

# Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences

## Weekly Newsletter

APRIL 20-24, 2026



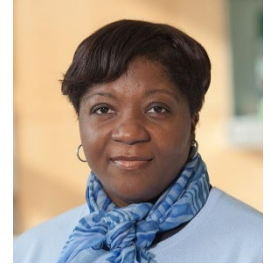
UMass Chan  
MEDICAL SCHOOL

## LEADERSHIP REMINDER

### CONNECT WITH THE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Jeroan Allison and Sharina Person invite you to schedule a 30-minute confidential meeting with them. These sessions are an opportunity for you to discuss any topic of your choice in confidence. Whether you have ideas to share, concerns to address, or simply want to connect, this is your chance to speak directly with leadership in a private setting.

If you would like to schedule a meeting with PQHS leadership, please use the scheduling link to reserve your time. [Sign up here](#)



They look forward to connecting with you.

## CONGRATULATIONS

**Nathaniel Glassy**, accepted an offer for a T32 Research Fellowship in Complementary & Integrative Healthcare at UNC Chapel Hill School of Medicine!

Brief description of the fellowship: This interdisciplinary program aims to provide training to examine the patterns, efficacy, effectiveness, mechanisms of action, and cost-benefits of complementary and integrative healthcare (CIH). Emphasis is on conducting research in mind-body therapies for promoting health, mitigating health conditions, and increasing access to culturally accessible CIH for diverse populations. Fellows are trained in research methodology, receive a firm grounding in CIH concepts and research issues, participate in ongoing research of their mentors, and develop research that will provide the foundation for future clinical trials.

**Mayuko Ito Fukunaga** has been invited to join the Implementation Science Communications Editorial Board.

**Rajani Sadasivam, Mayuko Ito Fukunaga**, and Julie LeMoine, had their pitch selected for Lahey's inaugural Care-AI-thon, The Air We Breathe, which is a focused co-design event aimed at transforming lung screening and patient outcomes through the responsible use of artificial intelligence.

**Adrian Zai** has been awarded a \$500K project with ForHealth Consulting to support MassHealth in launching a Disability Evaluation Services Automation Pilot. The initiative brings together a multidisciplinary UMass Chan team including Honghuang Lin, JungAe Lee, Steven Wong, Qiming (Timmy) Shi, Yurima Guilarte-Walker, and Greg Cohan to develop and evaluate a human-centered AI approach aimed at improving the efficiency, consistency, and transparency of disability determinations while maintaining clinician oversight.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Tuesday, April 21, 2:00-3:30 PM, In-person or Zoom**

**2026 American Statistical Association (ASA) Dione Price Public Lecture**



**Speaker:** Lorin Crawford, PhD, Principal Researcher at Microsoft Research

**Title:** A Statistician's Roadmap Toward an AI-Driven Paradigm for Precision Oncology

The lecture will be held in person at the University of Kansas Medical Center Campus, Kansas City, Kansas, as well as livestreamed for those who wish to attend virtually.

Learn more about [Lorin Crawford](#)

Click [here](#) to register to attend virtually

**Friday, April 24, 12:00 PM, Zoom**

**Qualitative Research Interest Group Inaugural Meeting**



**Presenter:** Heidi M. Levitt, PhD, Professor, UMass Boston, Department of Psychology

**Title:** An Introduction to Critical-Constructivist Grounded Theory - Considerations of Methodological Integrity

**Abstract:** Methodological integrity is a concept that was developed to encourage researchers to design methods by thinking about their capacity to reflect the specific phenomenon under study and to produce meaningful findings (Levitt et al., 2017). This concept is central in standards for qualitative research and is used by journal editors to evaluate qualitative studies. In this talk, Dr. Levitt will describe the method of Critical-Constructivist Grounded Theory (Levitt, 2021), a form

of grounded theory that is tailored to the understanding of both internal/interpersonal, and cultural/systemic meanings, and will discuss its features that enhance methodological integrity.

**Bio:** Dr. Levitt is Editor-in-Chief of Qualitative Psychology and past-president of the Society of Qualitative Inquiry in Psychology (SQIP), section of Division 5 of the American Psychological Association. She chaired the development of the SQIP recommendations for reviewing and designing qualitative research (Levitt et al., 2017). Dr. Levitt also chaired the development of the inaugural APA Journal Article Reporting Standards for qualitative, qualitative meta-analytic, and mixed methods research (JARS-Qual; Levitt et al., 2018). In 2020, she received the University of Massachusetts Boston Chancellor's Award for Distinguished Scholarship as well as the Distinguished Contributions in Qualitative Inquiry Award from APA Division 5 for a distinguished history of scientific contributions within the field of qualitative research methods. Click [here](#) to register. For More Information: Email [Qual.Interest.Group@umassmed.edu](mailto:Qual.Interest.Group@umassmed.edu)

For more information regarding the Qualitative Research Interest Group, click [here](#). If you would like to be added to the Qualitative Research Interest Group distribution list for announcements and reminders, email [judi.saber@umassmed.edu](mailto:judi.saber@umassmed.edu).



**New England Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC) Presentations**

**Friday, May 1, 12-1:30 PM**

**Trapped in Cyberspace: Understanding Internet Addiction** – click to register

Learn about the link between problem gambling and death by suicide, including key risk factors like financial strain, relationship challenges, and co-occurring alcohol use. Gain insights from emerging data to better inform prevention, improve data collection, and strengthen clinical support.

**Tuesday, May 5, 12-1:00 PM**

**A Primer on the Revised ASAM Criteria for Pregnant and Parenting Adolescents with Substance Use Disorders** – click to register

Discover ASAM Criteria 4th Edition updates to support safety and empowerment for pregnant and parenting adolescents, and explore developmentally appropriate approaches, system-level implications, and practical implementation strategies to apply key concepts for improving outcomes in today's behavioral health landscape.

**Tuesday, May 12, 1:00-2:00 PM EST**

**A Practical Overview of Treating Cannabis Use in the Perinatal Period** – click to register

Navigate an evidence-based framework for perinatal cannabis use, covering key clinical considerations and co-occurring mental health factors while applying case-based interventions for pregnancy and postpartum settings.

**Tuesday, May 12, 12:00-1:30 PM**

**Older Adults and Casino Gambling: Behaviors, Motivations, and Risk** – click to register

Learn what motivates older adults to gamble and the factors that increase their risk for Gambling Disorder as this population evolves. Explore key implications for prevention and reducing gambling-related harm among older adults.

**Friday, June 5, 1:00-2:30 PM**

**Understanding ASAM Criteria: A Foundational Overview and 4th Edition Highlights** – click to register

This session provides a foundational overview of the ASAM Criteria, including key updates in the Fourth Edition (2023) and major changes from prior versions. The ASAM Criteria offers a patient-centered, evidence-based framework for assessing and treating substance use and co-occurring conditions, with an increased emphasis on a chronic care model and continuity across the care continuum. The training will also highlight practical applications in correctional settings, including screening, level-of-care decision-making, and care transitions during reentry—areas further emphasized in the Fourth Edition.

**ATTC Monthly Blog Posts**

[National Nutrition Month: Centering Nutrition in Substance Use Recovery](#)

[Brain Injury Awareness Month: Why it Matters for Substance Use Services](#)

**The New England ATTC**

Population and Quantitative Health Sciences

UMass Chan Medical School

[NewEnglandATTC@umassmed.edu](mailto:NewEnglandATTC@umassmed.edu)

[New England ATTC - Addiction Technology Transfer Center \(ATTC\) Network](#)

**RECENT PRESENTATIONS**

[Sarah Cutrona, MD, MPH](#) recently presented her work at Duke's NIH Pragmatic Clinical Trials Collaboratory Grand Rounds. This HSR IIR-funded randomized controlled trial sought to use video stories and narrative-based text messages to support Black Veterans with Hypertension in self-management behaviors.

While we didn't show significant improvements in blood pressure control in the intervention arm, we demonstrated significant decreases in blood pressure across both arms, accompanied by strong rates of engagement across the six-month texting intervention, with Veterans reporting identification with the stories and enhanced motivation for improving their health.

[Link](#) to the slides. [Link](#) to the recording.

[Adrian Zai, MD, PhD, MPH](#) presented at the inaugural Yale Medical AI Symposium on March 26, 2026 hosted by the Yale Center for Clinical Investigation (YCCI) and Yale

Biomedical Informatics and Computing (YBIC) at Yale School of Medicine. This one-day symposium brought together investigators, clinicians, informaticians, data scientists, and trainees to share advances in medical AI, foster cross-CTSA collaboration, and discuss best practices for developing, evaluating, and deploying AI in clinical and translational research. Presentation Title: "Principles for AI Translation in Healthcare: Progress from the CTSA Network"

Adrian Zai presented at "UMass Innovates" which took place at UMass Boston on April 7th. His presentation, "AI is Easy. Trust is Hard: Operationalizing Trust in Clinical AI Systems," will explore building trustworthy and responsible AI in healthcare.

High rates of engagement and follow-up for all participants who received text messages

- 86% completed 6-month follow-up.
- Response rates: 60.7% among those completing follow-up; 57% among all participants across 6 months.
- > 55% of participants responded to ≥1 text in the last week of months 1, 3 & 6.
- 79.5% (410/56) described texts as helpful motivators for improving health.
- Among intervention participants, 92.5% agreed with the statement: "I could identify with the Veteran in the video."

**Participants described intervention as one that conveyed empathy:**  
**"I liked this study. It showed concern."**



## The Culture Code

### Week 2: Direct vs. Indirect — What’s Really Being Said?

Have you ever left a meeting thinking:

- “Why didn’t they just say that?”
- “That felt a little blunt.”
- “What were they actually trying to say?”

You may not be dealing with rudeness or evasiveness.

You may be encountering a **context difference**.

In Edward T. Hall’s High–Low Context framework

#### Low (Individual) Context Communication

- Messages are explicit and direct
- Meaning is carried primarily in the words themselves
- Clarity, precision, and efficiency are valued
- Feedback may be straightforward and task-focused

#### High (Group) Context Communication

- Messages are more implicit
- Meaning is carried through tone, nonverbal cues, history, and relationships
- Harmony and relational awareness are important
- Feedback may be layered, softened, or conveyed indirectly

---

Neither style is better. Both are logical within their cultural systems.

But when these styles interact, misunderstandings can happen:

- Direct can feel aggressive.
- Indirect can feel unclear or evasive.

Often, it’s neither.

It’s simply a different communication operating system.

---

## Cultural Agility Challenge

### Notice:

This week, observe how feedback or disagreement is delivered in meetings or emails. Is it direct and literal? Or contextual and layered?

### Try:

If someone seems indirect, ask:

“Can you help me understand your main concern?”

If someone seems very direct, ask:

“Can you say more about what led you to that conclusion?”

### Reflect:

When do I equate directness with professionalism?

When do I equate subtlety with respect?

---

 **Next:** Relationships vs. Tasks — Why some cultures prioritize harmony while others prioritize efficiency.

## UMASS BENEFIT REMINDERS

### April 1 through May 1, 2026 - Annual Benefit Enrollment

The [Annual Enrollment](#) period runs from April 1 - May 1, 2026. Annual Enrollment is your opportunity to [review your benefit options](#) and make benefit changes for the upcoming Fiscal Year 2027, July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027.

Each year GIC benefit plans provide GIC members with a [virtual benefits fair](#) for your review. Please [contact the benefit plans](#) you're evaluating to ask questions about guidance or assistance regarding plan benefits and network coverage, tiering, costs, finding a provider, and more.

If you do not want to select a different health plan during [Annual Enrollment](#) no further action is needed to remain in your current health plan.

Note (employees only): You must re-enroll if you wish to participate in a Flexible Spending Account (FSA) effective July 1, 2026.

---

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