

# Epicenter

Department of Epidemiology Newsletter

Volume 2 Issue 5, September 2016



# The Department of Epidemiology Welcomes a New Chair



Dear Students, Faculty, and Staff;

It is with great enthusiasm that I welcome the newest incoming cohort of students in the Department of Epidemiology of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. This year we have 13 PhDs in Population Health Sciences, 26 80-credit Masters in Epidemiology and 26 42.5-credit Masters in Epidemiology students joining our department. I started my service as chair on July 1, 2016, and take great pride in the trust put in me to lead the most important epidemiology department in the world, and promise I will do all that I can for the department and for epidemiology.

In the past few months I have had the pleasure of speaking with many of our current students, faculty and staff. I am looking forward to meeting with our incoming cohort of Doctoral and Masters Students in the coming months. Our department is filled with creativity, ambition and the urge to be innovative, similar to that which I experienced when I first joined the department in 1980. I hope to continue the legacy of Dean Michelle Williams who has been the very successful chair of the Department over the past five years.

I would like to wish you all the best as you begin the fall semester here at the Harvard Chan School. My door and email-inbox are open and I invite you to contact me with questions or concerns regarding the department.

Warm regards,  
Bert Hofman



# New Faces in Epi



**Suzy Roberts**  
Program Coordinator

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Suzy Roberts started at Harvard University in August of 2015 as a temporary Project Coordinator in the Office for Academic and Clinical Affairs at HMS. She oversaw the HMS Foundation Funds, a faculty development and awards program in which HMS/HSDM faculty and postdocs apply for funding opportunities from private foundations that require candidates to be nominated by either Harvard Medical School or Harvard University. In January 2016, she then took on another Project Coordinator role in the Center for Health Communication at HSPH providing administrative support to the Center's Associate Director.

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**Jiyoung Wong**  
Sr. Administrative Coordinator

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Jiyoung started at the Department of Epidemiology in March 2016. Prior to coming to HSPH, she was the Events & Administrative Assistant at the Picower Institute at MIT, where she assisted the Administrative Officer, HR Administrator, and the Communications Coordinator. Jiyoung has also worked as a Banquet Manager at Aramark Higher Education and as the Public Relations Manager at Grapevine Inc. She is particularly interested in email marketing, content creation, event planning, and human resources work.

Jiyoung grew up in both Seoul, South Korea and Ithaca, NY, and then moved to Boston to attend Boston University, where she earned her Bachelor's degree in Communication with a specialization in Public Relations.



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**Sam Peisch**  
Research Coordinator Mucci Group

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Sam Peisch is a Research Coordinator with Dr. Lorelei Mucci. He previously worked for two years as a Research Assistant with Dr. Meir Stampfer at Channing Division of Network Medicine. In this new position, Sam will be working with the Prostate Cancer Epidemiology team and for the Cancer Epidemiology program. He comes into the position with varied interests and experience in global and public health having studied the impact of non-governmental organizations to improve health outcomes while in college at Middlebury. At HSPH, Sam's research interests are in the fields of racial disparities and lifestyle factors and how they impact lethal prostate cancer risk. During the work week, he can be found in the former desk of the renowned David Havelick, but on weekends he can usually be spotted writing or reading or listening to R&B at various coffee shops in Central, Harvard, or Davis Square.

## 2016 Summer Program in Epidemiology and Biostatistics



The Department of Epidemiology welcomed 8 undergraduate students for the 2016 Summer Program in Epidemiology and Biostatistics. The years cohort was selected from a 300 person applicant pool of extremely motivated students from around the United States. During their time at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health our summer interns were in pair conducting a research project with a Faculty/Postdoc mentor here at the School. Interns were also involved in GRE prep classes offered by Kaplan, daily Faculty Lectures from Chan Faculty, an Introduction to Epidemiology, Introduction to Biostatistics, and Introduction to Social and Behavioral Sciences course taught by current Doctoral Candidates. With-in these four busy weeks, our students were given a real feel of graduate life at the Harvard Chan School.

On numerous occasions The Summer Program Interns were able to meet with current Masters and Doctoral students and were encouraged to use their time at Harvard to the fullest extent. During a small networking luncheon that Interns were even able to sit with our new Chair, [Dr. Albert Hofman](#) and discuss thier future plans and research interests.

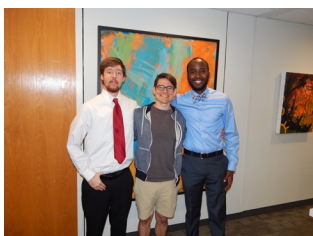
The Research Projector mentors/mentees for the 2016 Summer Program in Epidemiology and Biostatistics are listed below.

**[Dr. Meir Stampfer](#)/[Dr. Kathryn Penney](#)/ [Dr. Maxine Chen](#)- [Jessike Douglas](#) & [Jesse Valasek](#)**  
Association of Metabolic Syndrome with Prostate Cancer Mortality

**[Dr. Josh Gagne](#)/[Dr. Richard Wyss](#)- [Patricia Aubel](#) & [Andy Kim](#)**  
Seeking Smarter Gun Policy

**[Dr. Taj Azarian](#)- [Cristian Ovadiuc](#) & [Jeun Jun](#)**  
Streptococcus pneumoniae protein antigen diversity and implications for vaccine development looking beyond serotype specific capsular polysaccharide vaccines

**[Dr. Brian Arnold](#)- [Mohamed Mohamed](#) & [Callum Arras](#)**  
Infectious Disease Genetics



## Summer Program in Epidemiology

### Alumni Spotlight



My name is Fatimata Sanogo, and I grew up in Burkina Faso, a country in West Africa. I am the first generation of my family to attend college in the United States. In fact, I moved to California driven by my passion for science and the goal to get a high quality education. I have recently graduated from the University of California San Diego (UCSD), where I earned a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry. I am also a 2015 alumnus of the Summer Program in Epidemiology at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. During my 4-week long and intensive summer internship, my teammate Colin Gladue and I conducted a systematic review with our mentors Dr. Helen Jenkins and Dr. Courtney Yuen to assess the proportion of pregnant women who die from active tuberculosis, third leading cause of death in the world among women age 15-44. This research project was an experience that taught us both essential methods and tools that are used to collect and analyze multiple studies as a means to answer a scientific question. Also, we developed valuable teamwork skills and presented our findings to our peers and faculty members during the last day of the internship.

In addition to my summer project, I attended two introductory courses in Biostatistics and Epidemiology. In the Biostatistics course, our teacher Ryan introduced us to R, which we used to perform data analyses of the Framingham study. I realized that Biostatistics is an essential tool for an epidemiologist and this inspired me to take both a Biostatistics and programming course at UCSD after the internship to further enhance my understanding of the topic. Along with the Biostatistics tools, I learned about different epidemiological study designs, and data analysis approaches in the epidemiology course taught by Nadia.

Our internship program also included a Graduate Record Examination (GRE) preparatory class and our evenings were marked by collective dinner during seminars led by the most inspiring and successful epidemiologists across all divisions in the department. In fact, during an evening seminar, I was introduced to the area of molecular/genetic epidemiology by Dr. David Christiani who presented his work in relation to the impact of exposures to various pollutants on health and the interactions between host factors (genetic and acquired susceptibility) in producing chronic diseases. Prior to his presentation, my career vision was to do research in epidemiology that will use both my education in biochemistry and strong quantitative skills even though I was unaware that such a field already existed. Dr. Christiani's presentation was therefore one of the highlights of my evening seminars because it allowed me to recognize that molecular/genetic epidemiology is the perfect fit for me.

My educational goal is to earn a PhD in molecular/genetic epidemiology and contribute to providing better preventive health care to our communities. Growing up in Burkina Faso, I have witnessed the impact of disease on an impoverished community, and have had malaria myself multiple times. Today I see the increased incidence of chronic illnesses within our global population. Genetic/molecular Epidemiology attempts to understand the origins and determinants of health and disease across population using not only strong quantitative skills, but also focusing on the phenotypic effects of gene/environment interaction and its role in chronic disease etiology and complication. Researchers are only beginning to understand the genetic interaction with stress and environment and I want to be part of this "scientific exploration." In fact, The National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (NANA) reports that diet and inactivity are known to be cross-cutting risk factors, contributing to four of six leading causes of death (heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, and hypertension). Therefore, my future work as a molecular/genetic epidemiologist has the potential to generate empirical evidence to influence policies and regulations on environmental factors that affect health outcome, like food regulations for instance.

When I realized that molecular/genetic epidemiology is the field I wanted to do my graduate studies in, I reached out to the faculty mentors at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health who are currently doing research in the domain. I was truly humbled by this experience because they were very much available and helpful. Meeting Dr. Peter Kraft in particular was very meaningful because he not only connected me with graduate students in the department, but also inspired me to seek an international research opportunity in public health to further enrich my experience and prepare me for graduate school. Today, I am excited to announce that I am currently participating in an international summer internship at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana through the Minority Health and Health Disparities International Research Training (MHIRT) Program, which is part of the NIH's National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD). My work is divided between research in the lab and teaching a junior high school class. I am equally excited to announce my admission to the PhD program in Epidemiology at the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California (USC) for the Fall of 2016.



# Postdoc and Research Assistant Updates

[Aisha S. Dickerson](#) has joined [Dr. Marc Weisskopf's](#) Environmental Neuroepidemiology Group. During her doctoral studies, Aisha focused on the environmental risk factors for Autism Spectrum Disorder, with a particular focus on heavy metals. She is transitioning from a postdoctoral fellowship at the Environmental Protection Agency in environmental risk assessment. At Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Aisha will be using epidemiological study design to investigate the relationship between environmental and occupational exposures and the development and progression of neurodegenerative disorders such as Parkinson's Disease, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), and Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

[Barnabas Natamba](#), a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Epidemiology, was recently published in BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth for his manuscript entitled, "Concordance between self-reported pre-pregnancy body mass index (BMI) and BMI measured at the first prenatal study contact"

[Barbara Dickerman](#) was first author on a paper titled "Alcohol intake, drinking patterns, and prostate cancer risk and mortality: A 30 year prospective cohort study of Finnish twins" in Cancer Causes Control

Three postdoctoral fellows and a doctoral student from our biostats group presented at the International Biostatistics Conference in Victoria, Canada. [Ashley Buchanan](#) presented on 'Individual and Disseminated Package Effects in a HIV Prevention Network-Randomized Trial.' [Claudia Rivera](#) gave a talk titled 'On the analysis of two phase designs in cluster-correlated data settings.' [Daniel Nevo](#) presented on 'Inference for mediation proportion in generalized linear models.' And doctoral student, Ben Wong, presented on 'Correcting for Misclassification in the Partial Population Attributable Risk.'

Riley Gage joined the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in July as a research assistant with [Lorelei Mucci](#). Before coming to Harvard, Riley worked as a researcher and educator in San Pedro, Belize. While there, she studied population dynamics and the effects of ocean acidification on the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System. Riley was raised in Maine and graduated from Smith College. In her free time, Riley likes to run, bike, go to trivia nights, and anxiously await the beginning of football season. She currently resides in Boston.

The Cancer Epi group welcomed recent SD graduate [Maxine Chen](#) as postdoc. Chen will be working with [Dr. Kathryn Penney](#) and [Dr. Meir Stampfer](#) at Channing Division of Network Medicine.

[Ericka Ebot](#), a Research Associate in the Cancer Epi group, is a proud new mom of Josephine Ebot. Welcome to the Epi group little Josephine!



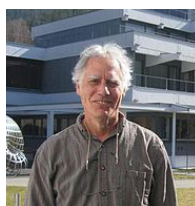
# Department Recognition

## Newly Awarded Grants

Dana-Farber Harvard Cancer Center (DFHCC) Nodal Award ([Dr. Shuji Ogino](#) & [Dr. Tyler VanderWeele](#)) “Trans-disciplinary Approach to Colorectal Cancer Immunity, Molecular Pathology, and Clinical Outcome”. This Nodal Award mechanism aims to enhance interdisciplinary research by diverse disciplines. 98K direct for 2 years from 6/1/16.

## Bernard Greenberg Award for Methods Development and Application

[Dr. Jamie Robins](#) was the 2016 recipient of the Bernard Greenberg Award. This award recognizes an epidemiologist who is renowned as a methodologist and who has made an outstanding contribution to the peer reviewed epidemiology literature. This award is especially appropriate for individuals whose accomplishments reflect significant methodological advancement in the field.



## Spiegelman Presented in Durban, South Africa



[Dr. Donna Spiegelman](#) traveled to Durban, South Africa to present on ‘Assessing Individual and Disseminated Effects in a Network Intervention for HIV Prevention’ at the International AIDS Society Conference. Doctoral student, Emma Thomas, also presented at the conference on ‘Estimating HIV prevalence from data on false positives in screening programs: implications for 90-90-90.’

## American Association for Cancer Research Science Award



[JoAnn E. Manson](#), MD, DrPH, Professor in the Department of Epidemiology at Harvard Chan, Professor of Medicine and the Michael and Lee Bell Professor of Women’s Health at Harvard Medical School and Chief of the Division of Preventive Medicine at Brigham

and Women’s Hospital, was one of the recipients of the American Association for Cancer Research’s (AACR’s) Team Science Award at the AACR Annual Meeting in New Orleans in April 2016. Dr. Manson is one of the lead investigators of the Women’s Health Initiative (WHI) and a member of the WHI research team that received the award for innovative research that has helped to advance our understanding of ways to prevent breast cancer, other cancers, and other chronic diseases in women.

## Dr. Deborah Blacker named Deputy Chair for Epidemiology Department

[Dr. Deborah Blacker](#) was named Deputy Chair of the Department of Epidemiology at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Dr. Blacker is a internationally renowned geriatric psychiatrist and epidemiologist. She is primarily based at MassGeneral Hospital where she directs the Gerontology Research Unit and serves as



Associate Chief for Research in the Department of Psychiatry. As Deputy Chair, Dr. Blacker will work closely with education-related topics. She chairs the new Epidemiology Education Committee in the Department.

## Upcoming Department Seminars and Special Events

September 7, 2016

**David Jones, MD, PhD**

A. Bernard Ackerman Professor of the Culture of Medicine  
Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the Faculty of Medicine  
Harvard University

12:30pm  
Kresge 502

September 14, 2016

**Evan Busch, PhD**

Postdoctoral Research Fellow Channing Division of Network  
Medicine, Department of Medicine,  
Brigham and Women’s Hospital; Department of Epidemiology,  
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

12:30pm  
Kresge 502

**Wonil Chung, PhD**

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Department of Epidemiology  
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health



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