



University of  
**Pittsburgh**<sup>®</sup>

Health Policy  
and Management  
School of Public Health

# Academic Year 2024-25 Annual Report



# A Note from the Chair of Health Policy and Management



**Julie M. Donohue, PhD**  
Professor and Chair,  
Health Policy and  
Management

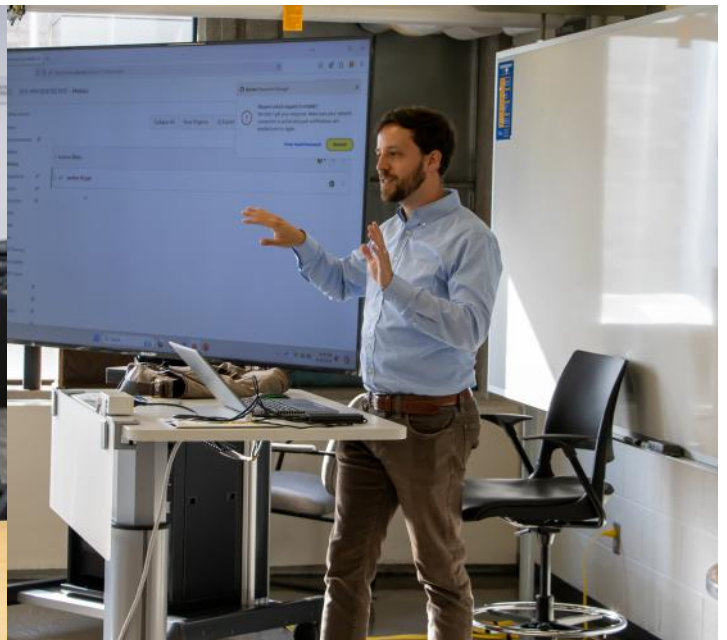
Greetings from the Department of Health Policy and Management!

We are thrilled to share news and accomplishments from our students, staff, faculty and alumni from 2024-2025.

In these pages, you will see messages from our outstanding program directors, stories about our students from Pittsburgh to Paris, career updates from our alumni, and insights from our award-winning staff and faculty.

We are exceptionally proud of the impact our students, staff, faculty and alumni have on health systems around the country, and on policymaking at the local, state and federal levels. Challenges to higher education and public health in 2025 have only solidified our commitment to elevating public health and serving our community through education, research and practice.

We hope you enjoy seeing what we've been up to over the last year and hope to connect with you soon.



## Health Policy and Management Annual Report

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The HPM Annual Report is published annually for students, faculty, staff, alumni of the Department of Health Policy and Management.  
The University of Pittsburgh is an affirmative action, equal opportunity institution

*On the cover: (L to R) Bolu Gbadebo (MHA '25), Natalya Temple (MHA '26), Neeharika Balaji (MHA '26), Gabe Riberi (MHA '25) and Ali Resch (MPH '26) walk to class in the Public Health Building. Above Left: HPM students discuss a group project; Above Right: Travis Donahoe lectures in his Economics class; Right: PHD students collaborate on an answer during class.*



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# About Health Policy and Management

## Degree Programs

Master of Health Administration (MHA)

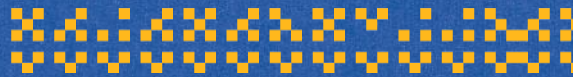
Joint Master of Health Administration (MHA) / Master of Business Administration (MBA)

Master of Public Health (MPH)

Joint Juris Doctor (JD) / Master of Public Health (MPH)

Doctorate in Health Services Research and Policy (PhD)

Bachelor of Science in Public Health (BSPH)



**22**

Primary  
Faculty

**19**

Part-time  
Lecturers

**13**

Adjunct  
Faculty

**28**

Full-time  
Staff

**59**

Courses offered



**100+**

Peer-reviewed publications  
in journals like:

*Annals of Internal Medicine, Cancer, JAMA  
Internal Medicine, JAMA Health Forum, Health  
Affairs, Health Equity and the Journal of Clinical  
Oncology.*

**68**

Active Grants

**\$22M**

Total direct costs in  
grants/contracts

# A Note from the MHA Program Director



**Kevin D. Broom, PhD**  
Associate Professor and  
Vice Chair for Education,  
Health Policy and  
Management  
Director, MHA and  
MHA/MBA Programs

**G**reetings to all our great alumni, industry partners, and friends from back here on the Pitt campus! As we reflect on yet another wonderful year for the Pitt MHA program, we're excited to continue telling our story of all the great things going on within the Pitt MHA family.

First and foremost, we started off this past year celebrating yet another positive change to our MHA ranking, where we moved up two spots to #12 in the U.S. News & World Report rankings. We believe this national ranking reflects our continued commitment to remaining among the most outstanding programs around the country. We're excited to remain a part of that group, which reflects very well on our great alumni, outstanding students, wonderful health industry stakeholders and nationally renowned faculty.

Over the past year, we were again successful with helping our newest graduates launch their careers with a robust mix of very notable organizations. Recent placement settings across the broader health industry include UPMC (multiple), Novo Nordisk, UnitedHealth Group, West Virginia University Medicine, Oak Street Health, Vizient Inc., ProspHire, Allina Health, AmeriHealth Caritas, the University of Pittsburgh and Inaya Medical Colleges (in Saudi Arabia). These placement settings vary from large integrated delivery systems and consulting to pharmaceutical, payers and academic institutions.

We continue to see our MHA and MHA/MBA graduates explore a wide mix of health industry career pathways.

Our returning students finished the summer portion of their residencies and have settled back into classes. Most of them were here in the Pittsburgh area this summer, but I did have the opportunity to visit one residency site in Phoenix.

Our students continue to represent us well around the country. As in previous years, they successfully participated in multiple case competitions, engaged with local and national professional organizations, and made another large showing at the 2025 ACHE Congress

in Houston. We had 21 MHA students attend Congress this past year, with most of them serving as program assistants. Several also volunteered with the Western PA Chapter of ACHE. We hope many of you have the chance to meet our students in Houston this spring for the next ACHE Congress.

We're looking forward to another prosperous year for the Pitt MHA program. Please feel free to reach out if you want to be engaged with us. We're always looking for opportunities to leverage our practitioner community's wonderful wisdom, experience and expertise in all we do back here at Pitt.

## About the MHA Program

**#12**

Ranked  
Program  
by U.S. News and  
World Report

**32**

Students in 2024-25  
MHA Cohort

**50%**

Non-PA residents  
(11 graduated from a  
PA institution)

### Class of 2025 Placement Snapshot

Office Coordinator - UPMC  
Administrative Fellow -  
Allina Health  
Project Analyst - UPMC  
Business Development  
Manager - AmeriHealth  
Caritas  
Consultant - Propshire  
Administrative Fellow -  
Vizient Inc.  
Associate Director -  
UnitedHealth Group  
Administrative Fellow -  
WVU Medicine  
U.S. Business Graduate  
Rotational Program -  
Novo Nordisk  
Administrative Fellow -  
UPMC



# A Note from the MPH Program Directors



**Cindy L. Bryce, PhD**  
Associate Dean for Enrollment,  
School of Public Health  
Associate Professor,  
Health Policy and  
Management  
Co-Director, MPH and  
JD/MPH Programs



**Tina B. Hershey, JD, MPH**  
Associate Professor,  
Health Policy and  
Management  
Co-Director, MPH and  
JD/MPH Programs

**H**ello to our HPM community and friends!  
It's exciting to connect with you again and share some of the significant accomplishments of the past year.

The MPH program remains in the Top 20 for graduate programs in Health Policy & Management in the U.S. News and World Report (USNWR) rankings.

While these rankings (for public health programs within specific disciplines) are still relatively new additions to the USNWR catalog, we do not take our position for granted.

As a department, HPM is determined to maintain and improve the program's ranking, as demonstrated by our ongoing work with alumni, current students, and other stakeholders to ensure that our coursework and integrated learning experiences enhance our graduates' skills and meet the needs of employers.

As our world evolves, so too does our curriculum – we've added data analytics and advocacy courses to ensure that our students have the right skills as they begin their careers.

Our returning students are coming back from excellent summer practicum experiences and are eager to complete their milestones for graduation. Our new students are settling in nicely as they adjust to graduate school.

HPM continues its work with employers and community partners (including some of our own alumni) to expand

practicum opportunities for its students. In addition to posting announcements and scheduling informational sessions with potential employers, the department has invested in faculty and staff who focus on supporting all HPM students through the practicum and residency process. These recent changes have already had a positive impact on student experiences in Summer 2025.

It's a challenging time for public health, to be sure, but a critical one as well. HPM continues to attract students who are highly motivated and committed to improving public health via health policy. We are thrilled that our cohort remains steady in number, with 15 students matriculating in the MPH program in Fall 2025... in fact, we're already hearing from prospective applicants for next fall.

As always, we welcome hearing from you with ideas you'd like to share or opportunities that we can promote to our students.

## About the MPH Program

**#18**

Ranked  
Program  
by U.S. News and  
World Report

**33**

Students in 2024-25  
MPH Cohort

**33%**

Non-PA residents  
(21 graduated from a  
PA institution)

### Class of 2025 Placement Snapshot

Associate - Leavitt Partners  
Wisconsin Population Health  
Fellow -  
UW Population Health  
Institute  
Community Benefit CHNA  
Coordinator -  
Akron Children's Hospital  
Patient Care Partner -  
Lehigh Valley Hospital, Cedar  
Crest  
Program Coordinator -  
Center of Life  
Clinical Lead Policy Analyst -  
EviCore by Evernorth  
Scientist - Merck  
Medical Student -  
University of Pittsburgh  
School of Medicine



# A Note from the PhD Program Directors



**Lindsay M. Sabik, PhD**  
Professor and Vice Chair for  
Research,  
Health Policy and  
Management  
Outgoing Director,  
HSRP PhD and MS Programs



**Coleman Drake, PhD**  
Associate Professor,  
Health Policy and  
Management  
Incoming Director,  
HSRP PhD and MS Programs

**D**ear HPM Friends and Colleagues,  
The Health Services Research and Policy (HSRP) PhD program in HPM has had another exceptional year. We welcomed two outstanding new students for the 2025-26 academic year, and our continuing students continued to excel in their academic and research pursuits.

The program's mission remains to prepare scholars who can shape health policy and advance public health through rigorous, innovative research. The accomplishments of our current students and alumni demonstrate the wide range of policy and clinical areas in which HSRP affiliates are making meaningful contributions that inform decision-making at the state and federal levels, as well as within health systems and other organizations across the country.

Our students regularly present independent research at local, national, and international conferences, showcasing the strength and relevance of their work. Over the past year, HSRP doctoral students presented at multiple high-profile meetings. The excellence of our students has been recognized both nationally and at Pitt. Haley Director received the 2024 Distinguished Service Award from the American Public Health Association Genetics Forum and recent graduate Katherine Kim was awarded the Delta

Omega dissertation award to support completion of her dissertation research. The growing recognition of HSRP student work highlights the impact and quality of their scholarship. HSRP students continue to collaborate closely with faculty on team-based projects, contributing to and leading peer-reviewed publications across policy, medical and related disciplines. This year, students co-authored papers appearing in leading journals such as *JAMA Internal Medicine*, *JAMA Health Forum*, *Health Services Research*, *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, *Substance Use & Addiction* and *Journal of Managed Care & Specialty Pharmacy*, among others.

Our alumni also continue to build on the strong foundations established during their time at Pitt, applying their skills across academic, governmental, and industry settings to improve health policy and practice.

Recent graduates have accepted positions that included postdoctoral fellowships at Stanford University and Case Western Reserve University, as well as a senior health economics analyst role at UPMC Health Plan. We are incredibly proud of all that our students and alumni have achieved over the past year. Their continued success underscores the strength of the HSRP program and its commitment to advancing evidence-based health policy research. We look forward to seeing their ongoing contributions in the years ahead.

## About the PhD Program

**14**  
PhD Students

**78%**  
Non-PA Residents



### Select PhD Candidate Publications

Callaway Kim, Roberts, E., Donohue, Good, Sabik, Devine, ... & Suda (2025). Changes in blood pressure, medication adherence, and cardiovascular-related health care use associated with the 2018 angiotensin receptor blocker recalls and drug shortages among patients with hypertension. *Journal of Managed Care & Specialty Pharmacy*

Bilden, Roberts, M., Stein & Jones (2025). Examining the impact of eliminating the X waiver on buprenorphine dispensation in 63 counties in Pennsylvania. *Substance Use & Addiction Journal*

Herbst, Danesh, Lewis, & Sevin, (2025). Multidisciplinary team approaches to assessing and addressing post intensive care syndrome. *Critical Care Clinics*

Drake, Nagy, Avina, Ludwinski, & Anderson (2025). Coverage retention and plan switching following switches from a zero- to a positive-premium plan. *JAMA Health Forum*

Madhavaram, Wu, Sharbaugh, Zhang, Yabes, Marchetti & Jacobs (2025). Factors associated with readmission to index vs. non-index hospitals after major cancer surgery: Does centralization play a role? *Journal of Clinical Oncology*



# A Note From the Bachelor of Science in Public Health (BSPH) Program



The University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health is proudly celebrating the rapid growth and success of the Bachelor of Science in Public Health (BSPH) program.

Since its launch in 2022, the program has grown 162% and expanded to a current enrollment of 499 students. In April 2024, the first class of nine students graduated, with a second graduating class of 35 students in May 2025.

The program continues to attract an increasing number of students who are passionate about advancing health equity and addressing public health challenges.

In fall 2022, we welcomed 38 first-year students. This number grew to 113 in fall 2023 and 117 in this year. We expect to welcome 234 first-year students for the 2025-26 academic year - the largest cohort yet. BSPH students are inspired by the prospect of advocating for vulnerable populations and addressing systemic inequalities. Through

collaborative projects and interactive activities, they actively seek solutions to pressing health concerns, demonstrating a commitment to becoming informed, passionate leaders in the field. This excitement not only fuels their academic journey but also lays a strong foundation for meaningful careers in public health advocacy and policy-making. To meet the evolving needs of BSPH students, new upper-level elective courses in health policy are being offered, including the new Fundamentals of Health Policy and Management.

**Ada O. Youk**

Associate Dean of Undergraduate Academic Affairs,  
Pitt School of Public Health  
Director, Bachelor of Science in Public Health  
Associate Professor, Biostatistics and Health Data Science

**Mara Leff Koperwas**

Director, Undergraduate Curriculum,  
Pitt School of Public Health

## From BSPH Faculty Member: Miranda Yaver, PhD



**M**iranda Yaver is an assistant professor of health policy and management who teaches several HPM core courses in the BSPH program, including: Fundamentals of Health Policy and Management; Administrative Burden and Inequality in U.S. Health Care; and Health Law and Politics. Read more about her experience teaching our undergraduate students:

One of the many things I love about teaching in the BSPH program is the interdisciplinary approach to understanding public health. As a political scientist by training, I show how everyday encounters with the American medical system — from overcrowded ER waiting rooms to needing insurance

pre-authorization for costly medical care — all stem from intentional policy choices emerging from the political process. I teach courses at the intersection of health law, politics and policy, and thrive on getting to discuss with students many of the foundational concepts of health policy such as health insurance, reproductive health, mental health and vaccines, as well as topics with which my undergraduates tend to be less familiar, like administrative burdens in accessing programs like Medicaid and SNAP, and how all these issues arise in contemporary policy developments like the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (H.R. 1). I enjoy showing my students a mix of academic research, applied policy analysis, and the latest data from sources like KFF, and walk my students through common forms of health policy communication like policy analyses and op-ed writing. I do my best to design the type of course I wish I had gotten to take as an undergraduate. My students come away from my classes with a better grounding in a wide range of health policy subjects that complement other BSPH courses related to health equity (such as through discussion of social determinants of health, or policies related to the myriad non-medical factors that profoundly affect our health), and an appreciation for how health policy debates have manifested both historically and in recent years.

## About the BSPH

Pitt Public Health has a history of preparing generations of leaders to meet the needs of our communities.

While the COVID-19 pandemic placed public health in the global spotlight, it also unearthed a growing need for strong, passionate students.

The Bachelor of Science in Public Health is a four-year degree program that provides students with a foundation in the key disciplines of public health alongside active learning activities.

Through its unique service-learning component, students will directly engage with populations and observe how coursework translates into real-world settings.



# HPM Research

## HPM awarded \$22M in direct costs for grants and contracts from federal, state and local funders

### Federal Funding Sources

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), National Institute on Aging (NIA), National Cancer Institute (NCI), National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR), National Institute for Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS)

### Foundation Funding Sources

American Cancer Society, Commonwealth Fund, Donaghue Foundation, Jewish Healthcare Foundation, The John A. Hartford Foundation

### State and Local Funding Sources

Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Pennsylvania Department of Aging, Pennsylvania Department of Health, Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, UPMC

## PA Medicaid Director discusses tool to help Pennsylvanians

Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) provide health and long-term care to 80 million people in the United States, including 3.1 million in Pennsylvania. [In October, Department of Human Services Deputy Secretary Sally Kozak](#), Pennsylvania's top Medicaid officer, visited Pitt and discussed the department's work to connect people with the services they need.

## Kreider discusses the impacts of immigration enforcement on home care and long-term care

Assistant Professor **Amanda Kreider, PhD** discussed her research into the effects of the federal government's immigration crackdown on the health care industry at the National Bureau of Economic Research Summer Institute in July.

[Her presentation](#) focused on the effects of mass deportations on the home care and long-term care industry. Immigrants comprise [28% of the entire long-term care workforce](#), along with one in three home care workers, providing vital frontline care to older adults and people with disabilities. Recent estimates suggest that [15% of immigrant workers](#) at home care agencies are undocumented.

## Cole's Research Informs the PA Department of Human Services



The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services offers support and services to help people live healthier lives. To do that, they rely on feedback that generates massive amounts of data and have called on Pitt to make sense of it all. HPM Research Associate Professor and Medicaid Research Center Director **Evan Cole, PhD**, has led the team doing much of the analysis. Cole's team has looked at proposed changes to SNAP benefits and Medicaid coverage and suggested to state leaders how to implement policies that help the most people.

## Whitman brings home awards for research

Postdoctoral researcher **Jacob Whitman, PhD**, has only been with HPM briefly, but his work is already earning several accolades.

In April, Whitman's poster was voted the best in the postdoctoral division at Pitt Public Health Dean's Day. His work also won the top prize at the annual [University of Pittsburgh Postdoctoral Association Postdoctoral Research Symposium](#).

The work presented in both posters looks at the relationship between for-profit hospices and hospice use among prostate

cancer decedents in the final 12 months of life. It estimates the effects of for-profit hospice enrollment on length of hospice stay, live discharge from hospice, and the likelihood of a care transition in the final week of life.

Prostate cancer represents the second-highest number of cancer deaths annually and follows a protracted course with a high likelihood of needing hospice at some point, with the number of patients requiring hospice in the last six months of life doubling over the [past 20 years](#).



Jacob Whitman at the Postdoctoral Association Postdoctoral Research Symposium

# Research Spotlight

## Ellison, Brown-Podgorski author JAMA Health Forum's most viewed article



No article published by JAMA Health Forum in 2024 was viewed more than one authored by HPM Assistant Professors Jackie Ellison, PhD, MPH and Brittany Brown-Podgorski, PhD, MPH.

The article, "[Changes in permanent contraception procedures among young adults following the Dobbs decision](#)," details an abrupt increase in permanent contraception procedures among adults aged 18 to 30 years following the Dobbs decision by the Supreme Court.

The study's results were cited dozens of times by publications worldwide, including The New York Times, The Guardian and the Associated Press.

## Kumar using machine learning to help clinicians predict OUD relapses



More than 5.5 million Americans suffer from opioid use disorder (OUD), with more than 81 thousand overdose deaths in 2023. Buprenorphine, one of the most prescribed medications for OUD, reduces opioid use, overdose risk, and saves lives.

However, between 20 and 60 percent of patients relapse while on buprenorphine. HPM Assistant Professor Praveen Kumar and Md Mahmudul Hasan, an assistant professor of pharmacy at the University of Florida, have been awarded an R01 grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse to develop a tool to help clinicians treating patients with OUD predict the likelihood of a relapse.

Using machine learning, researchers will identify hidden patterns in complex data to create precise relapse prediction algorithms and risk stratification subgroups, thereby enhancing clinical care and intervention development.

## Donahoe named to KL2 Clinical and Translational Science (CTS) Scholars Program



Assistant Professor Travis Donahoe, PhD, MPH, has been named a [KL2 scholar](#) by the University of Pittsburgh Clinical and Translational Science Institute.

The program provides competency-based training by immersing scholars in multi-disciplinary research teams that will mentor and support research from conceptualization to completion. It also helps scholars develop and submit competitive grant applications to transition to independent investigators.

"Travis' selection for this highly competitive program is a marker of the significance of his research program and his promise as a scholar," says HPM Professor and Chair Julie Donohue.

Donahoe's research includes examining the underlying causes of the opioid crisis to inform interventions at both the clinical and policy levels.

## HPM faculty among researchers in transdisciplinary pilot

**P**itt Public Health, the Swanson School of Engineering and Clinical and Translational Science Institute have partnered on five projects using data science to develop targeted interventions by person, place and time. Among those taking part is [HPM Assistant Professor Praveen Kumar, PhD.](#)

Kumar and Bo Zeng, from the Department of Industrial Engineering, will use EMS data to determine how to expand life-saving treatment and a cost-effective approach to pre-hospital blood transfusions, when paramedics give patients transfusions on their way to the hospital. Already introduced in some large cities, evidence shows that pre-hospital transfusions improve patient survival.

## HPM researchers focus on burdens keeping people from insurance coverage, care

**M**ore than 26 million Americans still don't have health insurance, despite subsidies from the American Rescue Plan Act and Inflation Reduction Act making high-quality, zero-premium plans available to millions.

In addition, many enrollees still face obstacles such as prior authorizations for routine treatments or a nearly impossible denial appeals process.

[HPM's Coleman Drake, PhD, and Miranda Yaver, PhD, are investigating these administrative burdens](#), their causes and how they can be fixed. Their research has found that burdensome denial appeals or an overwhelming number of plan choices are reasons people don't have insurance or can't get care.

## HPM in the News

In the past year, HPM experts have been quoted in dozens of stories covering a wide range of topics. Our experts were quoted by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, the Associated Press, New York Times, Reuters, The Guardian and NPR among many others. Below is a selection; [more can be found here.](#)

### **People Are Cheering on a Shooting. This Theory Could Explain Why**

*Politico, NPR, CNBC*

Insurance denials and the administrative burdens around them continue to top headlines following the killing of UnitedHealthcare's CEO. **Miranda Yaver** has been quoted in Politico, NPR, CNBC, and other outlets.

### **Taking Abortion Care on the Road in Pittsburgh**

*City Cast Pittsburgh podcast*

MPH student **Alexa Pierce** joined the City Cast Pittsburgh podcast to talk about her work with the Auto(nomous) Body Shop Student Van-bassadors program that works with the Auto(nomous) Body Shop, a mobile mutual aid resource supporting bodily autonomy & community care.

### **When States Banned Abortion, Sterilizations Rose Among Women**

*New York Times, the Associated Press*

Permanent contraception among women continues to rise after the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade. "...it suggests that people are experiencing fear and anxiety around the ruling, either for their ability to get an abortion or even to access contraception in the future," HPM's **Jackie Ellison** told the New York Times.

### **A Single Disorder Upended Pennsylvania's Medical Marijuana Program**

*U.S. News and World Report*

Anxiety is the top-cited condition in Pennsylvania's medical marijuana program. U.S. News and World Report wrote about **Coleman Drake's** findings and how one disorder has upended the program.

### **Even Dr. Oz Can't Break Medicare: This isn't TV. There are actual laws in play**

*Mother Jones*

"[Changes] would require them to either switch to a different drug in the class, or switch plans during the next open enrollment period," HPM Professor and Chair **Julie Donohue** told Mother Jones about potential changes to Medicare Part D coverage under the second Trump administration.

### **You don't want to throw a measles party**

*Salon*

"Events promoting intentional exposure to measles, such as 'measles parties,' can overwhelm local public health and medical services while endangering the lives and health of many community members," **Theresa Chapple-McGruder** told Salon. "Many have no frame of reference as to what measles can do to a child."

# Select Publications

The Department of Health Policy and Management prides itself on the research conducted by our faculty, staff and students. Their hard work is reflected in the number of publications credited to the department that have influenced decisions and policy at the local, state and federal levels of government in the past year. Below is a selection, more can [be found here](#).

**Kim, Ellison, Steinberg, & Boudreaux (2025)**. Abortion rate increased and birth rate decreased after introduction of Medicaid abortion coverage in Illinois. *Health Affairs*

**Donahoe, Brown-Podgorski, Gaire, Krans, & Jarlenski (2025)**. Advanced child tax credit monthly payments and substance use among U.S. parents. *JAMA Health Forum*

**Kreider, Layton, Shepard, & Wallace (2024)**. Adverse selection and network design under regulated plan prices: Evidence from Medicaid. *Journal of Health Economics*

**Bourne, Sun, Jacobs, Drake, Kahn, Roberts, E., & Sabik (2025)**. Association of a statewide alternative payment model for rural hospitals with bypass for elective surgeries. *Health Services Research*

**Bellerose, Ellison, Steenland, Meyers, Mitra, & Shireman (2025)**. Coverage gaps and contraceptive use among Medicare enrollees with disabilities. *JAMA Network Open*

**Drake, Nagy, Avina, Ludwinski, & Anderson (2025)**. Coverage retention and plan switching following switches from a zero-to-a positive-premium plan. *JAMA Health Forum*

**Smith, Levy, Falbe, Purtle, & Chriqui (2024)**. Design considerations for developing measures of policy implementation in quantitative evaluations of public health policy. *Frontiers in Health Services*

**Smith, Park, & Levy (2025)**. Development and usability testing of a tool to estimate the budget impact of implementing a smoking cessation intervention for cancer patients. *Cancer Causes & Control*

**Tadrous, Kim, Hernandez, Rothenberger, Devine, Hershey, & Suda (2024)**. Differences in drug shortages in the U.S. and Canada. *JAMA*

**Donahoe, Donohue, & Saloner (2024)**. Disparities in medication use for criminal justice system-referred opioid use disorder treatment. *JAMA Health Forum*

**Bradley, Liang, Lindrooth, Sabik, & Perrailon (2025)**. High-cost cancer drug use in Medicare Advantage and traditional Medicare. *JAMA Health Forum*

**Miller, Coe, Kreider, Hoffman, Rhode, & Gonalons-Pons (2025)**. Increasing expenditures on home and community-based services: Do home care workers benefit? *Health Services Research*

**Wilson, Donahoe, Herzig, & Anderson (2025)**. Industry payments to physicians during medical specialty society conferences. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*

**Myaskovsky, Leyva, Puttarajappa, Kalaria, Ng, Vélez-Bermúdez, & Bryce (2025)**. Kidney transplant fast track and likelihood of waitlisting and transplant: a non-randomized clinical trial. *JAMA Internal Medicine*

**McClure, Salter, Méndez, Cole, Sanders, Sharp, & Jarlenski (2024)**. MCO perspectives on Medicaid policy: racial equity in pregnancy and child health. *Health Equity*

**Drake, Nagy, Eisenberg, & Slusky (2025)**. Medical cannabis dispensary availability improved self-reported mental health among older adults in New York. *Economics Letters*

**Frankeberger, Jarlenski, Krans, Coulter, & Mair (2025)**. Spatial patterns of delivery hospitalizations with opioid use disorder in Pennsylvania. *Substance Use & Misuse*

**Offiaeli, Meyers, Macneal, Johnston, Brown-Podgorski, & Roberts, E. (2025)**. Patient-reported characteristics across dual-eligible Medicare Advantage plan types. *JAMA Network Open*

**Ellison (2025)**. Permanent contraception post-Dobbs: Implications for research and practice. *Fertility and Sterility*

**McMahan, Sabik, & Schenker (2025)**. Private equity's growing presence in hospice care: Clinical, research, and policy considerations. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*

**Dow, George, Hughes, Roma, Shireman, Donohue, & Hughto (2025)**. Association of state Medicaid prescription cap policies with trajectories of buprenorphine use for opioid use disorder. *Journal of Substance Use and Addiction Treatment*

**Wiley, Pugh, Brown-Podgorski, Jackson, & McSwain (2024)**. Associations between telemedicine use barriers, organizational factors, and physician perceptions of care quality. *Telemedicine and e-Health*

**Drake, Anderson, Biener, & Zewde (2025)**. Basic health plans: A promising alternative amidst marketplace subsidy decreases. *Health Affairs Forefront*

**Chughtai, Kim, Donohue, Huskamp, Mehrotra, & Barnett, (2025)**. Benchmarking the Transformed Medicaid Statistical Information System Analytic Files for analysis of opioid use disorder treatment. *Health Services Research*

**Yaver (2024)**. Rationing by inconvenience: how insurance denials induce administrative burdens. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*

**Van Cleve, Cole, Drake, Martsof, & Degenholtz (2025)**. Risk of hospitalization associated with use of consumer-directed attendant care. *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*

**Brown-Podgorski, Barinas-Mitchell, Magnani, & Jarlenski (2024)**. Understanding the impact of upward intergenerational economic mobility on allostatic load among black women and men. *Journal Of Women's Health*

**Hochheiser & Kumar (2025)**. Using surveillance data to estimate infectious disease burden: opportunities and challenges. *American Journal of Public Health*

The background of the page is a blue-tinted photograph of a university campus. On the left, there is a large bronze statue of a person, possibly a scholar or historical figure, standing on a pedestal. In the background, a tall, multi-story building with a central tower and arched windows is visible. The foreground shows a paved area and a low wall. The entire image is overlaid with a faint grid pattern.

# HPM Student News

## Students represent HPM at two spring conferences



Top: HPM students at ACHE Congress 2024 in Houston.  
Bottom: Sam Nigida, Ali Resch, Swetha Ramkumar and Nishi Thawani at ASPPH's annual meeting in Arlington, VA.

Pitt and HPM were well represented at conferences nationwide this year, as students participated in learning, networking and career development opportunities. Swetha Ramkumar (MPH '26), Ali Resch (MPH '26), Sam Nigida (MPH '26) and Nishi Thawani (MPH '26) traveled to Arlington, Virginia, for the annual meeting of the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH). Meanwhile, more than 20 students also traveled to Houston, Texas, for the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) Annual Congress.



## Charting Her Own Path

By Clare Collins



During her senior year in high school Sarah Siddiqui (MPH '25) was accepted into Pitt's Guaranteed Admission Program (GAP), securing a direct path to the School of Medicine - but she took a detour through HPM and earned another degree, condensing six years of schooling into just four.

## Six HPM students named Health Justice Scholars

The Center for Health Equity doubled the number of Health Justice Scholars it welcomed to the program this year; HPM students make up most of the cohort. Delaney Kenyon (MPH '26), Haliyat Oshodi (MPH '26), Swetha Ramkumar (MPH '26) and Sarah Siddiqui (MPH '25), along with PhD candidates Auti Johnson and Victoria Wyant, were among the students selected. The Health Justice Scholars Program supports the development of Pitt Public Health students with interests or projects in health equity and justice. This includes health equity research, policy and practice in areas such as chronic disease, violence prevention, maternal and infant health, mental health and interventions focused on Black, Latinx and communities of color and means something different to each student taking part.

## Bess among winners at Pitt Public Health annual Dean's Day poster competition

Dean's Day is Pitt Public Health's annual showcase where students present research posters to the multidisciplinary Pitt Public Health community. This year, three student posters from HPM were selected for presentation: first-year MPH candidate Alexa Pierce, second-year MPH candidate Claire Bess and PhD candidate Yuanbo Zhang.

Bess's poster, which focused on promoting health equity in McKeesport with a multicultural, community-led plan addressing the social determinants of health, was awarded the Catherine Cartier Ulrich Memorial Award for Public Health Service to the Underserved.



Claire Bess explains her research to a judge during 2025 Pitt Public Health Dean's Day

## Excelling in Europe: JD/MPH candidate earns third degree while studying abroad in France



Courtesy: Cindy Hsieh

HPM JD/MPH student Cindy Hsieh stands in front of the Eiffel Tower while studying abroad in Paris.

As if earning a joint JD/MPH wasn't already challenging enough, HPM student **Cindy Hsieh** (JD/MPH '25) earned a third degree while studying abroad.

[She talked to HPM](#) about her experience at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, what she's learned about the differences between the U.S. and French legal systems and how it will inform her decisions and career path.

## "Madam Ambassador"

### HPM student raises public health awareness as ASPPH Ambassador

Each year, schools and public health programs through the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) nominate students as ambassadors through the This is Public Health (TIPH) Ambassador Program to elevate public health awareness.

For the 2024-25 Academic Year, HPM's **Prathiksha Sivakumar** (MPH '25) was nominated by Pitt Public Health and selected to serve as an ambassador, something she wasn't expecting.

"When I found out I was nominated to be a TIPH Ambassador, I was incredibly grateful and a little surprised," said Sivakumar. "It's easy to get caught up in day-to-day responsibilities, so having that moment where someone says, 'Hey, we see your work, and we believe in you,' really hit home. It also made me step back and reflect on how far I've come."

As an ambassador, Sivakumar attended the ASPPH annual meeting in March. One of the biggest public health conferences in the country, the ASPPH meeting brings together professionals, students and leaders from various disciplines in public health.

"I met clinicians who've woven public health practices into their patient care, researchers shaping policy through evidence, and even data analysts with no formal health training who are using tech and data-driven strategies to address complex health challenges," she said, adding that seeing so many different fields in action was inspiring, especially as people shared their experiences and paths to public health.

Throughout the year, Ambassadors host and participate in events to bolster interest in public health education and careers, including social media takeovers where each shares about their area of focus. For Sivakumar,

## HPM teams earn three podium finishes, including win, at case competitions

Three teams from HPM brought hardware back to campus from case competitions nationwide this year. [Students say the experience](#), while exhausting and a little intimidating, is worth it. Additionally, the HPM team of **Saransh Maheshwari** (MHA '25), **Stephanie Musto** (MHA/MBA '26) and **Chloe Schur** (MHA/MBA '26), with **Jon Jiang** (MHA '26) as an observer, advanced to the semifinals at the University of Alabama-Birmingham case competition.



(L to R) Stuti Kapadia, Sarah Siddiqui, Neeharika Balaji, Dr. Kevin Broom, Natalya Temple, Swetha Ramkumar and Akanksha Choundhary stand with their winner's checks at the Seton Hall case competition.



*"..having that moment where someone says, 'Hey, we see your work, and we believe in you,' really hit home. "*

Courtesy: Prathiksha Sivakumar  
Prathiksha Sivakumar poses with an ASPPH sign at its annual conference

that was social determinants of health—non-medical factors that influence a person's health.

"It was really rewarding to share my knowledge about such an important topic with a larger audience," she said. "It was a unique opportunity to not only raise awareness about social determinates of health but also to engage with people who might not have thought about how deeply these factors impact health outcomes."

As her time in HPM draw to a close, Sivakumar says being an ambassador will help the next chapter in her career because it will allow her to connect with professionals and fellow students across a wide range of public health sectors and learn more about each.

"Connecting with experts and peers from diverse backgrounds has given me a broader perspective on the many

ways public health professionals can make an impact," she said. "I look forward to more pathways for collaboration and growth as I explore my future in the field."

As public health faces challenges and continues to grow and evolve, Sivakumar says programs like the TIPH Ambassadors are crucial to the development of future leaders.

"As we continue to face ongoing challenges, it's crucial to stay passionate and advocate for health equity and positive health outcomes for all communities," she said. "To my fellow public health peers and professionals, thank you for your incredible work and never stop making a difference."

## PhD candidate receives Distinguished Service Award from Genomics Forum

**H**aley Director received the 2024 Distinguished Service Award from the Genomics Forum at the 2024 American Public Health Association (APHA) conference. The PhD candidate also presented research she's done with HPM on genetics testing among pregnant people in Pittsburgh, which found that age is the most significant predictor of use of invasive prenatal genetic testing.



Haley Director (third from left) accepts her award at APHA conference.

## Rodell showcases work in community; Cole honored by Center for Public Health Practice



Top: Josie Rodell presents her results from work with the Hazelwood Mentorship Program; Bottom: Evan Cole accepts the Emerging Faculty Award

More than a dozen Pitt Public Health students showed off the work they are doing in the community at the annual Center for Public Health Practice showcase in November 2024.

Posters highlighted work that students completed in collaboration with community partners.

HPM student **Josie Rodell (MPH '25)** was among those presenting. Her poster focused on her work with the Hazelwood Girls' Mentorship program hosted by the Center of Life.

The program's purpose is to provide girls with learning experiences in areas like self-care, mental health wellness and self-advocacy while providing support and guidance as they navigate adolescence.

"To create this project, I got to know people in the Hazelwood community, as well as children who went through the summer camp," Rodell wrote, adding that the hands-on experience gave her a chance to see how policies succeed and fail and what she can do to help Hazelwood and communities like it.

**Evan Cole, PhD**, HPM associate research professor, and director of the Medicaid Research Center, was recognized with the Pitt Public Health Practice Emerging Faculty award for his research on improving access to and quality of health care for low-income and disabled populations.



## Kenyon wins at Health Sciences poster competition



Photo Credit: Rayni Shiring / Pitt Health Sciences  
Delaney Kenyon discusses her poster at the Health Disparities and Social Justice Poster Competition

First-year MPH student **Delaney Kenyon's** poster was named the best among master's program entrants at the annual Health Disparities and Social Justice Poster Competition hosted by the Office of Health Sciences Enrichment and Engagement.

Students participating must have researched health science, a health-related discipline and/or an intervention focused on health disparities.

Kenyon's award-winning poster evaluated adding diversity, equity and inclusion elements to the emergency medical services curriculum and found that bias education improves provider confidence with patients and teaches practical and inclusive assessment skills.

## HPM team earns podium finish in national case competition

A team of PhD candidates, including **Sarah Aviña, Heather Mentch, Sonia Persaud and Victoria Wyant**, won third place in the Elevating Voices case competition hosted by the [National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys \(NAELA\) Foundation](#).

The competition focused on the negative impact of Medicaid Estate Recovery on generational wealth and racial inequities and proposed solutions to the problem.

Under federal law, state Medicaid programs must seek to recover certain benefits paid to enrollees 55 or older or those of any age who are permanently institutionalized upon the enrollee's death, even if the state would prefer not to.

Medicaid enrollees may unknowingly lose access to assets such as their homes due to Medicaid Estate Recovery, which disproportionately affects the poorest and most marginalized Americans.

The competition's judges included elder law lawyers and policy experts at several U.S. firms and universities.



# HPM

# Department

# News

## Pitt Public Health forum addresses innovations and challenges in vaccinating children around the world



Credit: Pitt Public Health

Top: (L to R) Mari Webel, Theresa Chappel-McGruder, Dean Maureen Lichtveld, Peter Hotez and Paul Duprex; Bottom: Theresa Chappel-McGruder answers an audience question about vaccine hesitancy.

**P**eter Hotez, MD, PhD, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, [says Pitt virologist Dr. Jonas Salk](#) has been his personal hero since high school for his work developing the first safe and effective polio vaccine in 1955.

“As the kids today say, Salk was the GOAT [Greatest of All Time], and he was who I wanted to be,” Hotez said as he was honored with the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health’s 2024 Porter Prize.

Before the award ceremony, [Hotez discussed his research](#) and science advocacy before an audience of faculty, staff and students at the “Frontlines of Public Health” symposium and was joined by a panel of experts, including School of Public Health Dean Maureen Lichtveld, MD, MPH; Paul Duprex, PhD, professor of microbiology and molecular genetics at Pitt’s School of Medicine; Mari Webel, PhD, associate professor in Pitt’s Department of History at the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences; and [Theresa Chappel-McGruder, PhD](#), associate professor of Health Policy and Management and director of the Center for Health Equity.

Note: Clare Collins contributed to this story



# If Not Now, When?

## The 2025 Dawn Gideon Symposium

**T**he number of Americans aged 65 and older is expected to increase from 58 million in 2022 to 82 million in 2050, representing nearly one in four Americans.

With an aging population, the country’s population is older than it ever has been (the average age rose from 30 to 38.9 between 1980 and 2022). Health care leaders and providers are now more focused on caring for a growing population, especially in the realm of mental health.

The 2024 Dawn Gideon Symposium focused on mental health in an aging population.

“There is more variability among individuals in late life than at any other point in the lifespan,” said Ellen Whyte, MD, assistant professor of psychiatry, physical medicine



## HPM’s Yaver named think-tank fellow

**H**PM Assistant Professor [Miranda Yaver, PhD](#) was named a fellow in the [2025 winter cohort by the Roosevelt Institute](#). A think tank, a student network, and the nonprofit partner to the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, the Institute focuses on corporate and public power, labor and wages, and the economics of race and gender inequality. Through their fellowships, the multi-disciplinary cohort will explore a range of issues including the US taxation system, housing crisis and the care economy. Other disciplines represented in the cohort include sociology, law and economics.



Above: (L to R) Martin Raniowski, Deborah Brodine, Dale Adair and Ellen Whyte at the Dawn Gideon Symposium.  
 Left: Cindy Altomari speaks to the audience on behalf of the Dawn Gideon Foundation.

and rehabilitation at the Pitt School of Medicine and medical director for geriatric psychiatry ambulatory and long-term care services at UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital.

“Typically, childhood is 18 years, adulthood is 47 years, and if we take the oldest documented person in the world, who was 122, that’s 57 years. That gives us lots of opportunity for variety, both in basic biology and psychological makeup and even just lived experience.”

Dale Adair, MD, the chief psychiatric officer of the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and medical director of the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS), says a major concern among mental health care for older adults is substance abuse.

“From 2021 to 2022, there was a 21 percent increase in drug overdose deaths,” he said. “It’s something that’s not really discussed, but we need to focus on as the population ages.”

Panelist Deborah Brodine, MHA, MBA (HPM ’93, BUS ’93), is president of UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital and UPMC Senior

Services and is at a unique crossroads regarding aging and mental health.

“Aging and behavioral health, from a public health perspective, have similarities: both deal with underserved populations, and both have fragmented financing that is often misunderstood by the public, by some health care professionals, and by some in public health,” she said, adding that both aging and behavioral health care require active, ongoing preventative care and face stringent regulations that complicate access and cause costs to rise.

The aging population is also more racially and ethnically diverse than ever before, something panelists say providers and caregivers are taking into account. Brodine says American culture, as a whole, undervalues the caregiving role, which means fewer people are choosing that for a line of work, which could mean more older adults depending on care from family or going without care entirely.

When asked what role government, health care systems and community organizations can play, the panel agreed that one organization cannot solve the problem overnight.

## Annual Sonis lecture focuses on debunking maternal mortality myths and misinformation

Every day, more than 700 women around the world die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. At the annual Anne C. Sonis Memorial Lecture, Aasta Mehta, MD, MPP, director of the Division of Child, Family and Maternal Health at the City of Philadelphia Department of Public Health, discussed maternal morbidity and mortality, the trends across the U.S. and Pennsylvania and debunked some of the myths surrounding maternal mortality.



Dr. Aasta Mehta addresses the audience during the 2025 Anne C. Sonis Memorial Lecture at the University Club.

# HPM's Ali Pittman recognized in inaugural Health Sciences Awards

The Department of Health Policy and Management depends on external funding. It pays for research, supplements salaries and much more. While the results often get the spotlight, Pitt Health Sciences spotlighted one person in this department who helps ensure everything is in place for any research.

Grants administrator **Ali Pittman** was named a Stand-out Performer by Pitt Health Sciences in their inaugural research staff awards.

"It's hard to overstate the tremendous contributions that Ali makes to both the research mission and the culture of the department," said Professor and Vice Chair for Research **Lindsay Sabik, PhD.**

The Standout Performer award recognizes people who demonstrate a sustained high level of performance, productivity and excellence in the execution of their job responsibilities and have significantly impacted the achievement of departmental goals and objectives.

"Ali's work has been transformative," said HPM Professor and Chair **Julie Donohue, PhD.** "In the past three years, our department has had a 60% increase in the total number of research awards and a 60% increase in research funding. We would not have had this success without her."

Pittman started in HPM as an administrative assistant eight years ago, and it didn't take long for department leaders to notice her work ethic and willingness to take on new roles and challenges.

"It was a very busy time when she joined us," said **Tina Micale**, HPM director of business administration. "She caught my attention as having potential to go far and has proven it time and time again."

After promotion to research administrator, Pittman continued to impress, especially as the sole administrator for two departments because of pandemic related staffing issues. "Ali consistently goes above and beyond in her role," said Sabik, adding that Pittman has taken the lead on projects to make the grant process easier and more successful for faculty and staff.



Courtesy: Tina Micale

HPM Grant Administrator Ali Pittman shows off her Stand Out Performer Award from Pitt Health Sciences.

*"It's hard to overstate the tremendous contributions that Ali makes to both the research mission and the culture of the department."*

"She worked tirelessly over nights and weekends to get things done," said Donohue. "We are incredibly fortunate to have someone with Ali's dedication in the school. I can think of no one more deserving of this award."

"It's an honor to be recognized," said Pittman. "I didn't know what to say when they told me. There are so many people here that work hard, to get this award is humbling."

It's not only her work but also her personality that makes her such a valued member of the department. Even at her busiest, colleagues say, she is never too busy to say hello or help colleagues who ask. "Working with her is truly a joy," said Donohue. "I am very fortunate to have her as a colleague."

"I have worked at the University for 38 years, and I can say Ali is my best example of feeling like a proud supervisor," says Micale. "She has grown into a master at her craft and has become a leader in her community. I couldn't be prouder of her success."

# Pitt Public Health, Allegheny County Health Department announce partnership at “Stronger Together” forum

**P**itt Public Health and the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) announced a formal partnership in April.

At the heart of this agreement is the creation of an academic public health department that aligns Pitt Public Health’s academic strengths with ACHD’s frontline service to the community.

“We can learn a lot from each other,” said public health Dean Maureen Lichtveld, MD, MPH.

The announcement was part of the Stronger Together: Advancing Public Health Through Academic

Health Department Partnerships” forum, where members of PPH and ACHD highlighted the benefits of collaborative relationships between academia and the health department.

Among those taking part were ACHD director Iulia Vann, MD, MPH and HPM Professor and Chair Julie Donohue, PhD who highlighted the benefits of creating evidence-based policy through partnerships like those between HPM and departments and agencies of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.



Allegheny County Public Health Director Dr. Iulia Vann signs a certificate as Julie Donohue looks on.

## HPM tours UPMC's bed tower being built next door



HPM students and faculty pose on the 15th floor of UPMC Presbyterian’s 17-story, 636-bed tower under construction in December 2024.

**I**t’s hard to ignore. With the street and sidewalk closures, beeping of construction trucks, the whirl and hum of machines and hammering (so much hammering), the [massive new addition](#) UPMC–Presbyterian Hospital towers across De Soto Street from the Public Health Building.

The new building will have more than 630 patient beds in nearly a million square feet, 450 underground parking spaces and add almost a dozen state-of-the-art operating rooms to the complex.

In early December, HPM students, faculty and staff [were given a tour of the site](#). The tour included model patient rooms UPMC has constructed in a nearby space and a tour of the construction site from top to bottom. Construction is expected to be completed in late 2026, and the tower is slated to open in 2027.

HPM student James Gray (MHA '25), a UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside and Children's Hospital Facilities and Support Services department resident, set up the visit.

## Big adventures for little visitors



**TOP:** Visitors to the Emerging Technology Lab in the Falk Library of Health Sciences learn how technology is being used to educate students in Health Sciences. **Bottom:** Kids make posters at the text and conText print shop in Hillman Library during Take Your Child to Work Day.

**T**he School of Public Health’s first “official” Take Your Child to Work Day was a huge success.

What could have been a normal day at the office [became so much more](#) – a day of learning and adventure that ventured beyond the walls of the Public Health Building.



## Join us in welcoming our new faculty and staff



HPM is growing! Over the past year, we've welcomed several new faculty and staff members.

- **Theresa Chapple-McGruder, PhD** - associate professor and director of the Center for Health Equity
- **Amanda Kreider, PhD** - assistant professor
- **Jacob Whitman, PhD** - postdoctoral researcher
- **Natalie Smith, PhD** - assistant professor
- **Kenna Campbell** - research coordinator

## HPM researchers create educational tool showing Medicaid reliance by Congressional district

**M**assive cuts to Medicaid are part of the H.R. 1 budget bill passed by Congress in 2025. Further changes to the program could include re-enacting work requirements or dropping coverage to those who qualified under expansion.

A team of HPM researchers led by Professor **Marian Jarlenski, PhD, MPH** in collaboration with HPM Assistant Professor **Miranda Yaver, PhD**, created a tool that estimates Medicaid and CHIP enrollees by congressional district, the number and proportion of births covered by Medicaid in each district.

With more than 20% of Americans enrolled in Medicaid, mainly comprised of working-class and poor people who need health insurance, the dashboard shows how each district could be affected.

## Coleman Drake promoted to associate professor



**C**oleman Drake, PhD who has been with HPM since 2018, was promoted to associate professor with tenure in February.

He has led innovative research on the insurance marketplaces established by the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and is one of the foremost experts in the country. He has also conducted many studies

on substance use disorders, combining methods used in geography and economics to inform policies addressing the opioid crisis and the regulation of cannabis.

Importantly, his research has directly impacted policy at the state and federal levels.

## Chapple-McGruder leading new training program focusing on child and maternal health

**A**imed at training the next generation of public health leaders who will improve outcomes for birthing people, children and families, the [Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health Education, Science and Practice](#) will host a training program open to graduate students and post-doctoral scholars across Pitt.

The program, which launched in the fall of 2025, will be led by **Theresa Chapple-McGruder, PhD**, director of the Center for Health Equity and associate professor of health policy and management. "This program offers a structured way for students to explore maternal and child health, no matter their background or intended career path," she said. "Whether you're looking for a short-term introduction or a deep dive with applied experience, this program provides flexible, meaningful training grounded in equity and advocacy."

Students can select from three levels of engagement: short-term (under 40 hours), medium-term (40+ hours), or long-term (300+ hours)—and complete both didactic and applied learning experiences. The program is designed to fit a range of academic schedules while offering high-impact preparation for research, policy or practice careers in MCH and is open to graduate students and post doctoral scholars across the University.

## HPM's McClure discusses the value of academic-community partnerships at University forum



Christine McClure talks about the importance of community partnerships

Senior research scientist **Christine McClure, EdD, MPPM, MBA**, was among the featured presenters at the Community Engaged Scholarship Forum in April. Hosted by several University departments and units, the annual event focuses on community-engaged work by Pitt faculty, staff, students and community partners, allowing attendees to network and connect with those doing similar work.

The theme of this year's forum focused on reducing barriers in the region to community-informed scholarship. McClure, a qualitative and community-based researcher, focused her presentation on the importance of partners like community-based organizations in community-based participatory research.

## Pitt Health Sciences experts talk health equity



In September 2024, the University of Pittsburgh Health Sciences Library System hosted a health care reform and equity panel. HPM Associate Professor **Tina Hershey, JD, MPH**, moderated. HPM Chair **Julie Donohue, PhD**, and HPM alum and Assistant Professor of Pharmacy **Terri Newman (MS '19)** were members of the panel expanding on topics featured in the National Library of Medicine's traveling exhibit, "For All the People: A Century of Citizen Action in Health Care Reform," which was on display at the Falk Library of Health Sciences.

## Hughes picked as National Academy of Medicine State Health Policy Fellow



Assistant Professor **Meredith Hughes, JD, MPH**, was chosen as an inaugural fellow in the [National Academy of Medicine's State Health Policy Fellowship](#).

As part of the program, the fellows advise state entities on health policy matters. Hughes's work is primarily with the Pennsylvania Department of Aging. Other fellows work extensively with Colorado's attorney general, and Wisconsin's Medicaid office.

## In Memorium: Beaufort Longest Jr.



The University of Pittsburgh has been home to its fair share of science pioneers; Beaufort Longest Jr. is among them. As a distinguished academic, Longest helped shape the field of health policy and management.

He died on January 17, 2025, following a brief and sudden illness.

Longest joined the University of Pittsburgh in 1980 from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. He was a faculty member from 1980 until 2016, when he retired as an emeritus faculty member in Health Policy and Management. He was the M. Allen Pond Professor and founding director of the University's Health Policy Institute, which continues to shape health policy and practice today.

"I had the privilege of working with Beaufort for several years and am grateful for his mentorship," said Julie Donohue, professor and chair of Health Policy and Management. "Beaufort will be missed, but his legacy in the department and the field lives on."

He was a prodigious author of health care policy and management textbooks, chapters and articles. His widely used textbook *Health Policymaking in the United States*, now in its seventh edition, continues to serve as the backbone of HPM's core course for MPH students.

## 'Serving those who served us'

HPM alumna takes pride in serving a purpose in role as director of VA Rocky Mountain Network



Courtesy: VA Rocky Mountain Network

The VA Rocky Mountain Network, also known as Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 19, is one of 18 VISNs across the U.S. It consists of eight health care systems covering half a million square miles in Colorado, Montana, Oklahoma, Utah, Wyoming and parts of Idaho, Kansas,

Nebraska, Nevada, and Texas, the largest contiguous geographic area covered by any VISN and a challenge for any leader.

Sunaina Kumar-Giebel (HPM '06) was appointed director of VISN-19 in 2023 and is responsible for overseeing the care of more than a million patients, an operating budget of \$5 billion dollars and more than 20,000 employees, [a duty she does not take lightly.](#)

"We have many rural locations that may not be near a VA facility, which leads to longer travel times for Veterans," said Kumar-Giebel. "Ensuring that each of those veterans has timely and equitable access to care whether in the community or VA is a major priority and can be challenging."

## HPM alum among those recognized at annual Pitt Public Health Alumni awards



Courtesy: Pitt Public Health

Top: Christopher Gessner (left) with HPM Vice Chair for Education Kevin Broom. Bottom: Pitt Public Health Alumni Award recipients with Pitt Public Health Dean Maureen Lichtveld

A 1991 MHA graduate was among the seven Pitt Public Health alumni honored during the [annual alumni awards](#). Christopher Gessner, MHA (HPM '91) received the Alumni Award. He is the president and CEO of Akron Children's Hospital and has served as a visionary leader amid the changing health care landscape and kept Akron Children's an independent and locally led system.



## HPM Alumni Career Updates

**Mark Sevco (MHA / MBA '91)** is now President and CEO of Allegheny Health Network.

**Evan Klein (MPH '23)** is now a Data Strategy & Analytics Consultant at Trinity Life Sciences.

**Myrna Brignol (MHA '23)** is now an Ambulatory Business Manager, Perioperative Services at Cooper University Health Care.

**Sabrina Lew (MPH '24)** is now a Healthcare Consulting Analyst with Huron.

**Saad Meer, (MHA '24)** is now Campus Operations Manager at Lehigh Valley Health Network.

**Sarah Zogu (MPH '24)** is now a Health Education Specialist with the West Hartford-Bloomfield (CT) Health District.

**Nick Schoonover (MHA '24)** is now a Quality Operations Coordinator at MedStar Washington Hospital Center.

**Nina Yacovani (MPH '18)** is now a Senior Healthcare Consultant with Ernst & Young.

**Karl Gibson (MHA '19)** is now a Senior Project Manager at Allegheny Health Network.

**Kirsten Eom (PhD '21)** is now an Assistant Professor of Public Health at the University of Texas – San Antonio.

**Nathan Lampenfeld (MPH '22)** is now Special Assistant to the Pennsylvania Secretary of Aging.

**Jennifer Kells (MHA '20)** is now Lead Analytics and Insights Associate at Vizient Inc.

**Lysia Gehris (MPH '23)** is now a Provider Network Strategist with the UPMC Health Plan.

If you have a job change or announcement you'd like to share, email us at [HealthPolicy@pitt.edu](mailto:HealthPolicy@pitt.edu)



# Celebrating the Class of 2025

## HPM students recognized for scholarship service during graduation ceremony



(L to R) Aaviele Ieraci, Reeya Vora, Aditi Sharma, Candace Drzik, Claire Bess, Olivia Cargile, Julia Flowers, Anna Pilotta and Prathiksha Sivakumar

In addition to their diplomas, several HPM students were recognized with awards during commencement.

MPH graduate **Claire Bess** and PhD graduate **Anna Lewis** were both awarded the Outstanding Student Award for their academic work within HPM.

**Nikita Nagpal (MHA)** was given the Dean's Service Award for leadership and service to the school.

Several students were inducted into Delta Omega, the national honorary society for graduate studies in public health. Election to membership in Delta Omega is intended not only to recognize merit, but also to encourage further excellence and devotion to public health work.

### 2025 Delta Omega Inductees:

- Candace Drzik (MPH)
- Jerusha George (MPH)
- Aaviele Ieraci (MPH)
- Trishna Kini (MHA)
- Samikchya Rai (MHA)
- Gabe Riberi (MHA)
- Corey Shipman (MPH)
- Sarah Siddiqui (MPH)
- Prathiksha Sivakumar (MPH)

PhD graduate **Katherine Callaway Kim** was recognized with the Delta Omega Dissertation Award and **Vivianne Liu (MPH)** was given the Delta Omega Essay Award.

At the undergraduate commencement ceremony, 4+1 MPH student **Ashawnti Buckner** was awarded the Emma W. Locke Memorial Award. One of the top honors bestowed by the University, the award recognizes high scholarship, character, leadership and devotion to the ideals of the University of Pittsburgh.

# A new adventure awaits MPH graduate

**C**laire Bess (MPH '25) says her primary area of interest in public health is food policy, but her interests have broadened to many aspects of state health policy during her time at Pitt.

"I am interested in how state-level policy is implemented locally," she says. "Based on my interests and the food assistance programs, I see a lot of issues where we have good state-level policy, but it's not being implemented well."

When HPM Research Associate Professor Evan Cole presented during the cohort's professional development class and mentioned the Wisconsin Population Health Fellowship – a program of which Cole is an alumnus, but hadn't seen any of his Pitt students to this point accept – Bess knew it was something she couldn't pass up.

"I thought 'I'd love to go to Wisconsin,'" said Bess. "I'm from the Midwest and would like to go back, and I don't have much interest in working on either coast."

## HPM Commencement 2025: In Pictures



It's not "goodbye", but "until we see you again." Along with friends, loved ones and well-wishers, HPM celebrated the Class of 2025 at commencement in May. Check out the day as [captured by the department](#) and the [School of Public Health](#).



Claire Bess receives her diploma from Pitt Public Health Dean Maureen Lichtveld

*“They have also just developed a Food Policy Council, so I’ll get to help with some of their agenda development for that, which is good for my food policy interests,”*

So, I thought this fellowship was tailor-made for me.” Sponsored by the state and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the program places fellows in positions across Wisconsin and exposes them to a variety of disciplines and interests.

Bess’s fellowship will include two placements. The first is with the Rock County Health Department, where she’ll work with the public health policy specialist on policy engagement tools and issue briefs.

“They have also just developed a Food Policy Council, so I’ll get to help with some of their agenda development for that, which is good for my food policy interests,” she said.

The second half of the placement is with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services’ commercial tobacco prevention and treatment program, admittedly new territory for Bess and the fellowship, since she will be the first fellow placed there with an opportunity for good mentorship.

“I’m excited about the fellowship and my placements for a couple of reasons,” she said. “This will definitely feed into what I want to do next, especially as my interests have expanded but also as I look to get into state-level health positions.”

The daughter of a state human services director, Bess says many hiring managers are looking for candidates with experience working at the state level. Between her work as a master’s student and this fellowship, she is confident it will help her take the next step.

“So, I’m hoping to come out of this with a broader topic knowledge area,” she said. “Also, skills that will help me be a better health policy person.”

## Life lessons, discovery and friendship among top memories for graduating HPM students

Two years can pass in the blink of an eye, especially for graduate students balancing life, practical learning experiences, other jobs, and personal lives. With their time at Pitt drawing to a close, several HPM students [reflected on their time together](#), what they’ve learned and what they’ll take with them into the next chapter.

As they got ready to walk across the stage, receive their diplomas, and shake hands with Dean Lichtveld, the students say they’ve grown – some in ways they never thought possible.



L to R: Nikita Nagpal, Claire Bess and Madeline Cherry.



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