

Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences

Weekly Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 21-25, 2026



UMass Chan
MEDICAL SCHOOL

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, September 22, 1:00 – 2:00 PM, AS9.2072 (In-Person only)

Generative AI Seminar



Presenter: [Jeroan Allison, MD, MS](#) - Professor and Chair, PQHS

Title: Artificial Intelligence for Scientific Writing: Friend or Foe?

Join us for an interactive session exploring the opportunities, challenges, and practical applications of artificial intelligence in scientific writing. Whether you are new to AI tools or already incorporating them into your research workflow, this discussion will provide valuable insights into how AI can support scholarly writing while highlighting important considerations and limitations.

This seminar will be **in person only**. Please respond to the invitation sent by Benedicta Treku, if you plan to attend, as this will help us determine the anticipated attendance. Attendees are encouraged to **bring their laptops** to this session. We look forward to an insightful conversation about the evolving role of AI in research and scientific communication.

Tuesday, September 22, 12:30 – 5:30 PM

Health Education Academy for Leadership and Learning (HEALL) Education Day

Location: Paul J. DiMare Center, N1-1200 - N1-1500

Education Day offers an ongoing opportunity to engage in meaningful conversation, connect with like-minded colleagues, plan collaborations, and celebrate our educational activities and scholarship. This annual event serves to highlight the academic scholarly work that happens here, complementing your daily teaching, lab or clinical responsibilities, and curriculum development.

Education Day features plenary speakers who address topics such as the influence of Academies, conducting educational scholarly projects, and innovative trends in Health Sciences education. The event brings together key institutional leaders and educators who shape the future of Health Sciences education at UMass Chan and beyond. It also provides a forum for presenting and discussing novel educational initiatives underway at UMass Chan, enhancing our school's reputation and fostering collaboration within our educational community.

- 12:30-12:45 pm, Welcome Remarks
- 12:45-1:45 pm, Plenary (details coming soon)
- 1:55-4:00 pm Workshops
- 4:10-5:30 pm, Collaborative and Conversations (includes reception)

Click [here](#) to register.

Wednesday, September 23, 12:00 - 1:30 AM, Zoom

Title: Hidden Risks: Problem Gambling in Prediction Market Platforms

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

Description: Prediction markets—platforms where participants trade on the likelihood of future events—are often framed as tools for aggregating information and improving forecasts. However, they share structural similarities with gambling environments, including real-money stakes, rapid feedback loops, and uncertainty-based rewards. Participants will be provided with foundational information on problem gambling, warning signs, and impacts on individuals and loved ones. Additionally, focus areas will include where the line between forecasting and gambling begins to blur, and why that distinction matters for public health and policy.

Click [here](#) to register.

Friday, September 25, 12:30 – 5:30 PM, Zoom

Qualitative Research Interest Group Webinar

Presenter: Katie Sveinson, PhD, Associate Professor, Associate Department Chair Charles J. Dockendorff Endowed Faculty Fellow, Isenberg School of Management at UMass Amherst

Title: Introduction to Discourse Analysis as Theory and Methodology

Abstract: Communication in our multimodal world goes beyond spoken words and written text. Images, videos, symbols, icons, body language, sound, music, body language, and physical arrangements make unique contributions to effective messaging. Discourse analysis allows for



the study of these elements of communication in social processes. With a focus on meaning-making, discourse analysis highlights how the relationship between language and what language represents is far from straightforward (Gee, 2011; Sveinson, 2026). This approach offers opportunities to investigate and to be conscious of artifacts that may communicate (un)intended and implicit messaging that may reveal hidden assumptions and power structures encoded in common documents. It goes past literal words to show how other aspects of messaging content may shape beliefs and behaviors. In this talk, Dr. Sveinson will discuss the inextricably linked theory, methodology, methods, and analysis of discourse analysis, with a focus on the uniqueness of this approach compared to other qualitative methodologies. Emphasis will be placed on how this work links micro-level language use to macro-level structures. Examples of her work will be provided as well as suggested areas of interest to utilize this approach.

Bio: Dr. Sveinson has published 13 articles utilizing (critical) discourse analysis, including empirical pieces, methodological perspectives, and scoping reviews and has received the Isenberg School of Management Outstanding Research Award. She serves on the editorial boards of the Journal of Sport Management, Sport Management Review, and Sociology of Sport Journal and is a NASSM Research Fellow.

Click [here](#) to register.

Sunday, September 27, 12:00-1:00 PM

2026 UMass Cancer Walk

Polar Park, 100 Madison Street, Worcester

Join Us for the Cancer Walk!

We're putting together a team for this year's cancer walk, and everyone is welcome to join! It's a great opportunity to support cancer research, honor those affected by cancer, and connect with colleagues outside of work. If you're interested in participating, please use the team invitation link below. We'd love to have you with us!

To register, click [here](#).



2024 PQHS Team

[Watch Chancellor McManus's video message](#) to learn about how you can help.

Monday, October 5, 1:00-2:15 PM

Gerontology Speaker Series



Title: Implementation Science and Rehabilitation Research

Sponsored by: UMass Boston, Gerontology and Gerontology Institute and UMass Chan, PQHS

Presenter: Lisa Juckett, PhD, OTR/L, CHT, Associate Professor, Division of Occupational Therapy, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, The Ohio State University

via Zoom: <https://umassboston.zoom.us/j/94175483404>, Password: Boston

For more information contact Whitney Mills: whitney.mills@umb.edu

Wednesday, October 7, 10:00 – 11:00 AM, Zoom

Research Methods Meeting

Presenter: Aditya S. Khanna, PhD, Associate Professor of Behavioral and Social Sciences, Brown University School of Public Health

Title: Systems Science Methods for Public Health Planning: From HIV Transmission on Networks to Substance Use across the Lifecourse

Abstract: Systems science approaches are a useful tool for public health planning where purely empirical data are difficult to collect due to ethical, logistical, or financial barriers. This talk develops that idea across two problems and two modeling traditions. First, we discuss an agent-based network model of HIV transmission among young Black men who have sex with men in Chicago. Dynamic sexual partnerships generated from cohort data are coupled with agent-level



demography, HIV biology, antiretroviral treatment and pre-exposure prophylaxis. Calibrated to observed HIV prevalence and incidence, the model simulates interventions to inform Getting to Zero (GTZ) initiatives. Second, we turn to the association between alcohol use and cancer risk over the lifecourse. A discrete-time microsimulation is developed, linking lifecourse alcohol-use trajectories to cancer hazard. The model quantifies how the timing and magnitude of alcohol use shape cancer risk, motivating a decision-support tool. Throughout both parts, common themes emerge, including multi-source parameterization, calibration to population targets, high performance computing-enabled parameter searching, and counterfactual analysis to inform public health action.

Bio: Trained as a computational social scientist, Dr. Aditya Khanna is currently Associate Professor of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the Brown University School of Public Health. His work focuses on networked communities and systems, and how public health challenges diffuse through them. He develops simulation models to inform equity-focused initiatives for HIV prevention, mitigation of substance use disorders, and cancer disparities, with attention to structural systems such as incarceration, racism and minoritization of sexual or gender identity. Click [here](#) to join.

Friday, October 9, 12:00-1:00 PM

Qualitative Research Office Hours

This is an open online meeting for all interested in qualitative research methods, where participants may choose to present to other qualitative researchers their research project, proposal, manuscript, or idea for discussion and feedback. A short basic methods presentation will also be planned, such as using conceptual models, immersion/crystallization, or developing a coding structure. Click [here](#) to join.

Wednesday, October 21, 10:00 – 11:00 AM, Zoom

Research Methods Meeting



Presenter: Troy Wixson, PhD

Title: A three-groups non-local model for combining heterogeneous data sources to identify genes associated with Parkinson's Disease

Abstract: We seek to identify genes involved in Parkinson's Disease (PD) by combining information across different experiment types. Each experiment, taken individually, may contain too little information to distinguish some important genes from incidental ones. However, when experiments are combined using the proposed statistical framework, additional power emerges. The fundamental building block of the family of statistical models that we propose is a hierarchical three-groups mixture of distributions. Each gene is modeled probabilistically as

belonging to either a null group that is unassociated with PD, a deleterious group, or a beneficial group. This three-groups formalism has two key features. By apportioning prior probability of group assignments with a Dirichlet distribution, the resultant posterior group probabilities automatically account for the multiplicity inherent in analyzing many genes simultaneously. By building models for experimental outcomes conditionally on the group labels, any number of data modalities may be combined in a single coherent probability model, allowing information sharing across experiment types. These two features result in parsimonious inference with few false positives, while simultaneously enhancing power to detect signals. Simulations show that our three-groups approach performs at least as well as commonly-used tools for GWAS and RNA-seq, and in some cases it performs better. We apply our proposed approach to publicly-available GWAS and RNA-seq datasets, discovering novel genes that are potential therapeutic targets.

Bio: Troy Wixson joined the UMass Department of Mathematics and Statistics as a Visiting Assistant Professor after completing his PhD in statistics at Colorado State University in 2025. Troy has research interests related to modeling tail dependence in multivariate extremes with environmental applications and Bayesian modeling of heterogeneous data to probabilistically identify genes associated with disease. Click [here](#) to join.

National HBCU Week, September 13-20, 2026

Founded in 2016, the nonprofit HBCU Week Foundation encourages high school students to explore Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), while expanding access to scholarships and building pathways from higher education to meaningful careers. Through its annual HBCU Week celebration, the Foundation connects students with institutions, resources, and opportunities that can shape their educational and professional futures.



A central feature is the HBCU Week College Fair in Wilmington, Delaware. The fair gives students the unique opportunity to meet directly with HBCU representatives and pursue on-the-spot college acceptances and scholarships. Since its inception, HBCU Week and its College Fair have helped generate more than 15,000 on-the-spot college acceptances, nearly 6,000 scholarship offers, and more than \$109 million in scholarship opportunities—connecting students with HBCUs nationwide and supporting pathways from college into careers.

Students, families, educators, and supporters can learn more about HBCU Week events and the College Fair at the official HBCU Week website: [HBCU Week](#)

For year-round storytelling and programming about HBCUs, visit [HBCU Week NOW](#), a public-media initiative spearheaded by Maryland Public Television. HBCU Week NOW highlights the achievements, experiences, and contributions of HBCU students, alumni, faculty, and staff through on-demand programming and original content.

Join us in recognizing the history, excellence, and future of HBCUs, and in encouraging the next generation of scholars, leaders, and changemakers.

2026 SEPTEMBER							Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
2026 SEPTEMBER Monthly observances: * Hispanic Heritage Month * Intergenerational Month Weekly observance: National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week (2nd week of Sept.)							30	31	1	2	3	4	5
									Installation of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib		Krishna Janmashtami (9/3-4)		
							6	7	8	9	10	11	12
								*Brazilian Independence Day *Labor Day	Paryushana Parvarambha			*Ethiopian New Year *Rosh Hashanah (sundown to nightfall 9/13)	
							13	14	15	16	17	18	19
								Elevation of the Life-Giving Cross	*Ganesh Chaturthi *Guatemala Independence Day	Mexican Independence Day		*Chilean Independence Day * International Equal Pay Day	Army Day
							20	21	22	23	24	25	26
							Yom Kippur (sundown to nightfall 9/21)	*Respect for the Aged Day *Mabon		*Autumnal Equinox Day *International Day of Sign Languages *Saudi National Day	Chuseok (9/24-26)	*Mid-Autumn Festival *Native American Day *Sukkot (through 10/2)	
							27	28	29	30	1	2	3
							*Meskel * The Day of the Walloon Region *French Community Holiday		Michaelmas	National Day for Truth and Reconciliation			

UMASS REMINDERS

UMass Chan Farmers' Market



**Every Tuesday through October 27
10 AM - 1 PM**

[Click here](#) for more details and
to view the list of attending food
trucks and vendors

Two Locations:

- Market Vendors will be set up in the Albert Sherman Center, MPR - East, First Floor.
- Food Trucks and Food Vendors will set up outside on the Medical School Building Terrace.



🚩 Indigenous Peoples' Day – Monday, October 12th

🚩 Veterans Day – Wednesday, November 11th

🚩 Thanksgiving Day – Thursday, November 26th

🚩 Day After Thanksgiving – Friday, November 27th

🚩 Christmas Eve – Thursday, December 24th

🚩 Christmas Day – Friday, December 25th

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) & Sarah (sarah.yeboah@umassmed.edu) by Friday each week.