

Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences

Weekly Newsletter

APRIL 13-17, 2026



UMass Chan
MEDICAL SCHOOL

CONGRATULATIONS

Pryce Michener and Bethany Berry, MD/PhD, who met 8 years ago at orientation and recently got married, both matched at their first choice, the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota. Click [here](#) to watch the WCBV Channel 5 News YouTube video.



Suzanne Morrissey, PhD - Associate Professor, Health Informatics and Implementation Science has been accepted as **one of 10** participants in the Office of Faculty Affairs' third annual Summer Intensive on Presentation Skills (SIPS) course to take place **in-person** on the UMass Chan Medical School campus **July 22-24, 2026**.



Yiyang Yuan has been selected as an NIA IMPACT Collaboratory Real World Data Scholar!

Her proposed research “Advancing Malnutrition Measurement Using Linked EHR and MDS Data” aims to generate foundational evidence on the availability, validity, and clinical relevance of EHR-derived malnutrition indicators, with implications to clarify whether these measures complement existing MDS assessments and support earlier identification of nursing home residents at elevated malnutrition risk.

The Real World Data Scholars Program is a 1-year mentored training experience designed to build practical skills and professional networks for early-career investigators, postdoctoral fellows and graduate students interested in using real-world data to improve care of people living with dementia and care partners. This funding cycle is a collaborative initiative among the NIA IMPACT Collaboratory, NEXT STEPs Network and the Long-Term Care (LTC) Data Cooperative. Together, these NIA-funded national efforts aim to build capacity for rigorous, data-driven research to improve care for people living in nursing homes and assisted living communities, including people living with Alzheimer’s disease and Alzheimer’s disease-related dementias. Each scholar will complete a mentored research project and participate in a broad range of IMPACT Collaboratory activities that support interdisciplinary collaboration, professional growth, and methodological innovation.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, April 15, 10:00 – 11:00 AM

Research Methods Meeting



Presenter: Bruce Barton, Ph.D., Professor of Biostatistics, PQHS, UMass Chan Medical School

Title: Statistical Model Building - Best Practices and Cautionary Notes

Abstract: We will review best practices for building statistical models, along with cautionary notes, based on my decades of experience. I will present my approaches to model building, using an example from one of my earlier clinical trials and SAS for the analysis. The concepts will be applicable to other software. Whether you are new to model building or have been building models for years, this will be a good way to review the process - along with the Dos and Don'ts!

Bio: Dr. Barton also the Director of the U Mass Chan Quantitative Methods Core. He has substantial experience in statistical methods in clinical trials and has been awarded 80+ federal grants and pharma industry contracts to support biomedical research studies. He has over 49 years of experience in medical research, including study designs from observational data to randomized clinical trials. He has also designed pre-clinical (animal) studies, Phase I-III clinical trials for pharmaceutical and behavioral projects, and pragmatic trials for NIH-funded projects. He has been involved in studies covering many areas of medical investigation ranging from pain control in pre-term neonates to hip fracture prevention in nursing home residents, with substantial experience in cardiology, oncology, neurology, dermatology, anesthesiology, sickle cell disease, cardiovascular disease risk factors, infectious disease, and alcoholic hepatitis. Click [here](#) to join.

Thursday, April 16, 2026

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

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

May 2026

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

3rd Thursday - Skill Building: May 21, 2026

June 2026

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

3rd Thursday - Skill Building: June 18, 2026

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. If you would like to receive calendar invites, please email Samantha.Doxsey@umassmed.edu.

Child Health Equity Center & Collaborative in Health Equity

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

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.

KUDOS



Mary R. Lee - PhD Candidate, presented a poster at the AHA Epi | Lifestyle conference in Boston, MA, March 17-20, 2026, in a moderated poster session titled, "Individual-Level Social Determinants of Health and High-Risk Behavior Engagement Among Puerto Rican Young Adults: PR-OUTLOOK Study". Mary R. Lee, Cynthia M. Perez, Milagros C. Rosal, Sarah N. Forrester

DIVERSITY DIGEST

April is Celebrate Diversity Month, spotlighting the richness of human differences and fostering inclusion and understanding across cultures, backgrounds, and identities. Although it is observed in April, Celebrate Diversity Month builds on broader efforts to honor human differences year-round.

Celebrate Diversity Month emerged in the early 2000s as part of workplace and educational initiatives to promote equity, inspired by anti-discrimination movements and cultural awareness campaigns by organizations such as the National Fair Housing Alliance. It gained traction amid growing recognition of the value of multiculturalism in society, evolving from singular heritage months (e.g., Black History Month) into a broader celebration of all differences.

Its goal is to highlight the strength in gathering varied perspectives from people of all races, ethnicities, genders, abilities, and orientations, aiming to combat bias and build empathy. The focus is on creating inclusive spaces where everyone is valued, driving innovation and social harmony.

Learn more: <https://www.stompoutbullying.org/blog/diversity-month>



In the United States, April is **Autism Acceptance Month**, a time to recognize the talents, contributions, and diversity within the autism community.

Autism Acceptance Month builds on decades of advocacy. It began in the US in 1970 as Autism Awareness Month and, in 1988, gained national recognition through a presidential proclamation. In 2021, the shift to acceptance reflected what autistic people have long called for - not just recognition, but authentic inclusion.

Autistic people deserve full respect and inclusion. Yet, they continue to face misunderstanding, discrimination, and barriers in education, employment, healthcare, and community life. Autism Acceptance Month is a call to action to remove the obstacles that can make it difficult for autistic people to thrive and live as their authentic selves.

Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007, **World Autism Awareness Day** reaffirms the global commitment to advancing the rights, inclusion, and full participation of autistic individuals. What began as an effort to raise awareness has evolved into an international movement dedicated to appreciation and meaningful engagement.

Autism Acceptance Month and **World Autism Awareness Day** encourage us to continue promoting evidence-based understanding and inclusive practices - not just in April, but throughout the year. By advocating for accessible care, respect, and opportunity, we help create a world where every person can contribute fully and live with dignity.

Did you know

- According to 2025 CDC ADDM Network data, <https://www.cdc.gov/autism/data-research/index.html>, **approximately 1 in 31 (3.2%) children aged 8 years in the U.S. have been identified as autistic.** This represents a rise from previous estimates, with prevalence notably higher in boys (1 in 20) than in girls (1 in 70)
- **Many autistic people prefer identity-first language (“autistic person”) over person-first language (“person with autism”),** viewing autism as an integral part of who they are. Respecting individual preferences is a key part of inclusion. When in doubt, it’s best to ask the person what they prefer.

Learn more about the United Nations’ observance of **World Autism Awareness Day** at <https://www.un.org/en/observances/autism-day>

Learn more about **Autism Acceptance Month** and the shift from autism “acceptance’ to “awareness” at <https://sites.uab.edu/humanrights/2021/04/02/the-shift-from-autism-awareness-month-to-autism-acceptance-month/>

UMASS REMINDER


**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.



The graphic features a blue background with a diamond pattern. It includes the UMass Chan Medical School logo in the top right. Two diamonds indicate 'Open enrollment STARTS Wednesday APRIL 1' and 'Open enrollment ENDS Friday MAY 1'. The main title is '2026 BENEFITS OPEN ENROLLMENT'. Below this, two columns list benefits: 'Benefits that do not require action unless making changes' (Health Insurance, Health Insurance Buy-Out Option, Dental Insurance, Vision Insurance, Short-term Disability) and 'Benefits that require you to re-enroll each open enrollment' (Health Care Spending Account, Dependent Care Assistance Program, Child Care Assistance Program).

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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 —

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

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.