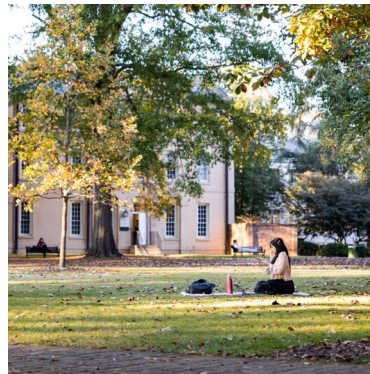




**Health Services Policy
and Management**
Arnold School of Public Health
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

2023/2024 ANNUAL REPORT



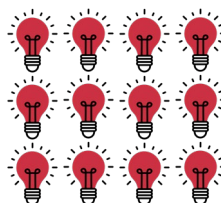
HSPM By the Numbers

Our research output this year involved...

70

Research collaborators nationwide and globally

12



Research projects newly funded in FY23/24 to HSPM faculty

90

Publications by HSPM faculty and students

Our programs featured...

15



Full-time faculty members, including one newly hired in FY23/24 and two promoted to tenure track



25

Undergraduate and graduate students on faculty-led projects

We also celebrated and welcomed...

26



Graduates from our MHA, MPH, and PhD programs

35

New students joining our three programs in Fall 2024

100%

Graduates from our programs who are employed or pursuing a fellowship or higher ed within 3 months of graduation

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Letter from the Chair

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Welcome to the Department of Health Services Policy and Management's 2023 – 2024 Annual Report! It was an exciting year, from the Gamecock women's basketball team capping a perfect season with another national championship to the Arnold School of Public Health generating a record \$59.1 million in extramural funding. While the dollar figure is impressive, what really matters is the impact of our faculty's research on people's lives—in our case by helping to inform health policy and improve the delivery of health care services in South Carolina, across the nation, and around the globe.



Speaking of the faculty, two of our own, Dr. Nicole Hair and Dr. Peiyin Hung, were tenured and promoted to the rank of Associate Professor, effective August 2024. I am so proud of them for reaching this important milestone, which reflects their hard work and dedication. We have also been hiring. In August 2023, we welcomed Dr. Alton Croker to the department. Dr. Croker received his PhD from the University of Iowa, completed a postdoc at UCSF, and studies access to care among racially minoritized LGBTQ+ populations. Moreover, I am pleased to report we hired Dr. David Anderson—a nationally known expert in the dynamics of health insurance markets—who received his PhD from Duke University.

Last year was also a time of change. After 17 years at the helm, our beloved Dean, Dr. Tom Chandler returned to the faculty in Environmental Health Sciences. We thank Dean Chandler for his remarkable leadership of the Arnold School, and I especially thank him for his unwavering support and wise counsel during my first two years as HSPM chair. After a national search, we are excited to welcome our new Dean, Dr. Tara Sabo-Attwood, who joins us from the University of Florida. I very much look forward to working with her to continue building on our success.

In the year ahead, we will be revising our department's mission, vision, and values, updating our doctoral program curriculum, building a new state-of-the-art research computing platform, and completing substantial renovations to our physical space—including a new student work area, conference room, and office space, and updated furniture and décor in common areas—all designed to make our working environment more functional and inviting. We are also making a concerted push to increase alumni engagement, starting with the alumni updates featured in this report. If you are an alum, we would love for you to connect with us, participate in events, and express your interest in becoming more involved with the department.

There is a lot to read and digest in this report because the faculty, staff, and students in HSPM are so productive. But productivity alone doesn't create a better and more equitable world. That takes vision, determination, intentionality, innovation, and perseverance. That is our goal in everything we do—from research to teaching to service—and it is why our motto is: HSPM—*where differences are made*.

Sincerely,

Brad Wright, PhD
Professor and Chair



Core Faculty



Christina Andrews, PhD

Associate Professor

Dr. Andrews' research interests include the impact of the organization and financing of substance use disorder treatment on service access, with a particular focus on public insurance coverage for substance use disorder. She is currently Principal Investigator on two R01 grants assessing the effects of Medicaid managed care on access to alcohol use disorder treatment and opioid use disorder treatment. Dr. Andrews is also Director of the Data Analytics Core of the South Carolina Center of Excellence in Addiction.



John Brooks, PhD

Professor and South Carolina SmartState Endowed Chair

Dr. Brooks is a health economist with a focus on estimating treatment effectiveness using observational healthcare databases. He is the Director of the Center for Effectiveness Research in Orthopaedics (CERortho) which is a collaborative effort between USC and Prisma Health to promote comparative effectiveness research (CER) in orthopaedic care. CERortho enables methodologists and clinicians in a large dynamic healthcare system to create prospective data collection platforms and develop innovative methods in treatment effectiveness research.



Brian Chen, JD, PhD

Associate Professor

Dr. Chen's research interest lies in examining the legal and economic influences on healthcare delivery and their ultimate impact on health outcomes. Dr. Chen is particularly interested in investigating how food and drug laws, as well as financial interests from drug prescriptions, influence the quantity and manner in which prescription drugs are prescribed to patients. As prescription medications continue to be a significant part of healthcare delivery, Dr. Chen focuses his research agenda on assessing the choices and consequences associated with explicit and implicit policies surrounding prescription medications.





J. Alton Croker, III, PhD, MA

Assistant Professor

Dr. Croker's research aims at a deeper understanding of how minoritized identity influences health behaviors to inform policies that promote health among vulnerable groups across the lifespan. Presently, Dr. Croker's research examines the relationship between minoritized identity and polysubstance use, particularly among adolescents and emerging adults (AEA), and among older adults living with HIV. Dr. Croker's long-term research interests aim at reducing health disparities for people of color, LGBT people, AEA, and older PLWH through individual health promotion, harm reduction, and multi-level policy interventions.



Elizabeth Crouch, PhD

Associate Professor

Dr. Crouch is the Director for the Master of Public Health (MPH) Program and Director of the Rural and Minority Health Research Center. She was recognized with the 2023 Outstanding Researcher Award from the National Rural Health Association. Her work focuses on policy-related issues across the age spectrum in vulnerable populations at the beginning of life (children) and the end of life (elderly), particularly focusing on rural populations, with expertise in policy, claims-based analysis, and economics. Dr. Crouch serves as Research and Education chair of the National Rural Health Association board of trustees and serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Rural Health*.



Nicole L. Hair, PhD

Assistant Professor

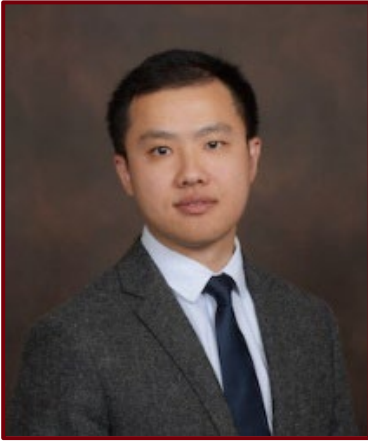
Dr. Hair is an economist whose research focuses on understanding the relationships between poverty, health, and human capital. Her current research examines socioeconomic differences in childhood health and access to health care, programs to improve childhood vaccination coverage, and the potential for public health intervention to promote more equal opportunity for disadvantaged children. Dr. Hair was named a 2022-2023 Resource Centers for Minority Aging Research (RCMAR) Scientist by the University of Southern California Schaffer Center.



Peiyin Hung, PhD

Assistant Professor

Dr. Hung's primary research interests include rural health disparity, quality of care, spatial access to health services, and women health. Her research focuses on geographic disparities in hospital services and quality of health care at the national, state, and institutional levels. She specializes in quantitative methods to understand the effects of organizational structure, clinical, and policy intervention. The USC Office of Research honored Dr. Hung with the 2023 Breakthrough Star Award.



Chen Liang, PhD
Assistant Professor

Dr. Liang's research interest focuses on the development and application of data science, informatics, and artificial intelligence that lead to a safe and intelligent health system. His recent work involves heterogeneous health data integration, Electronic Health Records-based phenotyping and data mining, medical knowledge representation, EHR-based machine learning and predictive modeling, and clinical natural language processing. He was selected to join Data and Technology Advancement National Service Scholar Program and as a Fellow of the American Medical Informatic Association in 2022.



Melinda A. Merrell, PhD, MPH
Clinical Assistant Professor

Dr. Merrell directs HSPM's MHA program (both traditional and executive tracks). Her research interests include the delivery of health care in U.S. rural communities, with specific focus areas of rural hospital closures and emergency medicine. She also has an interest in the intersection of social determinants of health and health-seeking behaviors among rural populations. Her other areas of expertise are in community health development, program planning and evaluation, and non-profit management.



Nabil Natafji, PhD, MPH, CPH
Assistant Professor

Dr. Natafji is the Associate Director of the USC Patient Engagement Studio (PES). His work is focused on evaluating the effectiveness and impact of telehealth applications on care delivery and outcomes as well as the methodologies of engagement patients in research. Dr. Natafji co-led two PCORI-funded projects that use technology to engage patients and caregivers in the development, implementation, and dissemination of research projects. His research encompasses both quantitative and qualitative analyses, with emphasis on mixed-methods and a special interest in the engagement of patients and stakeholders.



Bankole Olatosi, PhD
Associate Professor

Dr. Olatosi's research interests are in the fields of Health Analytics, HIV/AIDS, and COVID-19, understanding how big data science can advance important discoveries in disease surveillance, transmission, natural history, and progression important for treatment and necessary for targeted intervention purposes in the state. He co-leads the National Big Data Health Science Center and is the Chair of the National Board of the Commission for Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (CAHME).





Jan Ostermann, PhD

Associate Professor

Dr. Ostermann's research focuses on the intersection of health policy and health economics. Examples of his international work include an mHealth-focused randomized controlled trial evaluating whether SMS reminders and conditional financial incentives improve the timeliness of childhood vaccinations in rural Tanzania. His U.S.-based research currently focuses on use of telehealth for routine patient care among people living with HIV and strategies for attracting health care professionals to rural areas, especially in Appalachia.



Lauren Workman, PhD

Research Assistant Professor

Dr. Workman is the Associate Director at the Center for Applied Research & Evaluation (CARE). Dr. Workman is a community engaged researcher and evaluator. She uses qualitative methods, implementation science, and evaluation frameworks to support community partners in improving health. Much of Dr. Workman's funded work is focused on programs to support vulnerable children and families.



Brad Wright, PhD

Professor and Chair

Dr. Wright's research focuses on inequities in health care delivery, with an emphasis on publicly insured populations, primary care, and emergency medicine. He is one of the nation's leading experts on both federally qualified health centers and hospital observation stays. His additional research interests include health politics and policy, and patient and public involvement in health care. He has received funding for his research from the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, HRSA, the Iowa Department of Human Services, and multiple private foundations.



Sudha Xirasagar, MBBS, PhD

Professor

Dr. Xirasagar's research focuses on the impact of health services on patient outcomes, specifically, colorectal cancer prevention, colorectal surgical conditions, acute ischemic stroke, and interventional approaches to universal primary health care use.

Emeritus/Emerita Faculty

Roger Amidon, PhD
Distinguished Professor Emeritus

Sandra Glover, PhD
Distinguished Professor Emerita

Samuel L. Baker, PhD
Professor Emeritus

Janice C Probst, PhD
Distinguished Professor Emerita

Adjunct Faculty & Instructors

MPH Program

Mark Barnes, MBA
CFO/COO, SC First Steps to School Readiness

Brad Cole, MBA
Executive Business Director, USC

Cindy Dreher, MPH, MA
Retired, Past Program Senior Director, Palmetto GBA

Rupinderjit Grewal, JD
Director of Strategic Planning and Research, South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Tim Fitzgerald, MHA
Assistant Vice President of Perioperative Services, Lexington Medical Center

Eboni Haynes, PhD
Health Sciences Director, Virginia Union University and CEO, The Mahogany Group

Jay Hamm, MHA, RN, FACHE
Vice President of Operations, Lexington Medical Center

Kelli Kenison, PhD
Research Associate, USC Center for Applied Research and Evaluation (CARE)

Sara McCartha, JD
Associate General Counsel, Lexington Medical Center

William R. Render, MHA, FACHE
Partner, RCH Benefits Advisors

William R. Render, MHA, FACHE
Partner, RCH Benefits Advisors

Chelsea Richard, PhD, MSPH
Chief of Staff, South Carolina First Steps

MHA Program

J. Ira Bedenbaugh, MBA
Consulting Shareholder / Medical Consulting Practice Chair, Elliott Davis

Frank T. Shepke, MBA, MSW
President and CEO, Lutheran Homes of South Carolina

Matthew Dowdey, MHIT
Client Manager, Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina

George Edward (Ed) Bell, Jr, MHA, CCP
Director of Business Transformation and Continuous Improvement, CEEUS, Inc.

Undergraduate Program

Tommy Cockrell, MA, FHFMA
Retired, Past CFO of SC Hospital Association

Kolby T. Redd, PhD, MHA
Assistant Professor and Program Manager, Anderson University (SC)



Departmental Staff



Sharon Gary
Administrative Assistant

Mrs. Gary supports the department with tasks that include course scheduling, processing travel, and assisting with coordinating special events. Her most precious time is spent with her family and cooking meals that everyone enjoys.



April Osteen, BS, MEd
Administrative Coordinator, CEROrtho

Ms. Osteen is a business operations coordinator for the Center for Effectiveness Research in Orthopaedics (CERortho) and the Arnold School of Public Health-Greenville (ASPH-Greenville). Her day-to-day duties focus on accounting operations for CERortho, including the oversight of endowment and grant accounts, and serving as a resource for the Arnold School's Greenville presence. She is also responsible for all pre-award and post-award operations associated with CERortho.



Sandra Rhyne, MEd, GCDF
Academic Programs Specialist

Ms. Rhyne is the Academic Programs Specialist for all the students in the Health Services Policy and Management Department. In this role, she oversees the out-of-classroom experiences. This includes things such as orientation, professional development, and career services. In her free time, she enjoys being a member of Gamecock Nation and cheering on our teams and spending time with friends and her fur-baby, Teddie.



Katherine Tse, BA, MBA

Grants Coordinator

Ms. Tse aids with executing, supporting, and monitoring pre- and post-award functions for HSPM faculty with sponsored projects. Outside of work, she also coaches the University of South Carolina's women's ultimate (frisbee) club team Scorch.



Dantz Woodberry, BS, MBA

Business Manager

Mrs. Woodberry is the department's Business/HR manager. She works closely with the department chair to oversee HSPM's budget, accounting, and human resources activities. As business manager, she also oversees the planning of departmental special events (e.g., the annual James E. Clyburn Health Equity Lecture). She was recognized at the inaugural 2024 Staff Senate Awards.

Research Associates



Audrey Auen, MPH

Program Coordinator

Ms. Auen earned her bachelor's degree in Exercise Science and her master's in Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior from the University of South Carolina's Arnold School of Public Health. She is the Program Coordinator at the University of South Carolina's Big Data Health Science Center. She coordinates the NIH-funded T35 Training Grant on the Application of Data Science to Infectious Diseases, and other NIH-funded grants.



Research Assistants

Graduate Students

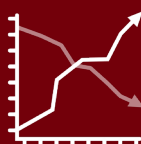
Unum Aslam
 Shanikque Barksdale
 Salomé-Joëlle Gass
 Anusha Ghosh
 Olivia Hinds
 Dakshu Jindal
 Tianchu Lyu
 Gahssan Mehmood
 Ariana Mitcham
 Melissa Mull
 Sophia Negaro
 Chelsea Norregaard
 Ibitein Okefor
 Tanveer Shafiq
 Angela Shoulders
 Valerie Yelverton

Undergraduate Students

William Byerman
 Rachael Erickson
 Carolyn Greene
 Muskaan Makkar
 Samuel Maloney
 Karthik Rangavajhula
 Meredith Rhodes
 Sanskruti Robin Patel
 Sravya Sunkara



Did you know?



The Arnold School of Public Health (ASPH) ranked **#11 overall** on the 2023 Blue Ridge Institute NIH Funding Rankings for public health schools, with \$32,023,881 total awarded. This improves upon last year's #13 ranking with \$23 million total awarded by the NIH.

Find out more on the [BRIMR website](https://brimr.org/).



Partners at USC

The following individuals from other USC units were actively engaged as research collaborators with HSPM faculty in FY23/24 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024).

Arnold School of Public Health

Michael Beets

Professor, Exercise Science

Nansi Boghossian

Associate Professor,
Epidemiology and Biostatistics

Monique J Brown

Assistant Professor,
Epidemiology and Biostatistics

Bo Cai

Professor, Epidemiology and
Biostatistics

Daniela B. Friedman

Professor and Chair, Health
Promotion, Education, and
Behavior

Xiaoming Li

Professor, Health Promotion,
Education, and Behavior

Jihong Liu

Professor, Epidemiology and
Biostatistics

Maria McClam

Research Associate, Center for
Applied Research and Evaluation

Cassie Odahowski

Research Assistant Professor,
Rural and Minority Health
Research Center

Christine Pellegrini

Associate Professor, Exercise
Science

Holly Pope

Research Associate, Center for
Applied Research and Evaluation

Shan Qiao

Associate Professor, Health
Promotion, Education, and
Behavior

Anne Rudisill

Associate Professor, Health
Promotion, Education, and
Behavior

George Tam

Research Assistant Professor,
Health Promotion, Education, and
Behavior

Glenn Weaver

Associate Professor, Exercise
Science

Xueying Yang

Research Assistant Professor,
Health Promotion, Education, and
Behavior

Jiajia Zhang

Professor, Epidemiology and
Biostatistics

College of Arts and Sciences

Sayward Harrison

Assistant Professor, Psychology

Yuhao Kang

Assistant Professor, Geography

College of Nursing

Phyllis Raynor

Assistant Professor, Biobehavioral Health & Nursing
Science



Molinaroli College of Engineering & Computing

Neset Hikmet
Professor, Integrated Information Technology

Jianjun Hu
Professor, Computer Science and Engineering

Dezhi Wu
Associate Professor, Integrated Information Technology

School of Medicine, Columbia

Divya Ahuja
Associate Professor, Clinical Internal Medicine

Berry Campbell
Clinical Associate Professor and Chair, Obstetrics and Gynecology

Sharon Weissman
Professor and Chair, Internal Medicine

School of Medicine, Greenville

Ann M. Dietrich
Clinical Professor, Emergency Medicine

Ann Blair Kennedy
Associate Professor, Biomedical Sciences

Ronald G. Pirralo
Professor, Emergency Medicine

Jeremiah D. Smith
Clinical Assistant Professor, Emergency Medicine

Jennifer L. Trilk
Professor, Department of Biomedical Sciences

School of Social Work

Nelis Soto-Ramirez
Research Associate, Social Work

Yanfeng Xu
Assistant Professor, Social Work



Collaborating Across Borders

Mapping HSPM's Research Partnerships

The following individuals from other universities around the nation and the globe were actively engaged as research collaborators with HSPM faculty on a variety of projects in FY23/24 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024).

Nationwide Collaborators

Amanda Abraham
University of Georgia

Anirban Basu
University of Washington

Joy Noel Baumgartner
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Dawn Blackhurst
Prisma Health

Julie Bynum
University of Michigan

Jennifer Candipan
Brown University

Cole Chapman
University of Iowa

Megan B. Cole
Boston University

Rachel Culbreth
American College of Medical Toxicology

Jennifer Dahne
The Medical University of South Carolina

Samantha Eiffert
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Amany A. Farag
University of Iowa

Sarah Floyd
Clemson University

Bianca K. Frogner
University of Washington

Theodoros Giannouchos
University of Alabama-Birmingham

Chris Gillette
Wake Forest University

Colleen Grogan
University of Chicago

Patricia S. Groves
University of Iowa

Moonseong Heo
Clemson University

Amy Hobbie
Duke University

James F. Howard
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Ben Jackson
Prisma Health

Kyle Jeray
Prisma Health

Jennifer Kawi
University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

Paula Kett
University of Washington

M. Mahmud Khan
University of Georgia

Michael Kissenberth
Prisma Health Upstate

Hye-Chung Kum
Texas A&M

Joshua M. Liao
University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center

Alain Litwin
Prisma Health

Brianna Lombardi
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Karen Joynt Maddox
Washington University in St. Louis

Kevin Murr
Prisma Health



Joshua Nardin
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Canada Parrish
University of Washington

Yelena Perkhounkova
University of Iowa

Amber Sabbatini
University of Washington

Janice Sabin
University of Washington

Benjamin Schooley
Brigham Young University

Kathy Schneider
Sum It Health Analytics

Kosali Simon
Indiana University

Phillip M. Singer
University of Utah

Daniel Skinner
Ohio University

Jonathan Staloff
University of Washington

Maureen Stewart
Brandeis University

Shelby Steuart
University of Chicago

Connor Sullivan
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Stephanie Tanner
Prisma Health

Nathan Thielman
Duke University

Charles Thigpen
ATI Holdings, LLC

Rebecca Traub
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Benjamin Ukert
Texas A&M

Carly Urban
Montana State University

Lavanya Vasudevan
Emory University

Kevin Walker
Prisma Health

Katrina Walsemann
University of Maryland

Jeremy Warren
Prisma Health

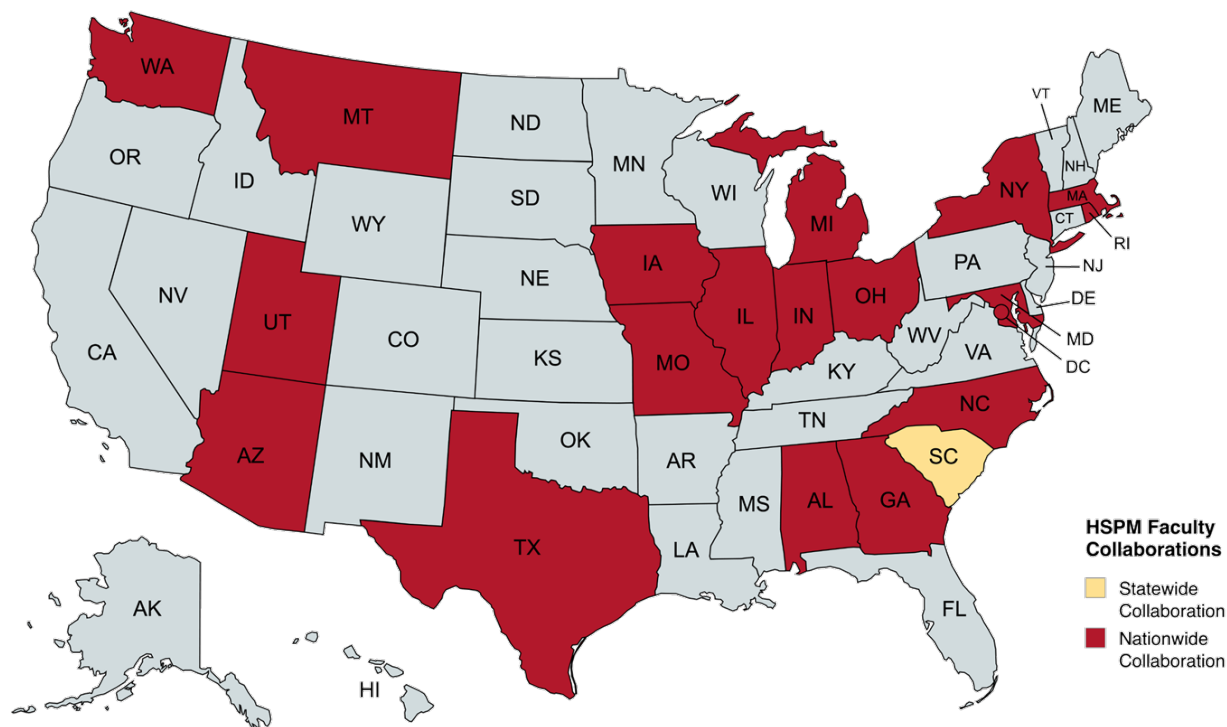
Kathryn Whetten
Duke University

Matthew J. Witry
University of Iowa

Thespina Yamanis
American University

Jiani Yu
Weill Cornell Medicine

Lisa D. Zerden
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



Global Collaborators

Wafa Alnakhi
University of Sharjah
Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

Ibrahim Demir
Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University
Ankara, Turkey

Fatima Mousa Khadadah
Kuwait University
Kuwait City, Kuwait

Ching-Ching Claire Lin
National Taiwan University
Taipei, Taiwan

Tara Mtuy
London School of Hygiene and
Tropical Medicine
London, United Kingdom

Esther Ngadaya
Tanzania National Institute for
Medical Research
Dar es Salam, Tanzania

Bernard Njau
Kilimanjaro Christian Medical
Centre
Kilimanjaro, Tanzania

Refilwe Phaswana-Mafuya
University of Johannesburg
Johannesburg, South Africa

Marco van Zwetselaar
Zwets IT
Netherlands

GLOBAL REACH

MAPPING HSPM INITIATIVES WORLDWIDE



**HSPM Students Explore
Healthcare in Spain**
Madrid & Barcelona, Spain
experiential learning abroad
enhances understanding of
global health systems



**Counseling Access for
China's Oldest-Old**
Jiangsu, China
Tracking trends in
community-based
mental health
services.



Treating Opioid Use Disorder
United States of America
addressing state policies and
politics driving disparities in opioid
treatment access across the US



Data Science in Nigeria
Lagos, Nigeria
using big data to improve
HIV programming



Data Science in South Africa
Johannesburg, South Africa
provide technical assistance in
applying data science to
HIV/infectious diseases.



**Cancer Patients' Info
Needs in Kuwait**
Kuwait City, Kuwait
A mixed-methods study
to improve patient
education and care
outcomes.

Empowering Health Solutions across the World, One Project at a Time



Research Projects

This section provides a comprehensive overview of HSPM's research endeavors. Delve into a collection of projects, each a testament to our commitment to pushing the boundaries of health services research and addressing real-world health policy and management challenges. From ongoing investigations to newly secured grants, explore the breadth and depth of our department's research landscape.

* Denotes new grants secured in FY23/24 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024)

† Denotes grants generated through the Center for Applied Research & Evaluation (CARE) under the leadership of HSPM faculty

° Denotes grants generated through the Rural and Minority Health Research Center (RMHRC) under the leadership of HSPM faculty

Extramural Funding

Patterns and Predictors of Viral Suppression: A Big Data Approach

Sponsor: National Institute of Allergy & Infectious Diseases (NIAID)/NIH (R01)

Principal Investigator: Bankole Olatosi

Funded Amount: \$3,670,855

Funding Period: 2021 – 2026

°Rural & Minority Health Research Center

Sponsor: Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)HRSA/Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

Principal Investigator: Elizabeth Crouch and Peiyin Hung

Funded Amount: \$2,800,000

Funding Period: 2024 – 2028

Treatment for Alcohol Use Disorder in Medicaid Managed Care

Sponsor: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism (NIAAA)/NIH (R01)

Principal Investigator: Christina Andrews

Funded Amount: \$2,573,343

Funding Period: 2021 – 2025

Medicaid Managed Care Coverage and Utilization Management of Opioid Use Disorder Treatment

Sponsor: National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)/NIH (R01)

Principal Investigator: Christina Andrews

Funded Amount: \$2,528,947

Funding Period: 2021 – 2025

Mitigating Effects of Telehealth Uptake On Disparities in Maternal Care Access, Quality, Outcomes, and Expenditures During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Sponsor: National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (NICHD)/NIH (U01)

Principal Investigator: Peiyin Hung

Co-Investigators: Chen Liang

Funded Amount: \$3,058,354

Funding Period: 2022 – 2027



Featured Project

Nicole Hair to study link between childhood measles exposure and later-life cognition



Health services policy and management assistant professor **Nicole Hair** will lead a study to examine the cognitive function of older adults who were exposed to measles during childhood. The two projects are funded by the National Institute on Aging.

“The goal of our research is to better understand how different experiences during childhood – especially those related to health – shape health

and well-being across the life course,” Hair says

Experts estimate that 6.5 million Americans have Alzheimer’s disease or related dementias. As the U.S. population ages, they expect this number to triple by 2050. With few effective treatments available, scientists and clinicians look to lifestyle behaviors and other predictors to identify vulnerable individuals and groups who may benefit from early screening and intervention.

These risk factors may include childhood experiences and exposures, which often play a role in children’s cognitive development. Exposures to infectious diseases in childhood have also been shown to have lasting effects in immunological, inflammatory and vascular processes as well as lower performance on cognitive tests.

The introduction of the measles vaccine in 1963 contributed to dramatic reductions in childhood illnesses from infectious diseases. Using data collected in the Health and Retirement Study for a sample of older adults who were born between 1942 and 1965, Hair and her colleagues will examine how childhood measles exposure (a function of state-level measles incidence rates and access to the measles vaccine) relates to cognitive functioning later in life.

“We already know that individuals born after the measles vaccine became available had more success as adults in terms of employment and income when compared to older groups who did not have the opportunity to be vaccinated as children,” Hair says. “This study will shed more light on other potential long-term benefits of routine childhood vaccinations on cognitive health.”

A member of the Arnold School since 2016, Hair is an economist who studies the relationships between poverty, health and human capital. She is particularly interested in the socioeconomic differences in childhood health and access to care, programs to improve childhood vaccination coverage, and public health interventions aimed at promoting equity for disadvantaged children.

Story posted on November 29, 2023, by Erin Bluvase (bluvase@sc.edu). Available on the [ASPH website](#).



Effects of Musculoskeletal Surgery Rate of Medicare Costs

Sponsor: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)/HHS (R01)

Principal Investigator: John Brooks

Funded Amount: \$1,370,693

Funding Period: 2020 – 2025

Chanjo Kwa Wakati - Leveraging Community Health Workers and a Responsive Digital Health System to Improve Vaccination Coverage and Timeliness in Rural Settings

Sponsor: National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (NICHD)/NIH (R01)

Principal Investigator: Jan Ostermann

Co-Investigators: Nicole Hair and Chen Liang

Funded Amount: \$1,221,796

Funding Period: 2022 – 2027

The Development and Evaluation of a Patient-Centered Opioid Discharge Prescribing Guideline Within the Electronic Health Record of a Health System

Sponsor: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)/HHS (R18)

Principal Investigator: John Brooks

Funded Amount: \$1,164,550

Funding Period: 2022 – 2026

Big Data Health Science Scholar Program for Infectious Diseases

Sponsor: National Institute of Allergy & Infectious Diseases (NIAID)/NIH (T35)

Principal Investigator: Bankole Olatosi

Funded Amount: \$446,590

Funding Period: 2021 - 2026

Confidential Social Network Referrals for HIV Testing (CONSORT)

Sponsor: Fogarty International Center (FIC)/NIH (R21)

Principal Investigator: Jan Ostermann

Funded Amount: \$374,359

Funding Period: 2022 – 2024

°FY22 MIECHV Coordinated Evaluation Proposal

Sponsor: Children's Trust of South Carolina/HRSA

Principal Investigator: Elizabeth Crouch

Funded Amount: \$322,680

Funding Period: 2022 – 2024

°FY21 MIECHV Coordinated Evaluation Proposal

Sponsor: Children's Trust of South Carolina/HRSA

Principal Investigator: Elizabeth Crouch

Funded Amount: \$321,191

Funding Period: 2021 – 2023



°*MIECHV Coordinated Evaluation Proposal 2023-2025

Sponsor: Children's Trust of South Carolina/HRSA

Principal Investigator: Elizabeth Crouch

Funded Amount: \$315,179

Funding Period: 2023 – 2025

An Ethical Framework-Guided Metric Tool for Assessing Bias in EHR-Based Big Data Studies

Sponsor: National Institute of Allergy & Infectious Diseases (NIAID)/NIH (R01 supplement)

Principal Investigator: Bankole Olatosi

Funded Amount: \$267,578

Funding Period: 2022 – 2025

Hospital Variations in Postpartum Care Access, Quality, and Outcome: The Intersectionality of Residence Location and Race/Ethnicity

Sponsor: Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)/NIH

Principal Investigator: Peiyin Hung

Funded Amount: \$200,709

Funding Period: 2024 – 2025

°*Strengthening Public Health Systems and Services through National Partnerships to Improve and Protect the Nation's Health: Development and implementation of a culturally sensitive, comprehensive, sexual health approach to reducing STIs and HIV for rural providers and Black/African American men

Sponsor: National Foundation for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Inc./CDC/HHS

Principal Investigator: Elizabeth Crouch

Funded Amount: \$189,305

Funding Period: 2024

†MIECHV Coordinated State Evaluation FY 2021 (2021-2023)

Sponsor: Children's Trust of South Carolina/HRSA

Principal Investigator: Lauren Workman

Funded Amount: \$151,579

Funding Period: 2021 – 2023

†SC MIECHV FY22 Coordinated State Evaluation (2022-2024)

Sponsor: Children's Trust of South Carolina/HRSA

Principal Investigator: Lauren Workman

Funded Amount: \$150,896

Funding Period: 2022 – 2024

†*SC MIECHV FY23 Coordinated State Evaluation (2023-2025)

Sponsor: Children's Trust of South Carolina/HRSA

Principal Investigator: Lauren Workman

Funded Amount: \$150,896

Funding Period: 2023 – 2025

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Measures and Viral Suppression for People Living with HIV (PLWH) Using Integrated Electronic Health Records

Sponsor: National Institute of Allergy & Infectious Diseases (NIAID)/NIH (R01 supplement)

Principal Investigator: Bankole Olatosi

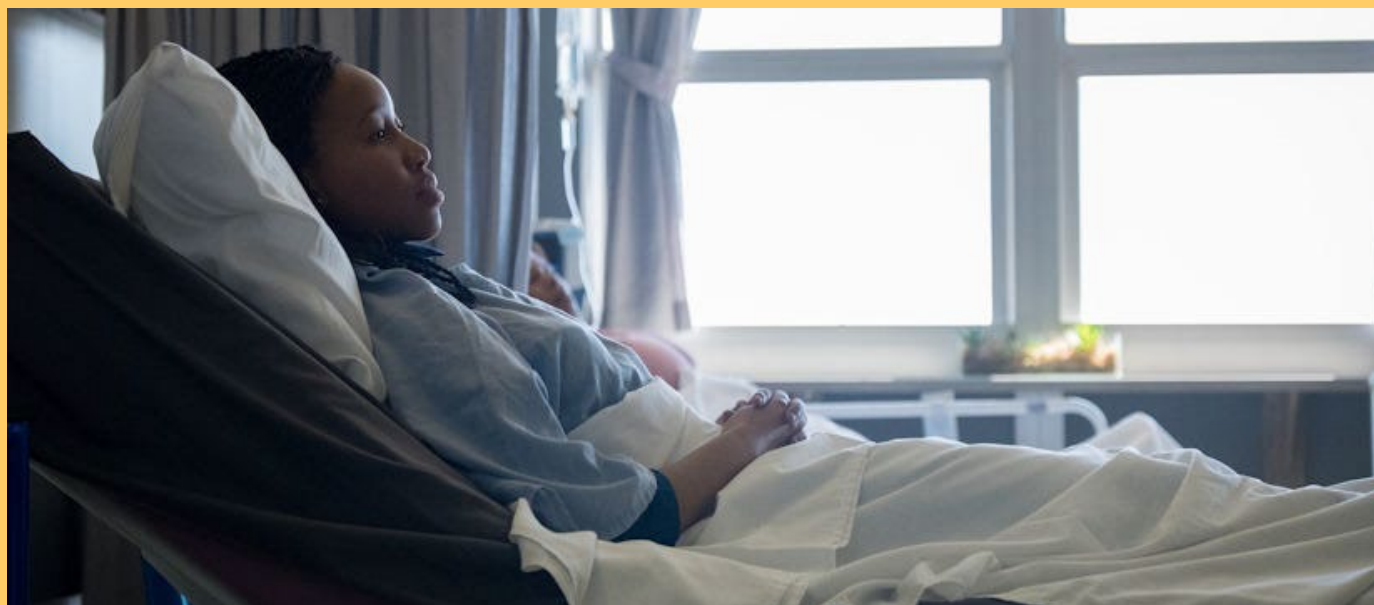
Funded Amount: \$144,381

Funding Period: 2023 – 2025



Featured Project

Researchers find geographic, racial disparities in postpartum readmissions involving mental health, substance use disorders



In a collaboration between the Rural and Minority Health Research Center and South Carolina SmartState Center for Healthcare Quality, USC researchers have discovered a hidden crisis impacting rural and minority South Carolinians. Their recent paper, published in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, reveals that members of rural and minority populations are more likely to be readmitted to the hospital for mental health and/or substance use disorders after giving birth.

“The postpartum period is challenging for many birthing individuals who may experience significant needs related to physical, psychosocial and behavioral functioning,” says **Peiyin Hung**, an associate professor in the Arnold School of Public Health’s Department of Health Services Policy and Management and deputy director of the Rural and Minority Health Research Center. “After giving birth, they are susceptible to mental health and substance use disorders, leading to maternal morbidity and mortality inequity. This is especially true for those facing social or economic hardships or with a history of mental health disorders.”



Members of rural and minority populations are more likely to be readmitted to the hospital for mental health and/or substance use disorders after giving birth.

As the most common complication of pregnancy and childbirth, mental health conditions impact one in every five mothers in the U.S., with 75 percent of them undiagnosed and untreated. More than 800,000 families

are affected by this epidemic which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic by an estimated 300 to 400 percent. Black and rural populations are disproportionately impacted, with the first group experiencing double the depression rates and the second facing increased stigma and supply shortages.

During the first year postpartum, suicides and overdoses are the leading causes of mortality for the 20 percent of mothers who experience mental health disorders, though most of these deaths are preventable. Though rare, maternal suicide is also associated with a risk of infanticide.

To better understand these challenges in South Carolina, Hung and co-principal investigator Xiaoming Li, professor of health promotion education, and behavior and director of the Center for Healthcare Quality, designed a study using funding from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development. The research team analyzed hospital records from more than 71,000 South Carolinians who gave birth between March 2020 and January 2022 – following up on readmissions for one year postpartum.

“These geographic and racial disparities in postpartum readmissions highlight the need for greater efforts to deliver timely interventions to at-risk postpartum individuals.”

Peiyin Hung



They found that 1,125 individuals were readmitted for mental health disorders and 588 were readmitted for substance use disorders. Though rural and urban residents experienced similar rates of readmission for mental health disorders up until 300 days, rural populations had higher incidences past that point. Black individuals had the highest rates of postpartum mental health readmissions overall. Further, patients who had more health challenges during pregnancy (e.g., gestational hypertension/diabetes) and labor/birth (e.g., emergency c-section) were more likely to be readmitted for mental health reasons during the postpartum period.

“These geographic and racial disparities in postpartum readmissions highlight the need for greater efforts to deliver timely interventions to at-risk postpartum individuals,” Hung says. “It is well-documented that Black individuals face systemic barriers to preventive health care access and quality, and our results suggest that these barriers may result in delayed access to care and more postpartum readmissions.”

The authors believe that learning more about the protective factors that help certain groups could help avoid the need for hospital readmissions among vulnerable populations. In addition, these insights could inform targeted interventions universally.

Story posted on June 13, 2024, by Erin Bluvas (bluvase@sc.edu). Available on the [USC website](https://www.usc.edu).



Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program

Sponsor: South Carolina Broadband Office
 Principal Investigator: Nabil Natafji
 Co-Investigators: Jan Ostermann, Brad Wright
 Funded Amount: \$125,000
 Funding Period: 2023

Economic Evaluation of the Rescue Program of South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

Sponsor: SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC)
 Principal Investigator: Nicole Hair
 Funded Amount: \$124,933
 Funding Period: 2020 – 2024

South Carolina Center for Excellence in Addiction – BCBS

Sponsor: SC Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS)/BCBS Foundation
 Principal Investigator: Christina Andrews
 Co-Investigators: Bankole Olatosi, Elizabeth Crouch, Peiyin Hung
 Funded Amount: \$120,600
 Funding Period: 2023 – 2024

***South Carolina Center for Excellence in Addiction – General Assembly**

Sponsor: SC Department of Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS)/General Assembly
 Principal Investigator: Christina Andrews
 Co-Investigators: Bankole Olatosi
 Funded Amount: \$114,942
 Funding Period: 2023 – 2024

***South Carolina Center for Excellence in Addiction – SCORF**

Sponsor: South Carolina Opioid Recovery Fund (SCORF)
 Principal Investigator: Christina Andrews
 Co-Investigators: Bankole Olatosi
 Funded Amount: \$102,049
 Funding Period: 2023 – 2024

Personalized Prediction of Virological Failure Among Underrepresented Population Using All of Us Data

Sponsor: Office of Aids Research (OAR)/NIAID/NIH (R01 supplement)
 Principal Investigator: Bankole Olatosi
 Funded Amount: \$93,131
 Funding Period: 2021 – 2026

***Preparatory Phase for South Carolina's 5-Year Strategic Plan for the Control of Sexually Transmitted Diseases**

Sponsor: SC Department of Health & Environmental Control (DHEC)
 Principal Investigator: Sudha Xirasagar
 Funded Amount: \$88,905
 Funding Period: 2024



† Catawba Nation MIECHV Community Engagement and Data Specialist

Sponsor: Catawba Nation/HRSA

Principal Investigator: Lauren Workman

Funded Amount: \$78,207

Funding Period: 2023 – 2024

†*Sisters of Charity Foundation of South Carolina Poverty Study

Sponsor: Sisters of Charity Foundation of South Carolina

Principal Investigator: Lauren Workman

Funded Amount: \$50,000

Funding Period: 2023 – 2024

†*SC Institute of Medicine and Public Health Evaluation 2023-2024

Sponsor: SC Institute of Medicine and Public Health (IMPH)

Principal Investigator: Lauren Workman

Funded Amount: \$49,919

Funding Period: 2023 – 2024

†*AccessHealth & Healthy People Healthy Carolinas Evaluation 2024

Sponsor: SC Hospital Association Foundation (SCHA)

Principal Investigator: Lauren Workman

Funded Amount: \$44,846

Funding Period: 2024

Behavioral Health Initiatives across the Care Continuum (SCBHI): Evaluation of Telehealth and Mental Health Intervention

Sponsor: SC Office of Rural Health / Prisma Health

Principal Investigator: Nabil Natafji

Funded Amount: \$44,000

Funding Period: 2023 – 2025

Patient Experiences and Disparities in Telehealth HIV Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Mixed Methods Study from the Southern US

Sponsor: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)/HHS (R36)

Principal Investigator: Valerie Yelverton (Student)

Advisor: Jan Ostermann

Funded Amount: \$41,983

Funding Period: 2023

† AccessHealth & Healthy People Healthy Carolinas Evaluation 2023

Sponsor: SC Hospital Association Foundation (SCHA)

Principal Investigator: Lauren Workman

Funded Amount: \$39,195

Funding Period: 2023

Well-being of the Workforce: An Innovative Wellness Program for South Carolina School Mental Health Clinicians

Sponsor: SC Office of Rural Health / Prisma Health

Principal Investigator: Nabil Natafji

Funded Amount: \$30,000

Funding Period: 2023 – 2025



Persistent Frequent Emergency Department Users in South Carolina: Who Are They and How Do They Use Other Cross-Sector Services?

Sponsor: Prisma Health

Principal Investigator: Brad Wright

Funded Amount: \$19,994

Funding Period: 2023 – 2024

Equitability and Health Outcomes of Telehealth Supported HIV Care in South Carolina

Sponsor: Prisma Health – Upstate

Principal Investigator: Jan Ostermann

Funded Amount: \$19,976

Funding Period: 2022 – 2024

Identifying Preference-Relevant Features of Telehealth Supported HIV Care in South Carolina

Sponsor: Prisma Health – Upstate

Principal Investigator: Jan Ostermann

Funded Amount: \$19,976

Funding Period: 2023

Identifying Predictive Factors of HIV Care Discontinuation Using Clinical Natural Language Processing

Sponsor: Prisma Health – Upstate

Principal Investigator: Chen Liang

Funded Amount: \$19,940

Funding Period: 2022 – 2024

†*Healthy Palmetto Community Focus Groups

Sponsor: SC Hospital Association Foundation (SCHAF)

Principal Investigator: Lauren Workman

Funded Amount: \$19,842

Funding Period: 2023 – 2024

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program

Sponsor: South Carolina Digital Equity Office

Principal Investigator: Nabil Natafqi

Funded Amount: \$15,250

Funding Period: 2022 – 2023

°*Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Grant with Children's Trust

Sponsor: Children's Trust of South Carolina/ACF/HHS

Principal Investigator: Elizabeth Crouch

Funded Amount: \$7,500

Funding Period: 2023 – 2025



Recognizing HSPM Excellence:

Big Data Health Science Center brings big minds, big ideas

The human body is so complex that it's estimated every person generates two terabytes of data every day. If health care experts could gather and study that data, they could pinpoint ways for people and communities to be healthier.

The biggest problem — two terabytes per person is too much data.

"We're not collecting one-hundredth of that data yet," says **Banky Olatosi**, an associate professor in health services policy and management at USC's Arnold School of Public Health. "If we're able to find a way to collect that data, it will have a very big impact on being able to deal with your health," he says, noting that it would lead to precise, personalized diagnoses.

Because data will play such a large role in the future of health care, the University of South Carolina launched the **Big Data Health Science Center** in 2019. The center held its fifth annual Big Data Health Science Conference in February, which attracted almost 100 presenters from five countries and 269 attendees. This was the first year the conference was partially sponsored by the National Institutes of Health.

"It shows how much the center and conference has grown to be nationally recognized," Olatosi says of the NIH's involvement.



Around 30 institutions were represented at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center, including universities, governmental organizations, industry and health care partners. "Year after year, our satisfaction surveys show attendees believe this conference is a great size in terms of not getting lost in your crowd," says Big Data Health Science Center managing director Miranda Nixon.

"It's small enough where you can have an individualized experience, but large enough where you can really network and form collaborations that you traditionally wouldn't have," she says

Their common calling: to accelerate cutting-edge research and discovery.

Professor Xiaoming Li, who is the USC SmartState Endowed Chair for Clinical Translational Research, points to the variety of specific data types that were discussed.

"The conference covers artificial Intelligence and sensing, electronic health record data, social media data, genomic data, geospatial data," Li says. "Also as part of the learning opportunities, we have student teams from across the nation, including our USC teams, compete over a 24-hour period to come up with analytical solutions to real data and real health issues they were given."



Olatosi and Li are the co-leaders of the Big Data Health Science Center, and they know the challenges and opportunities on the horizon.

Here's the big picture for what's next for the Big Data Health Science Center and its supporters.

Big data in public health

Olatosi explains that big data can be used for disease management, prediction and treatment.

"COVID-19 was the clearest example of the use of big data for health care, for active surveillance to see what's happening in real time, and to track the impacts of the virus across different geographical locations," he says.

"Real time active surveillance is continuing to grow. It gives us the opportunity to intervene in people's health care and their lives," he says. "Data that's been collected can be mined for interventions in the future."

For the chronic diseases that afflict so many Americans such as diabetes or cardiovascular disease, big data can identify those who are most at risk, and then help tailor their lifestyle like nutrition and their diet and their food to improve their health.

We've already started seeing advances where based on your speech, we can predict whether you're going to have cognitive decline in the future. And that's a precursor to being able to then diagnose whether you're going to be at risk for Alzheimer's or other dementias.

Banky Olatosi



Olatosi notes that despite advances in what data can now tell researchers, there still must be dialogue with those seeking care.

"Long COVID is the only disease condition in our lifetime that was discovered by patients," he says. "They were the ones who said there's something going on. The health community was like, 'No, it's all in your head.'"

Those patients then formed online support groups where they could share their symptoms and experiences.

"The academic community saw that and said, 'Maybe there is something,' and then it translated to find the scientific basis of it," Olatosi says.

Story posted on April 22, 2024, by Gregory Hardy (gghardy@sc.edu). Full story available on the [USC website](#).

Consortium Agreements

†Development and Validation of a Measure of Organizational Readiness (motivation x capacity) for Implementation

Prime: University of Texas Health Science Center/NCI/NIH (R01)

Site Principal Investigator: Lauren Workman

Funded Amount: \$690,319

Funding Period: 2018 – 2024

Positive Outcomes for Orphans (POFO): HIV Risk as Young Adults

Prime: Duke University/NICHD/NIH (R01)

Site Principal Investigator: Jan Ostermann

Funded Amount: \$267,532

Funding Period: 2018 – 2024

Examining Opioid Use Disorder Treatment in Medicaid Managed Care Plans: Policies and Outcomes

Prime: Brandeis University/NIDA/NIH (R01)

Site Principal Investigator: Christina Andrews

Funded Amount: \$157,327

Funding Period: 2020 – 2024

Using Medicare Claims to Advance Our Understanding of Guillain-Barré Syndrome

Prime: UNC-Chapel Hill/NINDS/NIH (R21)

Site Principal Investigator: Brad Wright

Funded Amount: \$104,633

Funding Period: 2022 – 2025

°Addressing Rural Cancer Disparities via Proactive Smoking Cessation Treatment within Primary Care: A Hybrid Type 1 Effectiveness-Implementation Trial of a Scalable Smoking Cessation Electronic Visit

Sponsor: Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC)/NCI/NIH

Site Principal Investigator: Peiyin Hung and Brian Chen

Funded Amount: \$95,023

Funding Period: 2022 – 2027

Alcohol Treatment in Medicaid Managed Care Plans: Disparities in Policies and Outcomes

Prime: Brandeis University/NIAAA/NIH (R01)

Site Principal Investigator: Christina Andrews

Funded Amount: \$93,893

Funding Period: 2021 – 2026

Observation Stays and Readmissions For Older Adults: Implications for Medicare Policies

Prime: University of Washington/NIA/NIH (R01)

Site Principal Investigator: Brad Wright

Funded Amount: \$28,700

Funding Period: 2022 – 2024



Heeding Patient Voices: Patient, Nurse, and Event Characteristics Associated with Nurse Judgments

Prime: University of Iowa/NIH (R21)

Site Principal Investigator: Brad Wright

Funded Amount: \$61,152

Funding Period: 2022 – 2024

How Changing Neighborhood and School Contexts Shape Mental Health and Educational Attainment from Childhood to Early Adulthood

Prime: Brown University/Spencer Foundation

Site Principal Investigator: Nicole Hair

Funded Amount: \$59,868

Funding Period: 2021 – 2024

***Access to Health Care in Rural Appalachia**

Prime: Wake Forest University/NIH (R21)

Site Principal Investigator: Jan Ostermann

Funded Amount: \$56,949

Funding Period: 2023 – 2025

Childhood Measles Exposure and Later-Life Cognitive Function

Prime: University of Michigan (CAPRA)/NIA/NIH (P30)

Site Principal Investigator: Nicole Hair

Funded Amount: \$55,709

Funding Period: 2023 – 2024

Hybrid Type 1 Effectiveness-Implementation Trial of a Proactive Smoking Cessation Electronic Visit for Scalable Delivery via Primary Care

Prime: Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC)/NIH (R01)

Site Principal Investigator: Brian Chen

Funded Amount: \$29,116

Funding Period: 2022 – 2026

Childhood Measles Exposure and Later-Life Cognition: The Mediating Role of Education

Prime: University of Maryland/NIA/NIH

Site Principal Investigator: Nicole Hair

Funded Amount: \$24,996

Funding Period: 2023 – 2024

Addressing Rural Cancer Disparities via Proactive Smoking Cessation Treatment within Primary Care: A Hybrid Type 1 Effectiveness-Implementation Trial of a Scalable Smoking Cessation Electronic Visit

Prime: Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC)/NIH (R01)

Site Principal Investigator: Peiyin Hung

Funded Amount: \$331,901

Funding Period: 2022 – 2026

Personalized Auricular Point Acupressure Self-Management for Chronic Pain in Rural Populations

Prime: The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston/NIH (UG3/UH3)

Site Principal Investigator: Peiyin Hung

Funded Amount: \$394,069

Funding Period: 2024 – 2029

Internally Funded Awards

SPARC: Predict the occurrence of postpartum cardiovascular disease and assess the impacts of structural disparities among a national cohort of pregnant women using electronic health records

Site Principal Investigator: Tianchu Lyu

Advisor: Cheng Liang

Funded Amount: \$5,000

Funding Period: 2023 – 2024

SPARC: The Role of Structural Racism on the Association Between Maternal Obesity and Severe Maternal Morbidity in South Carolina

Student Lead: Chelsea Norregaard

Advisor: Peiyin Hung

Funded Amount: \$4,998

Funding Period: 2022 – 2023

SPARC: Impact of Telehealth and Obstetrics Capacity on Maternal Health Outcomes & User Satisfaction: A Mixed Methods Approach

Student Lead: Shanikque Blackwell

Advisor: Nabil Natafqi and Peiyin Hung

Funded Amount: \$4,983

Funding Period: 2023 – 2024

SPARC: Understanding Perspectives on Characteristics of Shared Decision-Making of People Living with HIV in South Carolina

Student Lead: Valerie Yelverton

Advisor: Jan Ostermann

Funded Amount: \$4,057

Funding Period: 2020 – 2023

SPARC: An Analysis of the Association Between State Direct Access Laws and Physical Therapy Use, and the Effect of Change in Physical Therapy Use on Subsequent Healthcare Costs and Opioid Use

Student Lead: Dakshu Jindal

Advisor: Brian Chen and John Brooks

Funded Amount: \$3,459

Funding Period: 2022 – 2023

***Magellan: Racial Differences in Pain Management for Medicare Patients Diagnosed with Rotator Cuff Injury**

Student Lead: Sravya Sunkara

Advisors: Brian Chen and John Brooks

Funded Amount: \$2,500

Funding Period: 2024 – 2025



Featured Program

Olatosi leads a T35 Big Data Health Scholar Program for Infectious Diseases

The T35 Big Data Health Scholar Program for Infectious Diseases incorporates didactic learning, seminar discussions, research, professional development, bonding activities, workshops, presentations, and collaborative activities throughout the summer, with research interests spanning a wide range of fields. Each year, a diverse group of eight predoctoral students from the physical and quantitative sciences across the US are recruited to participate in this 10-week intensive summer research training program.

The following is a snapshot of our 2024 summer cohort and their respective research projects:

- **Joshua Cook**, University of West Florida; Assessment of Temporal Trends in HPV Vaccination, Cervical Cancer Screening, and Diagnosis Among LGBTQ+ Individuals with Dr. Swann Adams
- **Lauren Holian**, University of South Carolina; Spatial and temporal patterns of Dengue in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras with Dr. Melissa Nolan
- **Grant Hunter**, University of Alabama; Chemical Synthesis with Dr. Forest Agostinelli
- **Gulnar Ibramsha**, University of South Carolina; Descriptive Epidemiology of Injection Drug Use (IDU)-related harms among People Living with HIV in South Carolina with Dr. Pieter Baker
- **Brenda Macias**, Tufts University; Maternal AI with Dr. Dezhi Wu

The 2024 Cohort

T35 Big Data Health Science Summer Research Training Program for Infectious Diseases



Big Data Health Science Center
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Funding support provided by:



**National Institute of
Allergy and
Infectious Diseases**



Joshua Cook
University of West Florida



Lauren Holian
University of South Carolina



Grant Hunter
University of Alabama



Gulnar Ibramsha
University of South Carolina



Brenda Macias
Tufts University

Publications

Explore publications by our faculty and students in FY23/24 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024). **Bolded names** indicate that the author is a HSPM faculty member. Underlined names indicate that the author is a HSPM student.

1. Aggarwal A, Zhang R, Qiao S, Wang B, Lwatula C, Menon A, **Ostermann J**, Li X, Harper G. Physician-Patient Interaction Quality Mediates the Association Between HIV-Related Stigma and HIV-Prevention Behaviors Among Sexual Minority Men in Zambia. *AIDS Behav.* 2024 May;28(5):1559-1569. doi: 10.1007/s10461-023-04171-4. Epub 2023 Oct 24. PMID: 37874436.
2. Aggarwal A, Zhang R, Qiao S, Wang B, Lwatula C, Menon A, **Ostermann J**, Li X, Harper G. Stigmatizing clinical setting erodes physician-patient interaction quality for sexual minority men through perceived HIV stigma and HIV infection concerns in Zambia. *AIDS Care.* 2024 Jun;36(6):797-806. doi: 10.1080/09540121.2024.2324288. Epub 2024 Mar 4. PMID: 38437705.
3. **Andrews CM**, Westlake MA, Abraham AJ, Grogan CM, Harris, SJ, Jehan, S. Medicaid Managed Care Prior Authorization For Buprenorphine Tied To State Partisanship And Health Plan Profit Status, 2018. *Health Aff (Millwood).* 2024 Jan; 43(1): 55–63. doi: 10.1377/hlthaff.2023.00288.
4. Barksdale S, Stark TS, Criss S, Kemper K, Friedman DB, Thompson W, Donelle L, MacGilvray P, **Natafji N**. Improving Patient Health Literacy During Telehealth Visits Through Remote Teach-Back Methods Training for Family Medicine Residents: Pilot 2-Arm Cluster, Nonrandomized Controlled Trial. *JMIR Form Res.* 2023 Nov 16;7:e51541. doi: 10.2196/51541.
5. Bell N, **Hung P**, **Merrell MA**, **Crouch E**, Eberth JM. Changes in access to community health services among rural areas affected and unaffected by hospital closures between 2006 and 2018: A comparative interrupted time series study. *Journal of Rural Health.* 2023;39(1):291-301. doi:10.1111/jrh.12691
6. Boswell E, Richard C, **Crouch E**, Jones A, Dugger D, Cordan K. (2023). Home Visiting Program Participation and Healthcare Utilization amongst Children Enrolled in South Carolina Medicaid, 2017-2021. *Journal of Health Visiting.* 2023 11:10, 422-433. <https://doi.org/10.12968/johv.2023.11.10.422>
7. **Brooks JM**, Chapman CG, **Chen BK**, Floyd SB, Hikmet N. Assessing the properties of patient-specific treatment effect estimates from causal forest algorithms under essential heterogeneity. *BMC Med Res Methodol.* 2024 Mar 13;24(1):66. doi: 10.1186/s12874-024-02187-5.
8. Brown MJ, Amoatika D, Addo PNO, Kaur A, Haider MR, **Merrell MA**, **Crouch E**. Childhood Sexual Trauma and Subjective Cognitive Decline: An Assessment of Racial/Ethnic and Sexual Orientation Disparities. *J Appl Gerontol.* 2023 Oct;42(10):2129-2138. doi: 10.1177/07334648231175299. Epub 2023 May 22. PMID: 37218145; PMCID: PMC10523896.
9. **Chen BK**, Dunsiger SI, Pinto BM. Cost-effectiveness of peer-delivered physical activity promotion and maintenance programs for initially sedentary breast cancer survivors. *Translational behavioral medicine.* 2023 Sep; 13(9): 683–693. Published online 2023 May 8. doi: 10.1093/tbm/ibad026.
10. **Crouch E**, Abshire DA, Wirth MD, **Hung P**, Benavidez GA. Rural-Urban Differences in Overweight and Obesity, Physical Activity, and Food Security Among Children and Adolescents. *Prev Chronic Dis.* 2023 Oct 19;20:E92. doi: 10.5888/pcd20.230136. PMID: 37857462; PMCID: PMC10599326.
11. **Crouch E**, Andersen TS, Smith HP. Adverse Childhood Experiences and Positive Childhood Experiences Among United States Military Children. *Mil Med.* 2024 May 18;189(5-6):e1072-e1079. doi: 10.1093/milmed/usad416. PMID: 37897695.
12. **Crouch E**, Figas K, Radcliff E, Hunt ET. Examining Bullying Victimization, Bullying Perpetration, and Positive Childhood Experiences. *J Sch Health.* 2023 Aug;93(8):669-678. doi: 10.1111/josh.13323. Epub 2023 Mar 13. PMID: 36911911.
13. **Crouch E**, **Hung P**, Benavidez G, Giannouchos T, Brown MJ. Rural-urban differences in access to care among children and adolescents in the United States. *J Rural Health.* 2024 Jan;40(1):200-207. doi: 10.1111/jrh.12769. Epub 2023 May 22. PMID: 37217438.



14. **Crouch E**, Nelson D, Radcliff E, **Workman L**, Browder J, McClam M. (2023). Factors Influencing Home Visiting Client Attrition in a Southern State. *Journal of Health Visiting*. 2024 Feb 6;11(4). <https://doi.org/10.12968/johv.2023.11.4.162>.
15. **Crouch E**, Radcliff E, Bennett K, Brown MJ, **Hung P**. Child and Adolescent Health in the United States: The Role of Adverse and Positive Childhood Experiences. *J Child Adolesc Trauma*. 2023 Nov 6;17(2):517-525. doi: 10.1007/s40653-023-00588-0. PMID: 38938966; PMCID: PMC11199427.
16. **Crouch E**, Radcliff E, **Probst J**. Changes in Positive Childhood Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Acad Pediatr*. 2024 Mar;24(2):254-257. doi: 10.1016/j.acap.2023.06.020. Epub 2023 Jun 22. PMID: 37354948; PMCID: PMC10286521.
17. **Crouch E**, Yell N, Herbert L, Browne T, **Hung P**. Availability and Quality of Dialysis Care in Rural versus Urban US Counties. *Am J Nephrol*. 2024;55(3):361-368. doi: 10.1159/000537763. Epub 2024 Feb 11. PMID: 38342081.
18. Shalowitz DI, **Hung P**, Zahnd WE, Eberth J. Pre-Pandemic Geographic Access to Hospital-Based Telehealth for Cancer Care in the United States. *PLoS One*. 2023 Jan 31;18(1):e0281071. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0281071. PMID: 36719889; PMCID: PMC9888704
19. Eiffert SR, **Wright B**, Nardin J, Howard JF, Traub R. Evaluating algorithms for identifying incident Guillain-Barré Syndrome in Medicare fee-for-service claims. *Glob Epidemiol*. 2024 May 3;7:100145. doi: 10.1016/j.gloepi.2024.100145. PMID: 38746856; PMCID: PMC11090889.
20. Estrada MAG, Abraham AJ, **Andrews CM**, Grogan CM. Statewide efforts to address the opioid epidemic: Results from a national survey of single state agencies. *J Subst Use Addict Treat*. 2024 May;160:209309. doi: 10.1016/j.josat.2024.209309. Epub 2024 Feb 8.
21. Fahey MC, Wahlquist AE, Diaz VA, Player MS, **Natale N**, Sterba KR, **Chen BK**, Hermes EDA, Carpenter MJ, Dahne J. Rationale, design, and protocol for a hybrid type 1 effectiveness-implementation trial of a proactive smoking cessation electronic visit for scalable delivery via primary care: the E-STOP trial. *BMC Prim Care*. 2023; 24: 254. Published online 2023 Nov 29. doi: 10.1186/s12875-023-02205-3.
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Student Spotlight

Undergraduate students win Tulane Health Policy Case Competition



Honors College students **Anusha Ghosh** (Accelerated Undergraduate to MD Program with concentrations in public health and Spanish) and **Muskaan Makkar** (public health) and Capstone Scholar Hima Vadlamani (finance) are the 2023 winners of the nationwide Tulane Health Policy Case Competition, which invited undergraduate students to propose solutions to New Orleans' homelessness crisis. The trio each won \$1,000 in cash and an offer of a \$10,000 scholarship to attend Tulane's Master of Public Health program with a health policy concentration.



Anusha Ghosh

"Case competitions are typically associated with just business majors, but having the opportunity to tackle the real-world issue of homelessness in New Orleans allowed us to view the field of public health in a more analytical, constructive manner," Ghosh says.

"We were able to grow our capacity to work as a team - a necessity for the interdisciplinary and interconnected field of public health. For all of us, it was a unique and exhilarating experience in which our strengths complemented each other extraordinarily well," Makkar adds.

The daughter of immigrants, Ghosh is committed to addressing health care inequities and has tailored her undergraduate program to focus on health policy and management. Following her 2024 graduation, she will learn how to improve patient-physician relationships and address public health issues through a clinical lens as a medical student at the USC School of Medicine Columbia.



Makkar became passionate about health care reform after learning about the American insulin crisis and the barriers to access that stem from the nation's complex health care and insurance systems. To learn more, she completed a public policy internship with Civica Script and plans to pursue a graduate degree in the field after graduating in 2025.

Both Ghosh and Makkar are undergraduate research assistants in the Arnold School's Department of Health Services Policy and Management. They work closely with **Christina Andrews** on the associate professor's two National Institutes of Health-funded projects aimed at understanding Medicaid coverage for mental health and substance use disorder treatment.

Vadlamani, who is enrolled in a dual program with the ESSEC Business School in Paris, already had experience with several case competitions through the Moore School. She was eager to combine her competition experience with Ghosh and Makkar's health policy knowledge to tackle a real-life public health challenge.

With the competition announced in early September, the next eight weeks were a whirlwind for the USC team. They had just 10 days between the release of the case details/prompt and the teams' zoom workshop and then another 10 before their proposals were due. Finalists shared their presentations with a panel of judges just a few days later – sharing their proposals for how to best design a policy package that would offer a sustainable solution to the New Orleans' homelessness crisis using \$50 million over a ten-year period.



Muskan Makkar

Ghosh, Makkar and Vadlamani emerged as the winners from among the 88 teams and 264 participants that competed this year. After assessing the problem from multiple angles, the team proposed 1) establishing a shelter database with real-time availability 2) employment assistance through the strategic placement of career coordinators and 3) developing private housing by leveraging unused school buildings. Their proposal also addressed barriers to success, outlined logistics and evaluation metrics, and discussed budgets, key stakeholders, and other elements essential to the success of the project.

They recommend seeking the support from local leaders and learning about the experiences of various stakeholders to truly understand the challenges faced by a community when attempting to develop solutions. The team also emphasizes the importance of ensuring that all statements are supported by data and to work toward truly feasible solutions that enhance existing systems and resources. Finally, they offer their advice and support to others interested in participating in a future health policy competition.

"I am thrilled to see this talented group of students receive national recognition of their high potential to make important contributions to the field of health policy," Andrews says. "Frankly, I am not surprised by their success, given the incredible work they have done on my research team examining complex health policies for low-income Americans struggling with addiction."

Photo credit: South Carolina Honors College

Story posted on November 17, 2023, by Erin Bluvase (bluvase@sc.edu). Available on the [ASPH website](https://www.asph.org/).



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Student Spotlight

Recent graduate continues HIV care research as T32 postdoctoral scholar



Valerie Yelverton recently left USC after nearly a decade of collaborations and a Ph.D. in Health Services Policy and Management (HSPM). The August graduate departed for Duke University in September to join the School of Medicine's Division of Infectious Diseases as a postdoctoral scholar. Funded by the National Institutes of Health's Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA; award # 5T32AI007392), she'll conduct research with the Interdisciplinary Research Training Program in AIDS.

"My T32 research project builds on my dissertation research and identifies preference-centered telehealth-supported HIV care options to reduce inequalities along the HIV care continuum in the Southern United States," Yelverton says.

Originally trained as a physical therapist, Yelverton's interests soon encompassed research and health care systems/decision making, and she completed additional degrees (B.S. in Public Health and Administration; M.S. in Health Sciences) in her native Germany. In 2015, she traveled to USC for a one-year fellowship through the Biomedical Sciences Exchange Program (International Academy of Life Sciences).

As a visiting scholar, her role involved estimating treatment preferences for people living with HIV. Yelverton's interests expanded to include health disparities in the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, and she made plans to return to the Arnold School a year later to pursue a doctoral degree and continue learning from her mentor, HSPM associate professor **Jan Ostermann**.

The Norman J Arnold Doctoral Fellow spent two years as a Junior Scholar with the South Carolina SmartState Center for Healthcare Quality – researching telehealth in HIV care in SC. She found mentors in center investigators Shan Qiao and Sayward Harrison, who introduced Yelverton to new research methodologies and encouraged her to explore different research topics.



With support from a SPARC grant awarded by the USC Office of the Vice President for Research, Yelverton investigated shared decision-making among people living with HIV in SC. The Agency of Healthcare Research and Quality funded her dissertation project with a R36 research grant. HSPM staff and chair **Brad Wright** and the clinicians and staff at the Prisma Immunology Center provided support and resources to help her implement the study smoothly.

Looking at the role of telehealth in HIV care during the COVID-19 pandemic, she found that this mode of care helped bridge interruptions to in-person care, but its utilization decreased after the first year of the pandemic. The HIV care providers Yelverton interviewed suggested that telehealth is most useful for routine care appointments for people living with HIV who are clinically stable and generally healthy.

“We learned that telehealth in its current form may not yet be suitable for all appointments for all people living with HIV,” she says. “To guide the optimal integration of telehealth in HIV care and promote equitable HIV care in the future, clinicians and researchers need to address persistent barriers to telehealth and shared decision-making for different types of care visits.”

To guide the optimal integration of telehealth in HIV care and promote equitable HIV care in the future, clinicians and researchers need to address persistent barriers to telehealth and shared decision-making for different types of care visits.

Valerie Yelverton



Yelverton’s impactful research has resulted in 14 peer-reviewed publications and has been recognized with several awards from USC. She is the recipient of the Outstanding Research Award and C.C. Royal Fellowship (The Graduate School) and the Breakthrough Graduate Scholar Award (Office of the Vice President for Research). She shares the credit with her supporters and mentors, particularly her doctoral advisor, Ostermann.

“I was lucky having multiple excellent and important mentors within and beyond the Arnold School who have relentlessly supported my research, personal and professional development,” Yelverton says. “Dr. Ostermann has been my most influential mentor, who supported and encouraged me unwaveringly throughout my Ph.D. journey. He taught me by example how to conduct robust, innovative and impactful research, and he included me in all stages of research projects starting with grant writing throughout the manuscript writing and publishing of study results. Dr. Ostermann’s trust in me and my capability has allowed me to develop my research skills, follow my passion to research health inequalities, and paved my way towards an independent research career.”

Story posted on December 6, 2023, by Erin Bluvase (bluvase@sc.edu). Available on the [ASPH website](#).

Featured Event

15th Annual James E. Clyburn Health Equity Lecture



The James E. Clyburn Health Equity Lecture Series was created to honor Congressman James E. Clyburn for his support and partnership in advancing health equity in South Carolina and across the nation. This prestigious lecture series is hosted by the Arnold School's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Department of Health Services Policy and Management along with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control's Office of Health Equity and the USC Office of Civil Rights History and Research.

This year's lecture was held on April 5, 2024, at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center. Keynote speaker, **Dr. Jamila Michener**, Inaugural Director, Center for Racial Justice and Equitable Futures Senior Associate Dean of Public Engagement, Brooks School of Public Policy Cornell University, delivered a lecture entitled "Building Power for Health: Advocacy Organizing, and Equity."



The James E. Clyburn Health Equity Leadership Award recognizes the contributions made by individuals and community organizations that have demonstrated a commitment to improving and protecting the health of the community. Awards are presented to health care policy makers, health disparities researchers, health care professionals, and community leaders committed to eliminating health disparities and achieving health equity. Awards are presented at the Annual James E. Clyburn Health Disparities Lecture, which is sponsored by the University of South Carolina's Institute for Partnership to Eliminate Health Disparities and its community partners.

2024 Clyburn Lecture Leadership Award Winners

- Shauna Hicks, Health Policy Leader in Public Health
- Sharon Beth Weissman, MD, Health Care Leader in Public Health
- Henry Well, Community Leader in Public Health
- Tisha M. Felder, Ph.D., MSW, Leadership in Public Health and Health Disparities Research
- Jewel Scott, Emerging Leader in Public Health and Health Disparities Research



For more photos of the event, [click here](#) or scan the QR code.



HSPM at National Conferences

AUPHA

Our faculty enjoyed networking, collaborating, and learning at the Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA) Annual Meeting in June 2024 in beautiful Tampa, Florida. This professional development opportunity engaged our faculty in reimagining, reinventing, and transforming health administration education for our students in these exciting and dynamic times. HSPM supported the meeting financially as a Gold Level sponsor and contributed to the meeting substantively by participating in a Collaboration and Conversation session (**Ed Bell**) and a poster presentation (**Melinda Merrell & Ed Bell**). Thanks to Dr. Dan Gentry, Jaime Stephens, Jason Walker, and the entire AUPHA team for putting together a great meeting! We look forward to seeing folks at the next meeting in Columbus, OH, June 17-19, 2025!

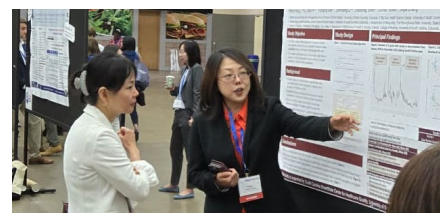


AcademyHealth

Our faculty and students had a fantastic time presenting their research at the AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting (ARM) in June 2024, held in Baltimore, MD. HSPM was also well-represented at the exhibit booth, engaging with prospective students and showcasing our graduate programs. Five HSPM faculty – Drs. **Christina Andrews**, **John Brooks**, **Peiyin Hung**, **Nabil Natafqi**, and **Brad Wright** – presented their research in 3 podium & 10 poster presentations, while Dr. Hung's poster "Identifying Racism Using AI with Social Media Data" was nominated for the 2024 Best Poster Award. Also, our 1st year PhD student, Dr. **Maushmi Patel**, presented the AcademyHealth Salary & Compensation Survey Project, a collaboration between HSPM and AcademyHealth to examine trends in compensation in health services research and policy. We are proud of the contributions our team made to this meeting – and our departmentally branded tumblers were a huge hit! We are already looking forward to next year's ARM, June 7-10, 2025, in Minneapolis!



Left: **Maushmi Patel** with her presentation. Top right: Ms. **Dantz Woodberry** at the HSPM booth. Bottom right: Dr. **Peiyin Hung** with her poster.



MHA Program Showcase

Shaping the Healthcare Leaders of Tomorrow

Dear Friends of HSPM,

It has been another exciting and productive year in the Master of Health Administration (MHA) program! Our focus over the past twelve months has been on consistency and collaboration. With the support of the HSPM Communications Committee, we refreshed our outward facing materials to ensure consistency of messaging. This included the creation of an updated [MHA landing page](#) on the Arnold School of Public Health website – I hope you will check it out! It also included work to rebrand our program's professional format to its new moniker, the USC MHA Program, Executive Track. We also worked to confirm this track as an official part of our CAHME accreditation. As we worked to put our “house in order,” we began new efforts at outreach for student recruitment, which will continue into the new academic year.



The other area of focus I mentioned for this year was collaboration. This began internally with our faculty meeting more often to share ideas and tips and to ensure that high-quality instruction is being provided across the program's core courses. With the guidance of our faculty and MHA Advisory Board, we also expanded our professional development offerings to include a focus in the spring semester on policy and advocacy. The SC Hospital Association (SCHA) and the SC chapter of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) co-hosted an advocacy workshop in February where several students and faculty were able to learn from program alumna **Rozalynn Goodwin**, FACHE, Vice President of Advocacy for SCHA. Four students participated in a visit to the SC Statehouse in April alongside Bryan Kost, Vice President of Government Relations for Absolute Total Care, where they were able to observe discussions of the state's health care budget.

Collaboration is also key in maintaining the wide variety of partnerships that our program depends on to provide practice-based opportunities for our students. We say it frequently because it is critically important: we absolutely could not provide an excellent educational experience without the organizations and preceptors who sponsor our students through graduate assistantships during the program. The preceptors' dedication to mentorship is impressive and we are so fortunate to have many return year after year. This speaks to the high caliber of our students and the outcomes they can achieve over such a short time period.

For academic year 2024-2025, we are welcoming 15 new students into our program across both tracks. We are also starting the new year with an Interim MHA Program Director, Dr. **Nabil Natafqi**, as I have transitioned to a professional role outside of higher education as of August 2024. It is a bittersweet moment for me personally as I reflect on the time I have spent in this role and all that our students have accomplished over that period with your support. I know that our current and future healthcare system is in excellent hands not only with these capable leaders but also with those who will continue to matriculate through this program for years to come.

Forever to Thee,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melinda Merrell".

Melinda Merrell, PhD
MHA Program Director



MHA Graduates

We love getting to celebrate our students' accomplishments! This past May, 14 students graduated combined from both tracks of the MHA program. Five of our traditional track students began post-graduate Administrative Fellowships this summer, all within South Carolina. All of our graduates were employed full-time by mid-July in a variety of different roles.

This past April, we also recognized five outstanding students for their achievements during the program: **Peyton Moore** (Susie B. Yates Award), and **Mike Mulligan, Taylor Newton-Spritz, Madison Paternostro, and Rebecca Wieseahn** (AUPHA Foster G. McGaw Scholarships).

Traditional Track

Haley Feldmeier
Katherine Fricks
Jamie Isaacs
Ariana Mitcham
Peyton Moore
Mike Mulligan
Taylor Newton-Spritz
Madison Paternostro
Tyler Smith
Pierlus Stewart



Executive Track

Melanie Blackburn
Steven Brewer
Kevin Herod
Rebecca Wieseahn



MHA Students Shine Across the Nation

CLARION Case Competition

In March, an interdisciplinary team of students, including **Madison Paternostro** from our program, collaborated to host the first-ever local CLARION case competition on the USC campus. While no MHA students were represented in the winning team from USC, that team ended up placing first in the national competition in Minneapolis in April. With their strong showing, the foundation has been laid for future teams from USC to compete successfully on the national stage.

2024 ACHE Congress

In March, a group of 7 first-year students were able to attend the annual ACHE Congress in Chicago. They enjoyed networking with alumni, faculty, and other supporters while in attendance. HSPM remains committed to sending all of our first year MHA students to ACHE Congress, where they are able to begin imagining their future careers as healthcare managers and executives.

In addition, alumna, **Ashley Vertuno**, received the highly prestigious Robert S. Hudgens Memorial Award for Young Healthcare Executive from ACHE during Congress. This award recognizes early careerists for outstanding achievements in the field of healthcare management.



Above: MHA students with alumna **Ashley Vertuno**, recipient of the Robert S. Hudgens Memorial Award for Young Healthcare Executive.

Left: MHA students at the 2024 ACHE Congress in Chicago.

UAB and OSU Case Competitions

Our students also continued to perform well at case competitions. Our team once again placed as semi-finalists this past February at the highly prestigious UAB case competition in Birmingham, AL. Shout out to new faculty member Dr. J. Alton Croker for coaching this team. We also had our first group ever to participate in the first-year-students-only competition at Ohio State University in Columbus, OH.



Top left and right: *Katie Fricks, Peyton Moore, Ariana Mitcham, and Ruta Patel* with Dr. J. Alton Croker at the UAB case competition.

Bottom left and right: *Will Owings, Ruta Patel, and Britton Utsey* at the OSU case competition.



Student Spotlight

Master of Health Administration graduate to continue career with fellowship at McLeod Health



Growing up in Hamilton, New Jersey, **Madison Paternostro** was well aware of her good fortune. A supportive family, good health and food on the table sparked her passion to give back – making her motto: “To whom much is given, much will be required” (Luke 12:48).

During her bachelor’s program at High Point University, she realized that working in the health care field was the best way to do that. Serving nutritious meals to homeless families at a local shelter opened Paternostro’s eyes to the social determinants of health and the safety nets within the health care and social work systems that work to address them.

Her degree in business administration – coupled with a minor in health care management – triggered an interest in understanding the roles of health care systems as drivers of community health. She knew a Master of Health Administration program was the best path to explore these dynamics, and USC’s stood out as one of the best.

“The USC MHA program directly aligned with my values in terms of professional development and experiential learning,” Paternostro says. “I liked that the program was cohort style, making it easy to build comradery with my classmates, who will soon become my professional peers.”

As a student in the Department of Health Services Policy and Management, Paternostro developed an interest in clinical operations within health systems – particularly at outpatient facilities where patients receive most of their care. With the opportunity for clinicians to make a significant impact during their interactions with patients at these visits, she believes this setting is a key part of the patient’s care journey and is confident that she can play an important role in the management of daily operations while also leading larger projects to improve patient experiences.



In addition to serving as president for the USC Healthcare Leadership Association and volunteering at Ronald McDonald House in Prisma Health Children's Hospital, Paternostro also gained practical experience as a graduate assistant with McLeod Health. Working with the associate vice presidents within the physician network, she learned the ins and outs of clinical operations in outpatient settings. The experience set her apart when looking for post-graduation fellowships and helped her land an Administrative Residency with McLeod.

"Administrative fellowships allow for the opportunity to rotate and complete projects within various departments of a health care system and build networks," says Paternostro, who will begin the 18-month fellowship after graduating in May. "After my residency, I would like to step into an administrator role where I manage multiple practices within the same or similar specialties. I think my degree will help me progress into higher management positions, and in the future, I see myself as a senior administrator of a physician network or health system.

The USC MHA program directly aligned with my values in terms of professional development and experiential learning. I liked that the program was cohort style, making it easy to build comradery with my classmates, who will soon become my professional peers.

Madison Paternostro



She loves that many of the MHA program's course instructors are health care professionals working in the field of the classes they teach – bringing real experiences and applications to the curriculum. The AUPHA Foster G. McGaw Scholarship Award winner found a mentor in clinical assistant professor **Melinda Merrell**, who helped her navigate the program and push herself to pursue new opportunities. She says she'll miss the USC campus and living right by the capitol building in the Main Street District.

"My favorite time of year to be a Gamecock is the fall because football is every Saturday, and it is a great way to get together with friends and show your school spirit," Paternostro says. "Having never lived in a city, it has been great to be able to walk everywhere. I also enjoy exercising, and with the river close by, there are so many beautiful trails to run on."

Story posted on May 2, 2024, by Erin Bluvase (bluvase@sc.edu). Available on the [ASPH website](#).



MHA Residency Projects

Haley Feldmeier

Prisma Health

“Adoption, Implementation, and Utilization of Device-Assisted Telemedicine within Prisma Health's Direct Primary Care Practice “

Katherine Fricks

Lexington Medical Center GME

“Evaluating Workflows in Lexington Family Medicine to Improve Continuity of Care”

Jamie Isaacs

MUSC Health Midlands (ED)

“The Impact of Charge Reconciliation to Enhance Financial Performance for the ED”

Ariana Mitcham

USC Patient Engagement Studio

“Strategic Tool Implementation for Continued Organizational Sustainability”

Peyton Moore

McLeod Health

“Minimizing Patient Registration-Related Claim Errors at MPA Cardiology and Orthopedics Using Six Sigma”

Mike Mulligan

MUSC Health Midlands (Quality)

“Improving the Environment of Care for MUSC Health Midlands Division through the Implementation of VergeHealth, an Electronic Auditing Platform”

Taylor Newton-Spritz

Lexington Medical Center Planning

“Evaluation of a Patient Optimization Clinic for Lexington Medical Center”

Madison Paternostro

McLeod Health

“Improving Upfront Copayment Collections Using the Six Sigma Methodology”

Tyler Smith

Lexington Medical Center Peri-Op

“Reducing Urology Sterile Instrument Returns using Lean Methodology”

Pierlus Stewart

Palmetto Care Connections

“Navigating the Future: A Comprehensive Toolkit for Telehealth Reimbursement in the Post-COVID Era”



Exploring Spain's Healthcare System:

MHA Executive Students' 2024 Global Immersion Experience

Each year, our MHA executive track students participate in an international site visit as part of the residency course, Health Systems of the World: A Comparative Analysis. The purpose of this course is to enhance students' proficiency in all five MHA program competency domains through the examination of global health systems. These site visits provide firsthand exposure to the assets and challenges faced by various stakeholders in the chosen country's health system.

In July 2024, five MHA executive students (**Alana Barton, Catherine Millender, Joe Noehring, Jill Powell-Reid, Dustin Roberts**), one PhD student (**Maushmi Patel**), two faculty members (Drs. **Nabil Natafqi** and **Banky Olatosi**), and two MHA Advisory Board members (Mr. **Jay Hamm** and Dr. **Sue Haddock**) traveled to Spain to explore the Spanish healthcare system. The trip included visits to prominent healthcare facilities and organizations across Madrid and Barcelona, offering deep insights into Spain's blend of public and private healthcare models.





Key visits included:

- **Torrejón University Hospital** (Madrid): A public-private partnership demonstrating the efficiency and innovation in healthcare delivery within Spain's publicly funded healthcare system.
- **Unidad Médica** (Madrid): A private, multilingual medical clinic that highlighted Spain's growing private healthcare sector, emphasizing personalized care for a diverse patient population.
- **Boston Scientific Ibérica**: A focus on medtech innovation, showcasing how multinational companies support healthcare professionals through technological advancements and collaboration.
- **HM Montepíncipe Hospital** (Madrid): A premier private hospital, part of the HM Hospitales group, demonstrating how Spain integrates private healthcare into its national system.
- **Instituto de Salud Carlos III**: A central hub for health research and public health initiatives in Spain, with discussions on precision medicine and the accreditation of healthcare organizations.
- **Vall d'Hebron University Hospital** (Barcelona): A leader in value-based healthcare, focusing on quality management and innovation in patient care. Students also explored the Vall d'Hebron Institute of Oncology (VHIO), renowned for its cutting-edge clinical trials and research.
- **Parc Sanitari Pere Virgili** (Barcelona): An institution specializing in geriatric and rehabilitation care, providing a comprehensive look at integrated healthcare for aging populations.
- **Sistema d'Emergències Mèdiques** (SEM): An in-depth look at Catalonia's emergency medical services system, highlighting its efficiency and coordination across the region.

We look forward to future international site visits that will continue to broaden our students' global perspective on healthcare systems.

If you are interested in participating as an alumnus or advisor on a future trip, please reach out to Dr. **Nabil Natafji** at nnatafji@mailbox.sc.edu for more information

MPH Program Showcase

Advancing Public Health Initiatives

HSPM alumni and friends,

Thank you for your continued support of our students. We have students currently enrolled in our traditional and distance programs, as well as the combination degree programs with the MPA/MPH and MSW/MPH. Many incoming students heard about the program from alumni and friends of the program, so thank you! We appreciate you sharing how our program prepares graduates to manage public health programs and direct population-based health improvement, through training in operations management, budgeting and public health finance, health economics, public health law, and health policy development.



This was my second year directing the MPH program and it has been a true delight and career highlight for me to interact with these wonderful students. The applied practice experiences were undertaken by our spring 2024 graduates, with much gratitude to alumni and friends who helped host our students in Columbia and throughout the Southeast. Students covered a breadth of topics in their applied practice experiences with graduates applying their classroom knowledge to the fields of rural health, access to care, cancer prevention, and nursing, to name a few.

Without the help of – and continued collaborations with – our partner organizations, these experiences would not have been possible for our students. We sincerely appreciate the efforts many of you reading this put into guiding and mentoring our students out in the field. Thank you!

Accreditation is under way in the Arnold School of Public Health! The MPH program, both at our departmental level and college level, is preparing for reaccreditation from the Council on Education and Public Health (CEPH), with the next reaccreditation site visit occurring from October 7-9th, 2024. This process has been ongoing since 2022, with a self-study visit occurring in September 2024. To prepare for this, bimonthly reaccreditation steering committee meetings have been occurring since Fall 2022, led by Dr. Myriam Torres, Dr. Lee Pearson, and Kollette Clark. We can assure you there is strong leadership guiding the MPH program at the college level!

We had seven graduates from our program for the spring 2024, and one graduate from Fall 2023. We are proud to announce that all graduates had employment upon graduation and all graduates that were in the traditional program who wanted a graduate assistantship received one.

For Fall 2024, there were 46 applicants, with 36 accepted applicants. We are delighted to welcome 14 new students to the MPH program this fall, with one student in the MPH/MPA dual degree, one in the MSW/MPH dual degree, and the other 12 incoming students in either the traditional or distance MPH programs. They join our 16 current students. Recruitment for amazing students such as these will continue in this upcoming year!

We appreciate your continued support and would appreciate you sharing our program information with colleagues and friends who are interested in earning their MPH!

All the best.



Elizabeth Crouch, PhD
MPH Program Director



MPH Graduates

Mia Bell
Suzanne Blais
Taryn Farrell
Olivia Hinds

Shemaiah McKenzie
DJ Milliken
Dan Nelson
Anna Nourse



MPH Practicum Sites

Mia Bell

South Carolina Department of Children's Advocacy

"Gap Analysis of MOAs and Workforce at the S.C. Department of Children's Advocacy"

Suzanne Blais

Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina

"Employee Compliance"

Taryn Farrell

SC Institute of Medicine and Public Health

"Health Outcomes Associated with Medicaid Expansion"

Olivia Hinds

Institute for Families in Society

"SBIRT"

Shemaiah McKenzie

Department of Veteran Affairs

"Department of Veteran Affairs Outreach Program"

DJ Milliken

National Institutes of Health

"Division of Other Transaction Management"

Dan Nelson

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

"HPV Vaccination Education Campaign for College Students"

Anna Nourse

University of South Carolina Patient Engagement Studio

Practice Experience



Student Spotlight

Master of public health student screens film of nonprofit she founded at APHA annual meeting



Tanya Ambrose is already a public health professional. The outreach specialist for Prisma Health Midlands Healthy Start founded Scrub Life Cares in 2020 – leading the nonprofit through the pandemic. An international organization that provides menstrual products to support health hygiene, Scrub Life Cares was borne out of Ambrose’s study abroad experience while she was public health student at Georgia State University.

“While I was in Uganda, I saw that people really needed basic items to carry out their day-to-day living activities,” she says. “I told myself I would create an organization aimed at giving back to communities that lacked resources for children to go to school and be actively engaged.”

After returning to Atlanta, Ambrose looked into her own community and that of Antigua and Barbuda, where she lived until the age of 19, to assess the often-invisible gaps in basic necessities that she had discovered abroad. She learned that due to the cost of sanitary napkins, many people in her own communities struggled to afford the essentials.

In the past two years, the Scrub Life Cares team has distributed more than 5,000 menstrual products to over one hundred women. They also provide hygiene kits and back packs and launched a community-based program to educate menstruators and remove stigma related to periods and hygiene. At their annual expos, they provide interactive health education for children and adults as well as hygiene and self-care items.

This work culminated in a film, [A Look into Period Poverty](#) that was screened at the American Public Health Association’s annual meeting this past fall.

“In a world where basic needs include food, water, shelter and clothing, the film challenges us to expand that list to include menstrual hygiene products and dismantle stigmas by shedding light on the hidden struggles of menstruators,” Ambrose says. “It is a call for a more inclusive society, and our goal is to break the silence, raise awareness and make menstrual health a fundamental right.”



In the midst of this journey, Ambrose completed her bachelor's degree, gained experience as a community behavioral counselor and helped fight the COVID-19 pandemic as a case investigator and call/response center representative. She also became a birth and postpartum doula.

Inspired by her experiences working with women's reproductive health, Ambrose began looking at graduate programs and discovered the Arnold School's Maternal and Child Health Certificate of Graduate Study. She has since enrolled in the Master of Public Health in Health Services Policy and Management program as well.

"USC consistently stood out as a top-tier institution with a distinguished reputation in public health," Ambrose says. "I was confident that the Arnold School's commitment to addressing pressing public health issues within a rigorous academic environment would equip me with the knowledge and skills to contribute significantly to improving maternal and child health outcomes."

I decided I would utilize my nonprofit to be a voice to end the stigma surrounding periods and to ensure that individuals had access to the food and hygiene essentials needed to survive.

Tanya Ambrose



In addition to the academic appeal, she was drawn to the university's warmth. Ambrose observed a strong sense of support among faculty and students and meaningful connections with the broader community. Having carefully assessed the needs of surrounding areas, she has decided to extend Scrub Life Cares' services into the Midlands.

After graduating in 2025, Ambrose plans to use her public health degrees to drive positive changes in women's health and reproductive issues. She intends to use lessons learned from her Arnold School programs to implement evidence-based strategies and foster community engagement to overcome challenges in these areas.

"I'm confident that the emphasis on leadership skills and practical knowledge application will empower me to contribute effectively to the evolving landscape of public health," says Ambrose, who hosts the podcast, [Tea With Tanya: Conversations about maternal health, self-development, health and wellness](#).

"Success often demands perseverance, and every challenge is an opportunity for growth and improvement," Ambrose advises students considering a similar path. "The journey may not always be smooth, but every effort invested will eventually lead to success in realizing your aspirations and positively impacting the community you seek to serve. Embrace the process, and always remember your why."

Story posted on January 26, 2024, by Erin Bluvase (bluvase@sc.edu). Available on the [ASPH website](#).



PhD Program Showcase

Fostering Research and Scholarship

Dear Friends:

The mission of HSPM's doctoral program is to promote effective, efficient, and equitable health services by preparing individuals to conduct rigorous health services research. In 2023, our department chair, Dr. **Brad Wright**, continued his vision to build upon and strengthen our doctoral curriculum to provide students with a robust theoretical and methodological foundation. Dr. Wright's vision is to equip our students with these important research skills to conduct rigorous health services research as a means to inform policy and practice, thereby advancing public health for all. Last year, for the first time in our program's history, we offered all incoming students two years of guaranteed financial support covering tuition, fees, and health insurance, as well as a competitive stipend covering living expenses.



Over the 2023-2024 academic year, we further solidified the apprenticeship model for our doctoral program. Even before arriving on campus, students are matched with an advisor. The advisor provides academic, and often also financial support so that students gain first-hand experience in research as soon as they begin their doctoral program. I am pleased that over the last year, the PhD Program initiated concrete steps to further refine our program competencies, made plans to enrich our doctoral curriculum with new courses and academic tracks, and streamlined and updated our admissions process. We received a record number of applicants last year, admitting six highly qualified doctoral students to join us in Fall 2024.

I am confident that our entering cohort will find that our faculty are highly engaged in research, providing doctoral students with numerous opportunities to apply the theory and methods they are learning in the classroom. Our apprenticeship approach to doctoral training also ensures that students begin publishing and presenting research early and often, helping them to build their national reputation and research network. I am pleased that our doctoral students have received recognition for their work, showcasing both the talent of our students and the dedication of their faculty mentors. In particular, **Anirban Chatterjee** and **Sophia Negaro** were both awarded the Presidential Fellowship by the Graduate School.

I am honored to have served my first full year as the PhD Program Director from Fall 2023 to the present. I thank Dr. **Melinda Merrell** and Dr. **Elizabeth Crouch**, respectively, directors of our MHA and MPH programs, for their guidance and mentorship in the first full year of my position as PhD Program Director. I remain committed to building upon our past success and working with Dr. Brad Wright and all our faculty to continually update our program in a rapidly evolving health services research landscape, and to provide a positive and supportive learning environment for all our students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brian Chen".

Brian Chen, JD, PhD
PhD Program Director

Student Spotlight

Doctoral graduate combines economics with health policy to advance health equity



“My journey in public health began with a deep-rooted interest in health equity,” says **Dakshu Jindal**, who graduates in May with a Ph.D. in Health Services Policy and Management (HSPM). “This was driven by my upbringing in India, where I witnessed stark disparities in health care access.”

Jindal studied economics at the University of Delhi (bachelor’s) and Indira Gandhi National Open University (master’s). During her graduate program, she began consulting for India’s National Health Systems Resource Center at the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Her three years at the center exposed Jindal to health policy, including the nuances of financing health in a complex nation like India. She also began to realize how improvements in policy can positively impact health systems and communities. An internship in the Philippines through the World Health Organization (WHO) introduced her to financing and policy in a global setting.

Together, these experiences cemented Jindal’s commitment to completing a doctoral degree in the field.

“USC offered an incredibly unique program in health services policy and management,” she says. “The department had diverse faculty and an inclination toward use of economics to conduct health services research. I strongly felt that I could leverage my academic background in economics and interest in public health to succeed in the program.”

At the Arnold School, Jindal gained research experience as a graduate assistant on projects within her department and at the Center for Community Health Alignment (CCHA). She found mentors in her dissertation co-chairs, **Brian Chen** and **John Brooks**, as well as CCHA executive director Julie Smithwick.

“Dr. Chen always motivated me to perform my best and expect more from my work, and Dr. Brooks always stressed the importance of the implications of my study results, which pushed me to be a better health services researcher,” says the Norman J. Arnold Fellow, who received guidance and support from Nicole Hair and Adam Lutz as well. “I have worked with Ms. Smithwick for five years, conducting research on the implementation and effectiveness of community health workers programs, and she has been a great mentor.”

Outside of the Arnold School, Jindal was selected into USC’s Preparing Future Faculty Program and received a SPARC grant from the Office of the Vice President for Research to support her dissertation research into how state laws influence access to physical therapy among Medicare patients. Her dozen or so publications cover various topics, but the theme of her research is how different laws, policies or programs impact health outcomes.

“I aim to leverage my expertise in health economics to explore research studies that improve health care outcomes and access,” Jindal says of her next steps. “By collaborating with stakeholders across sectors, I want to contribute meaningfully to the field of public health and advance health equity for all.”

Story posted on April 29, 2024, by Erin Bluvase (bluvase@sc.edu). Available on the [ASPH website](https://www.asph.org/).



PhD Graduates & Recognition

Our PhD Graduates

Shiba Simon Bailey
Shanikque L. Barksdale
Dakshu Jindal
Tanzir Shuvo

Advisor: Dr. Peiyin Hung
Advisor: Drs. Nabil Natafqi and Peiyin Hung
Advisor: Drs. Brian Chen and John Brooks
Advisor: Dr. Jan Osterman

Awards

- **Shehirbano Akthar** was awarded the SC HIMSS Chapter Scholarship.
- **Anirban Chatterjee** and **Sophia Negaro** were awarded the Presidential Fellowship given by the Graduate School.
- **Tianchu Lyu** was part of the NIH All of Us Research Scholar Program 2023 – 2024 Cohort. He was also part of the SPARC Graduate Research Grant Program through the Office of Research at the University of South Carolina.
- **Ibitein Okeafor** received the Big Data Abstract Award at the 2024 Big Data Health Science Conference.



Student Spotlight

Aiming for equity: Public health professional completes doctoral degree to address social determinants of health

Shanikue Barksdale combined biology and sociology for her undergraduate degree – looking at health from multiple perspectives. From the science of how the human body works to the social factors that influence individual and population behaviors and health outcomes, she had developed a holistic perspective by the time she graduated from Furman University in 2013.

“This knowledge, combined with my experience of watching individuals worry about their lives and the health of their children, increased my interest in the impact of health education, system change and policy development within our communities,” Barksdale says.

She enrolled in the Master of Public Health (focus on behavioral science and health education) program at Emory University to explore these intersecting factors further. During her program, Barksdale interned at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and volunteered at a refugee clinic – witnessing the impact of culture, language and access to care and resources on the well-being of individuals and families.

“The curriculum of the health services policy and management program was structured in a way that made me feel like it aligned with my interest in understanding policy and knowing how to conduct and convey meaningful research to engage various stakeholders.”

Shanikue Barksdale



“I realized that an individual’s social and cultural identity could create gaps in the access and quality of care received by these individuals,” she says. “I sought work experience that would allow me to participate in grassroots efforts directly aimed at understanding the health behaviors of individuals and those in their social network, as well as the implementation of policy, system and environmental change that would increase their access to healthy food, green space and tools to be better advocates for themselves and those around them.”

That work experience took her back to South Carolina where she joined the Department of Health and Environmental Control near her hometown of Abbeville. As a health educator, Barksdale spent three years on capacity-building and health improvement activities aimed at improving access to health programs.

In 2018, she transitioned to DHEC’s central office in Columbia to take on a new position as a multicultural health specialist. This position exposed Barksdale to the potential for using policy changes to address the systemic barriers that prevent individuals and communities from achieving optimum health. USC’s Ph.D. in Health Services Policy and Management offered the perfect path to learning how to use policy to effect this type of change. She enrolled in the Arnold School’s Maternal and Child Health Certificate of Graduate Study program as well.



“The curriculum of the health services policy and management program was structured in a way that made me feel like it aligned with my interest in understanding policy and knowing how to conduct and convey meaningful research to engage various stakeholders,” she says.



Shanikue Barksdale graduates in May with a Ph.D. in Health Services Policy and Management.

As a doctoral student, Barksdale continued working at DHEC – eventually shifting into a role as a senior consultant on the social determinants of health. She also gained research experience in the Department of Health Services Policy and Management and the Rural and Minority Health Research Center – finding mentors in assistant professors **Nabil Natafqi** and **Peiyin Hung**.

“Dr. Natafqi helped me to gain the skills and knowledge needed to conduct meaningful mixed methods research and helped me to stay motivated and encouraged me in the face of obstacles while also brainstorming ways to fund my educational journey,” Barksdale says. “Dr. Hung was instrumental in helping me to understand the scope of maternal and child health and the intricacies of quantitative research, and she encouraged me to do more ‘out-of-the-box’ thinking when developing my research interest/agenda.”

The Grace Jordan McFadden Professor Program Scholar also led her own projects. This includes her dissertation study – funded by a SPARC grant from the Office of the Vice President for Research – that examined the role of telehealth and obstetrics capacity on maternal health care.

Barksdale graduates in May with six peer-reviewed publications (and counting) to her name. With interests in maternal and child health, telehealth and rural health, she is perfectly positioned in her role at DHEC to continue making an impact in these areas.

“My degree will allow me to integrate my knowledge of behavioral science and health education with knowledge of improving the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of health services within our communities,” she says. “This will help me to improve my ability to address the social determinants of health and health inequities.”

Story posted on May 3, 2024, by Erin Bluvas (bluvase@sc.edu). Available on the [ASPH website](#).

Class Notes

Celebrating Our Alumni's Journeys & Achievements

Eric A. Aft (MHA '90) is the CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina (www.secondharvestnwc.org) in Winston-Salem, NC. The organization supports about 500 food assistance partners to provide more than 32 million meals annually across the 18 counties of northwest North Carolina and has close partnerships with regional health systems to address the confluence between food insecurity and health. Eric's wife of 26 years, Lisa, is a PhD candidate in history at UNC-Greensboro. Their son, Avery, is a band director at a public high school in Raleigh, and their daughter, Claire, recently completed her Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from UNC-Greensboro.

Sunshine K. Cobb (BS '10, MHA '12) is currently a Physician Network Vice President at Lexington Medical Center. Her division currently includes orthopaedics, outpatient physical therapy, and several other surgical specialties. In her current role, she most enjoys being able to have a positive impact on patient care as well as on her team—at all levels from frontline staff to service line leaders/directors.

Dylan Doceti (BA '20, MHA '22) is currently employed by the South Carolina Department of Insurance and enjoys serving the people of the state as an Insurance Regulatory Analyst. He recently purchased a house in Columbia, where he lives with his girlfriend of almost 5 years, and his two dogs, Nova and Odin, and two cats, Milo and Vlad.

Spencer Eason-Riddle (BS '19, MHA '21) is currently living in Raleigh, NC where he is employed as a territory manager in the Interventional Cardiology division at Boston Scientific covering 9 different hospitals across eastern NC. You can rest assured that this former USC football player will be cheering the Gamecocks on this fall!

Haley Feldmeier (MHA '24) has accepted a position with Prisma Health pediatrics and also shared that she recently got engaged.

John Garvey (MHA '23) is currently serving as acting practice administrator over Palmetto Family Medicine and Lexington Family Practice Forest Acres, both in the Columbia, SC metro area. In September 2024 he will serve as interim practice manager at Lexington Family Practice Summit and later will open and serve as office manager of Lexington Family Practice Blythewood.

Dan Gaskell (MHA '03) is currently employed as the Director of Rehab Services, Patient Transport, and Dialysis Operations at Ascension Saint Agnes Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland.

Jay D. Hamm, RN (BS '89, BSN '92, MHA '00) is Vice President of Operations for Lexington Medical Center, a position he has held since 2020. With over 20 years of executive leadership experience in healthcare, Jay has also been an adjunct faculty member in HSPM and served as Chair of the department's MHA Advisory Board since 2015. Earlier this year, he was named a Palmetto Gold Nurse for exemplifying excellence in nursing practice and commitment to the profession. Jay and his wife have raised three children (two Gamecocks and one Clemson Tiger!). In his spare time, he loves reading and walking, Gamecock sports, and boating on Lake Murray.



Bryan M. Jenkins, PhD (BS '10, MHA '15) worked as a Managed Care Coordinator at UNC Health until 2018, then attended Howard University where he received his Ph.D. in Communication, Culture, and Media Studies in 2022. He remained at Howard to work on a CDC funded grant project about public health crisis communication. That position ended last spring, and Dr. Jenkins joined USC in the College of Information and Communications as a Research Assistant Professor this fall.

Dakshu Jindal (PhD '24) earned a Postdoctoral Fellowship at Henry Ford Health System in Detroit.

James M. "Jay" Kirby, II (BS '89, MHA '91) has spent the last 3 decades in hospital leadership throughout the Carolinas and currently serves as President and CEO of UNC Health Pardee in Hendersonville, North Carolina—a position he has held since 2011. His daughter, Madison, is a 2024 graduate of the Gillings School of Public Health at UNC-Chapel Hill, but Jay assures us that he is proud to sport Garnet & Black in the land of the Blue!



Clayton Meisner (BS '17, MHA '21) served as the Director of Operations for the second largest private ENT practice in South Carolina, SC ENT Allergy & Sleep Medicine (SCENT), from 2021 to 2024, before joining Lexington Medical Center's Physician Network as the Practice Manager of the Urology department in July 2024. Clayton and his wife, Eve, live in Lexington, SC and welcomed their first child, Mason, in November 2023. Their family enjoys spending time together, trying new restaurants with friends, and playing with their dog, Stella.

Erin Mitchell, RN (MHA '16, BSN '19) currently works as a clinical research coordinator nurse at Accellacare in Charleston, SC and really enjoys being on the forefront of medication development.

Jamey (Smeltzer) Motter (MHA '89) currently serves as VP of Client Services for the Hospital Industry Data Institute (HIDI), a data company that is part of the Missouri Hospital Association. In this role, she is responsible for managing client accounts, ensuring client satisfaction, and developing new business opportunities. HIDI manages the statewide data and analytics programs for 15 state hospital associations across the country, collecting data from over 2,500 hospitals and other healthcare providers and providing business intelligence and analytics services. After more than 30 years in Raleigh, NC, Jamey and her husband of 32 years, Steve, recently moved to the small town of Bolivia, NC—located just southwest of Wilmington. Their daughter, Elizabeth, is a textile designer with a North Carolina textile company and their son, James, works on the creative team for USA Baseball.

Gayle Resetar (MHA '90) is the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Tidelands Health in the Myrtle Beach region of South Carolina. She joined Tidelands Health in 1990 and has helped the not-for-profit organization evolve and grow into the largest healthcare provider in the region with four hospitals and more than 60 care locations. Gayle is also currently serving a one-year term as Chair of the South Carolina Hospital Association board. In this role, Resetar will help drive the vision for the association, advocate for sound healthcare policies and facilitate collaboration statewide.

Naveed Sadiq, PhD ('15) is currently an Associate Professor at Khyber Medical University in Peshawar, Pakistan where he is working on health reforms and capacity building to improve the health system in Pakistan's tribal areas, the most impoverished and health-deprived regions in the country. He credits his time and training at USC—made possible by the Fulbright program—for enabling him to work for the betterment of the health system and the betterment of humanity. He writes, "I am and I will always be a proud Gamecock."



Sushen Thiyagarajan (MHA '19) recently transitioned from the role of Chief of Staff to the President of Federal Government Solutions at Elevance Health to the role of Chief of Staff at LaaS Health as of August 2024. He recently got engaged and resides in Atlanta, GA, where he enjoys running, cooking (Indian, Italian, Thai, or Mexican with a unique, plant-based twist), and camping in his spare time.

Miyako Wilson (MHA '02) completed a fellowship with the Veterans Health Administration after graduation and went on to continue her career with the VA—a career she thanks USC for catapulting her into. Over more than two decades, she has worked in local VA medical centers, and today serves as a Health System Administrator/Operations Manager at VA Headquarters in Washington, DC.



Ashley Vertuno (MHA '12) has been the CEO of HCA Florida JFK North Hospital in West Palm Beach, FL since November 2020. She has been recognized as one of the youngest CEOs within HCA Healthcare and an influential leader in driving teams to achieve successful outcomes. Earlier this year, she received both the Robert S. Hudgens Memorial Award for Young Healthcare Executive of the Year from the American College of Healthcare Executives and the Foundation Award for Leadership Excellence from the Baldrige Foundation.

Are you a HSPM alumnus/alumna?

We would love for you to connect with us, participate in events, and express your interest in becoming more involved with the department, as well as featuring you in future department communications. Please reach out to Ms. **Sharon Gary** at GARYSV@mailbox.sc.edu.



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Alumnus Spotlight

Norman J. Arnold Alumni Medal: Veronica Scott-Fulton



A 1993 graduate (Master of Public Health in Public Health Administration) of the Department of Health Services Policy and Management, **Veronica Scott-Fulton** is the System Chief Nurse Executive for Bon Secours Mercy Health System in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her MPH was Scott-Fulton's second USC degree – following a bachelor's in sociology and psychology that she completed in 1991.

She earned a second bachelor's degree (this time in nursing) at the Medical University of South Carolina and spent the next seven years as a registered nurse at Emory University Hospital. Scott-Fulton made the move into administration in 2005 as the medical-surgical director at Emory Hillandale. She also began her fourth degree during this time, completing a Doctor of Nursing Practice (Clinical Operations) from the University of Miami. She rounded out her academic credentials with an Executive MBA from the University of Florida in 2022.

“Dr. Scott-Fulton has definitely brought honor to her family and has built a foundation for generational excellence,” says her spouse, Dwight Fulton. “An opportunity and an education at USC changed the life of this African American woman, who started life with nothing but achieved a lot.”

Since completing her doctoral degree, Scott-Fulton has served in several executive roles – overseeing thousands of nurses and eight to 24 hospitals at the highest levels of leadership. In these roles, she has managed day-to-day operations while also implementing process improvements that reduce costs and improve patient outcomes. In addition to memberships in numerous state and professional organizations, her board participation includes High School to Medicine (introducing minority students to medical professions), the American Diabetes Association, ANA- Patient Care Ethics, UM – Operations/Administrative Agenda for Growth, and the Dreams Come True Foundation.

“Dr. Scott-Fulton is a nationally acclaimed and accomplished health care executive with proven success leading teams in the achievement of a vision for transforming and creating value in health care,” Fulton says. “As long as she has a voice in health care and public health, her story and her influence and impact in health care will continue nationally and internally.”

This award is open to all alumni who graduated more than 10 years prior to the current year. Eligible alumni should demonstrate work that has had both a positive impact on the profession and on the health of an identified community or population and has brought recognition to the Arnold School of Public Health. Find out more on the [ASPH website](https://www.asph.sc.edu).



Nexus of Innovation

Interdisciplinary Centers Led by HSPM Faculty

RURAL & MINORITY Health Research Center

The Rural and Minority Health Research Center's (RMHRC) mission is to illuminate and address the health and social inequities experienced by rural and minoritized populations to promote the health of all through policy-relevant research and advocacy. *The RMHRC is co-led by Dr. Elizabeth Crouch (Director) and Dr. Peiyin Hung (Deputy Director).*



Big Data Health Science Center UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

A University of South Carolina Excellence Initiative, the USC Big Data Health Science Center (BDHSC) serves as a campus-wide interdisciplinary enterprise that conducts cutting-edge research and discovery, offers professional development and academic training, and provides service to the community and industry. *The BDHSC is co-led by Dr. Banky Olatosi (Co-Director).*



Patient Engagement Studio UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

The University of South Carolina's Patient Engagement Studio (PES) brings together patients and caregivers, community groups, health system innovators and clinicians, and academic researchers to produce meaningful research and innovation that advances health and research outcomes. The studio's purpose is to revolutionize science so that it serves the patient. It is a resource for all through research, continuous quality improvement and innovation that impacts patients and other stakeholders. *The PES is co-led by Dr. Nabil Natafji (Associate Director).*

CERortho

CERortho (The SC Center for Effectiveness Research in Orthopaedics SmartState Center) includes academic faculty, clinicians, industrial researchers, graduate students, medical residents, and orthopaedic fellows engaged in advancing orthopaedic health and wellness through research, education, outreach, and clinical translation. Areas of expertise in the Center include basic orthopaedic science and engineering, exercise science and physical therapy, epidemiology and patient population studies, surgery, rehabilitation, and creation of new biologic products for clinical use. *CERortho is led by Dr. John Brooks (Director).*





Health Services Policy and Management

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