chan**  
MEDICAL SCHOOL

## CONGRATULATIONS

On Friday, March 6, **Emmanuella Asantewaa Asiedu**, mentored by: [Jennifer Tjia, MD, MSCE](#), and [Sarah Forrester, MS, PhD](#), successfully defended her PhD Dissertation, titled “Adverse Health Outcomes in Adults with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus: A Multi-Methods Examination of the roles of Neighborhood-Build Environment and Healthcare Setting Experiences”



**Maira Castañeda Avila, PhD**, Assistant Professor, Epidemiology has been accepted into two highly competitive training programs. She was selected for the I-REACH (Infrastructure for Research in Equity, Aging, Cancer, and Health) Scholar Program, a multi-institutional initiative that provides interdisciplinary training, mentorship, and access to data resources to support research on aging, cancer, and health disparities. She was also accepted into the Michigan Integrative Well-Being and Inequality (MIWI) Training Program, an initiative that provides interdisciplinary training, mentorship, and collaborative opportunities to study the intersection of mental and physical health and health inequities.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Monday, March 30, 9:00 AM, AS9.2072 or Teams**



**PhD Oral Qualifying Examination**

**Presenter:** Jessica Caouette, MS, RDN, LDN

**Mentor:** Stephenie Lemon, PhD

**Title:** Household and Caregiver Determinants of Family Meals: A Multi-Method Approach

This work presented by Jessica Caouette will describe valuable associations of social and relational health risk factors and family meals. Study results can be used to inform future interventions for health-promoting shared family meals that contribute to healthy child growth and reduce long-term obesity risk. Click [here](#) to join.

**Tuesday, March 31, 10:00 AM, AS9.2072 or Zoom**



**PhD Dissertation Defense**

**Presenter:** Nathaniel David Glassy

**Mentor:** Bo Wang, PhD, **Co-Mentor:** Jeroan Allison, MD, MS

**Title:** Modeling Developmental Trajectories of Multi-Domain Adolescent Risk Behaviors: Impact of Social-Ecological Risks and Cognitive-Motivational Appraisals

**Introduction:** The Caribbean bears a disproportionate HIV burden, and prevalence in The Bahamas is among the region’s highest. Although HIV incidence among Bahamian adolescents declined from 2015 to 2019, it has plateaued since 2020. Since delinquency, substance use, and sexual risk-taking co-occur and heighten HIV vulnerability, prevention requires approaches that identify heterogeneity in co-developing risk. This dissertation aimed to characterize sex-specific, multi-domain risk trajectories, evaluate social-context predictors and joint-exposure effects on trajectory membership and assess Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) constructs and threat and coping indices as correlates of trajectory membership. Findings support HIV prevention that prioritizes adolescents facing clustered social risks, aligns motivational targets to domain-specific risk escalation, and highlights where prevention content may require supplementation to reach adolescents most likely to remain high risk through high school.

Click [here](#) to join, password 848134

**Tuesday, March 31, 2:30 PM, PDC N1-1100 or Zoom**



**PhD Dissertation Defense**

**Presenter:** Gretchen K. Weaver, MPH

**Mentor:** Apurv Soni, MD, PhD

**Title:** Age, Telehealth, and COVID-19 Care: An Examination of Visit Type, Oral Antiviral Prescription, and Patient Preference

**Introduction:** Telehealth emerged as a healthcare innovation during the pandemic and is beneficial in the care of adults, especially older adults. Age may be related to technology use, and other areas of telehealth remain underexplored in the post pandemic era. This dissertation used an access-to-care lens and employed COVID-19 outpatient care as use case to assess three facets of telehealth. The specific aims examined the associations between 1) age group and visit type, 2) visit type and oral antiviral prescription, and 3) age group and care delivery preference for COVID-19 or flu.

Click [here](#) to join, password 221592

**Wednesday, April 1, 10:00 – 11:00 AM**

**Research Methods Meeting**

**Presenters:** Mara Meyer Epstein, ScD, Associate Professor, Division of Health Systems Science, Department of Medicine, Co-Director, Cancer Population Health Sciences Program, UMass Cancer Center

Mayra Tisminetzky MD PhD MPH, Associate Professor, Division of Geriatric Medicine and, Population and Quantitative Health Sciences, Director of Research in the Division of Geriatrics, UMass Chan Medical School

**Title:** Challenges in measuring multimorbidity for epidemiological research

**Abstract:** Multimorbidity, or the presence of two or more chronic conditions, is increasingly common in older adult populations. In this talk, we will discuss different methods used to measure multimorbidity in epidemiological research, including simple counts, dyads and triads, and the most common measuring indexes and approaches, and the pros and cons of each. We will also discuss several examples from our own research, including using electronic health records, claims data, and the All of Us Research Program to study multimorbidity in older adult populations



**Bio:** Mara Epstein, ScD, is a cancer epidemiologist and an Associate Professor in the Division of Health Systems Science in the Department of Medicine at UMass Chan. Her research addresses questions across the cancer care continuum, with a focus on hematological and prostate cancers, cancer screening, and studying the impact of multimorbidity on cancer care. She has also developed algorithms to identify cancer and precancer endpoints in electronic health data to facilitate population-based research in these areas.



**Bio:** Mayra Tisminetzky, MD, PhD is a clinical epidemiologist in the Division of Geriatric Medicine at UMass Chan Medical School, her research focuses on examining the magnitude, management, and clinical outcomes of older adults with multiple chronic conditions. Dr Tisminetzky recently completed a NIA-funded R01 grant where she investigated treatment patterns and the net benefits versus harms of selected therapies in patients with heart failure and multiple chronic conditions using data from the Cardiovascular Research Network. She has a particular interest in identifying innovative methods to assess multimorbidity burden in different vulnerable populations and investigate the association of multimorbidity with relevant clinical outcomes.

Click [here](#) to join.

The **Child Health Equity Center (CHEC) x Collaborative in Health Equity (CHE) Health Equity Working Group** is an open, welcoming community for anyone interested in engaging with and advancing health equity scholarship. We invite colleagues from any department or discipline who seek a supportive space to learn, collaborate, and deepen their work in the health equity space.

We meet weekly and follow a structured monthly cycle designed to promote progress, build skills, and strengthen connections: Our Monthly Cycle

- **1st Thursday – Works in Progress (WIP):** A collaborative forum where members share early-stage ideas or analyses and receive constructive, collegial feedback.
- **3rd Thursday – Skill Building:** Interactive sessions led by invited experts who introduce new methods, analytical approaches, and emerging issues in health equity.

Upcoming Schedule

April 2026

**1st Thursday - Works in Progress: April 2, 2026, 11AM**

3rd Thursday - Skill Building: April 16, 2026, 11 AM

May 2026

1st Thursday - Works in Progress: May 7, 2026, 11 AM

3rd Thursday - Skill Building: May 21, 2026, 11 AM

June 2026

1st Thursday - Works in Progress: June 4, 2026, 11 AM

3rd Thursday - Skill Building: June 18, 2026, 11 AM

### How to Participate

Whether you want to advance health equity but don't know where to start, learn new skills, or discuss a specific project with colleagues, please join us via the link below:

**Zoom Link:** [Join Meeting Here](#) For more information, you can scan the QR code on our flyer or send any questions to [CollaborativeinHealthEquity@umassmed.edu](mailto:CollaborativeinHealthEquity@umassmed.edu). If you would like to receive calendar invites, please email [Samantha.Doxsey@umassmed.edu](mailto:Samantha.Doxsey@umassmed.edu).

Child Health Equity Center & Collaborative in Health Equity

### Wednesday, April 8, 6:30 PM, Zoom

#### Urban Public Health & Gerontology, A Public Health Week 2026 Special Event

**Title:** Food Safety for Seniors

**Speaker:** Patrick “Pat” Maloney is a highly experienced public health leader, educator, and consultant with over four decades of impact at the national, county, and municipal levels. He most recently served as Commissioner of Public Health and Human Services for Brookline, MA, and previously as Deputy Commissioner and Chief of Environmental Health. Today, Pat supports workforce development across Massachusetts as a Public Health Consultant and Instructor, partnering with the Massachusetts Health Officers Association and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. He also serves on the faculty of the University of Massachusetts Boston Urban Public Health Program.



**Abstract:** As adults live longer and remain active in their communities, food safety becomes an increasingly important public health issue. Older adults are at higher risk for foodborne illness due to changes in immune function, chronic conditions, and medication interactions.

This session will explore practical, real-world strategies to protect older adults, whether aging at home, attending congregate meal programs, or living in community settings.

#### Who Should Attend?

Gerontology & MAS students, Urban Public Health students, Aging services professionals, Senior center and nutrition program staff, health advocates, and *anyone interested in aging, public health or food safety*

#### Co-Sponsored By

UMass Boston Urban Public Health Program UMass Boston Gerontology Department

April 10 - 17, 2026

Please join us as we honor Black Maternal Health Week (BMHW)

For the 3rd year in a row, Worcester is bringing attention to the dire public health statistics around Black birthing mothers. Join us for a week of awareness-raising, education, activism, empowerment, and community building that centers the voices of Black mothers!

Founded by the Black Mamas Alliance, BMHW raises awareness, inspires activism, and strengthens organizing around Black maternal health and coincides with National Minority Health Month and the International Day for Maternal Health and Rights.

Visit <https://www.umassmed.edu/che/bmhw/> for the full line-up of exciting events happening during the week of April 11 - 17. We are so grateful for the strong outpouring of community support and partnership in recognition of BMHW 2026!!!

# BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK 2026

FRI APRIL 10	SAT APRIL 11	SUN APRIL 12	MON APRIL 13
<b>THT REP PRESENTS: WHO IS EARTHA MAE?</b> 7:30 PM THE HANOVER THEATRE 2 SOUTHBRIDGE ST WORCESTER, MA 01608	<b>BLACK BREAST FEEDING CIRCLE SPECIAL EDITION</b> 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM GIRLS INC. WORCESTER 125 PROVIDENCE ST, WORCESTER, MA 01604	<b>KINGS RAISING KIDS: FATHERS EDUCATION AND SUPPORT GROUP</b> 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM YWCA 1 SALEM ST, WORCESTER, MA 01608	<b>BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK SUMMIT</b> 10:00 AM - 1:30 PM HOGAN CAMPUS CENTER COLLEGE OF HOLY CROSS 1 COLLEGE ST, WORCESTER, MA 01610
<b>HANOVER THEATRE &amp; CONSERVATORY</b> <b>Who is Eartha Mae?</b> created and performed by Jade Wheeler	<b>WOO MAMA WELLNESS DAY 2026</b> 10:00 AM - 2:30 PM GIRLS INC. WORCESTER 125 PROVIDENCE ST, WORCESTER, MA 01604	<b>BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK 2026</b> #BMHW26 THEME <b>ROOTED IN JUSTICE &amp; JOY!</b> BMMA	<b>FILM SCREENING WHEN YOU KNOW. CHILDBIRTH IN THE ASYLUM SYSTEM</b> 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM YMCA 766 MAIN ST, WORCESTER, MA 01610
<b>Patients R Waiting</b> <b>BUY TICKETS BIT.LY/PRW-EARTHA</b>	<b>PREGNANCY POP UP VILLAGE</b> 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM YWCA 1 SALEM ST, WORCESTER, MA 01608	<b>BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK 2026</b> #BMHW26 THEME <b>ROOTED IN JUSTICE &amp; JOY!</b> BMMA	<b>CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION</b> 6:00 - 8:00 PM ONLINE
<b>TUES APRIL 14</b> <b>BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK GAME NIGHT</b> 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM THE VILLAGE 4 KING ST, WORCESTER, MA 01610	<b>WED APRIL 15</b> <b>TOWARD BIRTH EQUITY THROUGH STRONG DOULA-PROVIDER COLLABORATION: NOTES FROM NEW YORK CITY</b> 7:30 AM - 8:30 AM ONLINE	<b>THUR APRIL 16</b> <b>BLACK BREAST FEEDING CIRCLE</b> 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM 16 SHAFFNER ST, WORCESTER, MA 01605	<b>BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK</b>
<b>MENSTRUAL POVERTY EDUCATIONAL AWARENESS</b> 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM GIRLS INC. WORCESTER 125 PROVIDENCE ST, WORCESTER, MA 01604	<b>FILM SCREENING &amp; FIRESIDE CHAT TOXIC: A BLACK WOMAN'S STORY</b> 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM JMAC 20 FRANKLIN ST, WORCESTER, MA 01608	<b>ROOTED IN JOY &amp; JUSTICE</b> Join us April 11-17 for a week of activism and community building for Black Mamas! In solidarity with <b>National Minority Health Month</b> and the <b>International Day for Maternal Health and Rights</b> . BMMA, Inc. founded BMHW to raise awareness, inspire activism, and strengthen organizing for Black maternal health. Visit <a href="http://BLKMATERNALHEALTHWEEK.COM">BLKMATERNALHEALTHWEEK.COM</a> to learn more	
	<b>CHECK OUT WORCESTER'S HUB FOR ALL BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK EVENTS BIT.LY/BMHW-WOO</b>		

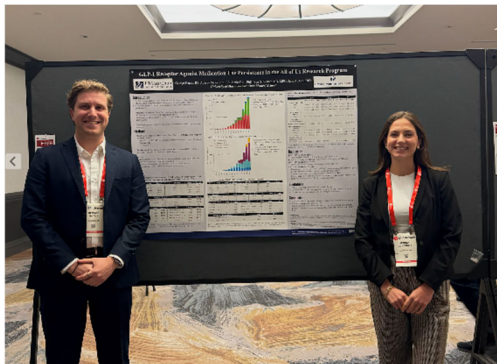


POSTER PRESENTATIONS AT THE EPI | LIFESTYLE SCIENTIFIC SESSIONS  
HELD IN BOSTON, MA ON MARCH 17-20



[Jamie Faro, PhD](#) - Assistant Professor, Health Informatics and Implementation Science, presented a poster titled “Independent and Joint Association of GLP-1 Therapy and Physical Activity with Weight Loss: Real-World Evidence from All of Us”. **JungAe Lee, Ben Gerber, Varun Ayyaswami, Christina Manxhari, Israel Adam, Jamie Faro**

[Melissa Goulding, PhD](#) - Assistant Professor, Preventive and Behavioral Medicine, presented a poster titled “Parents are Receptive to Childhood Blood Pressure Screening in Non-Clinical Settings”. **Melissa Goulding, Grace Ryan, Jessica Caouette, Arvin Garg, Michelle Trivedi, Milagros Rosal, Stephenie Lemon.**



**George Hatzis and Audrey McKennitt** (2<sup>nd</sup> yr medical students, mentored by [JungAe Lee, PhD](#), Assistant Professor, Biostatistics and Health Services Research) presented a poster titled “GLP-1 Receptor Agonist Medication Use Persistence in the All of Us Research Program”. **George Hatzis, Audrey McKennitt, Jamie Faro, Ben Gerber, JungAe Lee**

UMASS REMINDER

**Use Your Excess Vacation Leave by June 27, 2026**

As we get closer to fiscal year end, we want to remind you of the maximum accruals outlined in the [UMass Chan Holiday, and Personal and Vacation Time Policy](#) so you can plan accordingly.

As of the last full pay period of the fiscal year, the maximum number of vacation hours employees may carry over into the next fiscal year is 240. During the fiscal year, employees are allowed to accrue hours over

240. Hours over this accrual limit are automatically re-set in the payroll system to the accrual maximum. This year, **the relevant pay period ends Saturday, June 27, 2026**. You are encouraged to use any vacation balances that exceed the 240-hour maximum before that date. To avoid the loss of accrued vacation hours, review the following recommendations:



- Take all vacation over 240 hours before Saturday, June 27, 2026. Keep in mind that the vacation accrual for the pay period ending on that date that will not appear on your paycheck.
- Any hours over the cap will automatically be reset to 240 and will appear on your paycheck **on Friday, July 3, 2026**.
- If you are approaching 240 hours of accrued vacation time, talk with your manager about planning time off before June 27 and make sure it is approved by them.
- Ensure your vacation time has been entered into the Time Reporting system **by June 27, 2026**.



# HOLIDAY

— SCHEDULE —

- ✚ Patriots' Day – Monday, April 20<sup>th</sup>
- ✚ Memorial Day – Monday, May 25<sup>th</sup>
- ✚ Juneteenth National Independence Day – Friday, June 19<sup>th</sup>
- ✚ Independence Day – Friday, July 3<sup>rd</sup> (observed)
- ✚ Labor Day – Monday, September 7<sup>th</sup>
- ✚ Indigenous Peoples' Day – Monday, October 12<sup>th</sup>
- ✚ Veterans Day – Wednesday, November 11<sup>th</sup>
- ✚ Thanksgiving Day – Thursday, November 26<sup>th</sup>
- ✚ Day After Thanksgiving – Friday, November 27<sup>th</sup>
- ✚ Christmas Eve – Thursday, December 24<sup>th</sup>
- ✚ Christmas Day – Friday, 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.*