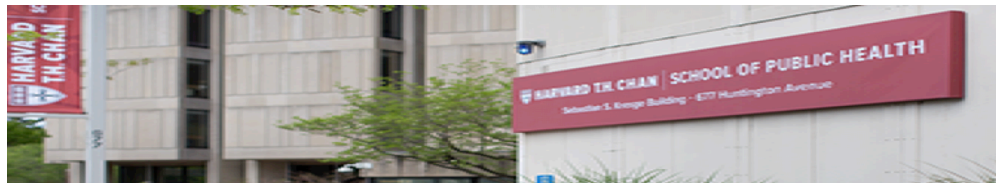


HARVARD T.H. CHAN

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Postdoctoral Association



THE CRIMSON CHRONICLE

Fall 2015

WELCOME

Welcome to the Fall 2015 edition of *The Crimson Chronicle*, the Harvard Chan postdoctoral fellow and research associates (PDA) Newsletter that is intended to keep you posted about all the latest news of the PDA community. This issue includes information about the PDA nanocourses, social events and...

much more! Hopefully the past few months have been a highly inspirational, productive and enjoyable period for all Harvard Chan folks! A special welcome to the new postdoctoral fellows and research associates that have recently joined our community. Greetings and the warmest wishes for the New Year from the 2015-2016 PDA Council!

Remarks from the PDA President

Dear friends,

I am excited to write to you about the newest highlights of the PDA association - the work brought to you by the PDA council members, who tirelessly devote their time and energy for the well-being of all of us.

Since its first inception in 2013, the PDA's nanocourse initiative has executed 16 courses, which have provided opportunities for many of us to propose, design, and execute a course. With guidance from faculty members and curriculum fellows, this program has filled our need for teaching experience, while serving as a resource to over 700 total participants: students, researchers, and professionals – within and beyond Harvard. The Harvard Chan PDA is committed to continue providing this opportunity to instructors and students, while improving every aspect of the program.

Our advocacy goal this year focuses on diversity and inclusion, more specifically in the area of enrollment, salary equity, and quality of life of postdocs at the School. Many suspected the current nationwide minimum salary policy, when applied in Boston with high cost of living, systematically discriminates against people from lower socio-economic background, leading to a loss of diversity – especially from historically disadvantaged groups. Others suspect a systematic salary gap between male and female postdocs, and between domestic and international postdocs. The PDA is in close coordination with the administration, and would like to particularly extend our gratitude to Dean Hunter, Dean Grusby, the Postdoc Advisory Committee, and the Office of Faculty Affairs: Mahy, Jennifer, and Christina, whom with the PDA, continuously and tirelessly support in the investigation of this concern, and move forward with proposed remediation if necessary.

IN THIS ISSUE

Words with... Professor Karestan Koenen

who was recently awarded with the 2015 PDA Outstanding Mentor Award!

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In addition to these two topics, the PDA works on a wide array of activities which you will find throughout this edition of *The Crimson Chronicle*. I invite you to join our next social events and PDA council meetings to share, discuss, and contribute to the PDA's work.

Happy holidays. Together, we shall welcome 2016 with renewed and inspired energy.

Best Regards,
Christian Suharlim, MD, MPH

Words with... Professor Karestan Koenen

by **Dania Valvi**, PDA International Chair

In this issue of The Crimson Chronicle we are delighted to feature Karestan Koenen, Ph.D., Professor of Psychiatric Epidemiology in the Department of Epidemiology and awarded twice with the PDA Outstanding Mentor Award (2010 & 2015)!

Prof. Karestan Chase Koenen grew up mostly in New Jersey. After completing her undergraduate degree in Economics at Wellesley College in 1990, she did her master in Developmental Psychology at Columbia University followed by the completion of her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at Boston University in 1999. She joined Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in 2004 as an Assistant Professor of Psychiatric Epidemiology. Her research mainly focuses on trauma and posttraumatic

stress disorder and she is an advocate of victims of sexual violence.

How do you spend most of your time outside of work?

During my non-working time I am most often either with my 8 year old son or doing yoga.

In relation to your career is this where you thought you would end up?

I never expected to be a professor at an institution like Harvard. I entered graduate school planning to be a practicing psychoanalyst. My career

trajectory has been a complete surprise to me!

What do you consider to be the most important characteristic of an outstanding mentor?

One of the most important characteristics of an outstanding mentor is the ability to put aside one's own agenda in order to enable the mentee to reach her full potential. This can be challenging as



Professor Karestan Koenen receiving the PDA Outstanding Mentor Award from the PDA President Christian Suharlim

Photo credit: The Office of Communications

all of us who serve as mentors have full research programs, and it's much easier for us if our mentees contribute to those programs. However, that is not always what is best for the mentee. I have succeeded as a mentor if I have helped my mentees be the best version of themselves. That is, I don't want to turn my mentees into "mini-me's" but help them reach their own personal and professional goals.

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What would be your best advice for postdoctoral fellows and research associates?

I would expect all post-doctoral fellows and research associates at institutions like Harvard have the intelligence to become successful researchers and academics. I believe there are at least two characteristics that distinguish those who are most successful. The first is being internally driven by a personal vision or passion. An academic career requires a lot of self-motivation, especially at Harvard. No one is going to come by your office and tell you how terrific you are every day.

Your motivation needs to come from inside. The second is persistence. Even the most prominent academics have experienced multiple set-backs, unscored grants, rejected papers. Those who succeed have to pick themselves up over and over again. I have several current funded grants that took 5 years to get funded. I had to resubmit, revise, resubmit and revise many many times. Of course, these two characteristics complement each other, as being passionate about what you do helps you be more persistent.

Focus on Diversity and Inclusion

by **Elisa Ghelfi**, PDA Research Associate Representative

The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health has started a project aiming to address equity, diversity, and inclusion issues in the school community. A collaboration between the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) and the Culturally Engaging Campus Environment (CECE) Project Team at the Indiana University plans to assess the school environment. Students, faculty, staff, research associates, and postdocs participated in 20 focus group sessions to share perceptions on diversity and inclusion in the School environment, and evaluate how diversity is currently addressed in the School. The initiative was recommended by the Dean's Advisory Committee on Equity & Diversity and Inclusion (DACDI) as part of its strategic plan from last year. It also continues the conversation about equity, diversity, and inclusion, as students push to create a more inclusive campus environment through chanschooljustice.org, and address the consequences of social inequities that render higher education less accessible to groups of people because of their race, socioeconomic status, or disability status.

The CECE Team will develop a survey for the entire Harvard Chan community based on the themes from the focus groups, which will

be available in early 2016. The preliminary findings are tentatively scheduled to be reported in spring 2016 while the final report is due for the summer 2016. **Stay tuned and please participate in the survey!**

The PDA and the Student Government Board worked together with Dr. Meredith Rosenthal, Associate Dean of Diversity, to achieve an important milestone on the topic of diversity and inclusion. Rainbow, bisexual, and trans* pride flags were hung for long term placement in the hallway by the FXB entrance. The flags symbolize the community's respect, acceptance and appreciation for LGBT population and issues. The hanging of the flags at the School is an incremental step towards overcoming the discrimination that the LGBT population experience. The focus on the LGBT community is important for public health professionals in

light of public health efforts to improve the health of every person and eliminate health disparities.

The hanging of the flags was presented by Dean Rosenthal as part of the conference **"Different Lenses One Vision" (dLOV)**, organized by the Harvard Chan School and the ODI. The dLOV program ran from November 16th through November 19th, hosted a series of lectures and discussions on the topic of otherness, diversity and discrimination.



Smiles and flags at the dLOV Conference

Nanocourses

by *Jacqueline Cohen, PDA Secretary*

The Harvard Chan PDA developed the Public Health 101 nanocourse series to provide opportunities for members of the wider community to learn about public health and teaching opportunities for postdoctoral fellows. The flagship **Public Health 101 nanocourse** was offered in early October and was followed by three more courses including **Introduction to Environmental Health**, **Fundamentals of Data Analysis and Visualization in R** and **Introduction to Occupational Health and Injuries**. For the flagship course, 58% of attendees were non-Harvard affiliates, coming from teaching hospitals, other Boston-area universities, and other non-academic institutions.

I attended the Environmental Health nanocourse. On the first day, after a brief introduction describing the scope of environmental health, the five postdoctoral course instructors each presented topics specific to their expertise. The first focused on urban health and the built environment which touched on pollution, walkability, and bike safety studies. The second presentation was on spatial epidemiology which is grounded in the desire to know where we should apply public health interventions. Next, we learned about exposure science which introduced the ways we may be exposed to environmental chemicals and how the exposure is quantified. We then learned about toxicology and

nanotoxicology and many of us were surprised to learn we may be exposed to nanoparticles in our food and cosmetics daily. Finally we learned about reproductive epidemiology and how environmental chemicals may impact fertility and birth outcomes. It was a great opportunity to be exposed to the breadth of the field of environmental health. The second day followed the case-study format. We prepared by reading an article from the Huffington Post about a West Virginia community that was exposed to high levels of perfluorinated chemicals due to the proximity to a chemical plant. During the session, we reviewed scientific articles of studies on the health effects of these chemicals and had the opportunity to put ourselves in the shoes of decisions makers, in light of the evidence we read. The PDA is working hard to provide

unique opportunities to learn about public health for the uninitiated and those who want to learn about a new area. With over 900 people in our mailing list excited for the next nanocourse offerings, **we invite postdoctoral fellows and research associates to propose, design, and execute a nanocourse in their field of expertise.** Your course can be offered in 2016, together with the upcoming **Health Decision Science and Nutritional Epidemiology nanocourses**. All are free and open to the public. Please reach out to us at PDA@hsph.harvard.edu. I hope that many of you will have the opportunity to attend or teach a nanocourse during your time at the School!



Public Health 101 Nanocourse

Photo credit: Bradley Coleman, Nanocourse Curriculum Fellow

Research Associates Corner

by *Elisa Ghelfi, PDA Research Associate Representative*

Hello! I am serving as Research Associate (RA) Representative, representing the RAs needs and ideas within the 2015-2016 PDA Council. I will collaborate with the PDA Council and the School administration to improve opportunities for involvement and advancement for RAs. One important initiative led by David Gregory, former RA Representative, is to clarify what an RA position is, how it differs from Postdoctoral Fellow and Research Scientist, and how the title of RAs is received on the job market. A workable suggestion is to change the RA title to something more meaningful and specific. We are still addressing this possibility, so please come forward with any suggestion or comment.

Writers Lounge

by *Traci Brown, PDA General Council Member*

The PDA currently has several offerings to help Postdoctoral Fellows and Research Associates improve their writing skills. Don't miss it!

Workshops and Course Offerings

The Office of Faculty Affairs will be working with Donald Halstead, the Director of Writing Programs at Harvard Chan School, to provide workshops and mini-courses to improve your writing including:

- **Scientific Writing Course** (Winter and Spring Session)
- **Essentials of Grant Writing Workshop** (May)

Be on the lookout in your inbox for more information and to sign up!

Peer Grant Network

The Peer Grant Network (PGN) is a PDA program that connects current post-doctoral grant applicants with recently successful grant awardees. The peer network will simplify the grant application process for grants managers, administrators, and applicants alike. This program is intended to benefit both postdocs and research associates in obtaining

external funding and advancing their careers.

The Spring 2016 semester PGN events include (but not limited to):

- **Introductory Social** (Beginning of Spring Semester): This social is intended to facilitate pairing and mingling between the mentees and mentors. The "dos and don'ts" of grant writing will also be reviewed.
- **End-Of-Semester Social** (End of Spring Semester): This social will serve as a thank you to mentors/mentees for their involvement in the PGN.

We always need more mentors for the Peer Grant Network, so if you are a grant recipient, please consider giving back by signing up with Sandra Pirela:

svp097@mail.harvard.edu

1306A from 10:30 AM-12:00 PM.

Topics covered will include:

- **Getting Past Writers Block**
- **Dealing with Procrastination**
- **Working Smarter not Harder**

The writing group also includes time for peer discussion on your specific writing goals. Individuals at any stage of the writing process are welcome and prior attendance is not required.

To be added to the mailing list to receive updates about the writing group, please contact Traci Brown: tbrown@hsph.harvard

Writing Group

The Writing Group is the PDA's newest writing initiative intended to provide peer-support in writing grants and papers. The Writing Group will meet on the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month, except holidays, in Building 1 RM



Social Events

by **Mudit Chaand**, PDA Social Co-chair

The PDA takes pride in organizing diverse social events throughout the year to encourage interaction amongst the postdoc and research associate community at the School and the greater Boston research community. We kicked off the academic year with a **Postdoc Appreciation Day** to honor the contributions of postdocs to research and development and recognize faculty members for their outstanding mentorship skills. Over 100 postdocs, research associates, and faculty attended the event. The Outstanding Postdoc Mentor Award, now in its sixth year, was presented to Prof. Karesten C. Koenen.

In October, the Harvard Chan PDA teamed up with the PDAs of Children's Hospital, Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Joslin Diabetes Center, Harvard Medical School, Mass General Hospital, MIT, and Tufts and organized a **Halloween Bash** at Lir in Back Bay. The event was a huge success with over 200 guests. Three prizes were awarded for the best costumes.

In November, the PDA co-sponsored the **Different Lenses One Vision (dLOV) mixer** with students, faculty, staff, community members, and alumni. dLOV exists under the Harvard Chan School's Office of Diversity and Inclusion and is dedicated to combat oppression and social isolation and building of inclusive communities. Thanks to the advocacy efforts of the PDA and the Student Government, a Rainbow, a Trans, and a Bi flag were unfurled for permanent placement at the School.

In December, the PDA organized its **annual Holiday Luncheon** for postdocs and research associates. The winners of the **PDA Fall Travel Awards** were also announced at the event. In line with the spirit of the season, the PDA also donated canned food items collected at the event to The Greater Boston Food Bank, the largest hunger relief organization in New England.

Some of the events planned for next year are a Faculty-Postdoc Mixer, a Bowling Night, and a Masquerade Ball... Stay tuned!



Amy Tsurumi (MGH PDA) and Mudit Chaand (Chan PDA) at the Halloween Bash

Fall Travel Awards

by **Jacqueline Cohen**

The PDA received eleven applications for four \$1,500 awards to support postdoctoral fellows and research associates travel to conferences to present their work. We are grateful to the faculty members who devoted their time to serve as judges. Applications were each judged by two faculty members from outside of the applicants department on the basis of their conference abstract, mentor letter of support, personal development statement and research statement.

Congratulations to the awardees:

Drs. Marthe H. Haverkamp,

Claudia Trudel-Fitzgerald,

Mara Rejane Barroso Barcelos and

Christian Suharlim!

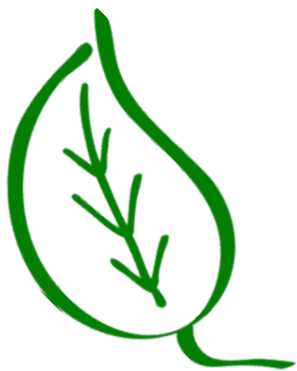


Mara Rejane and Claudia receiving their Fall Travel Award from the PDA Vice President Fred Tabung at the PDA Holiday Luncheon

The Eco-Corner

by *Traci Brown, PDA General Council Member*

As postdoctoral fellows and research associates we have the ability to make an impact on sustainability at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health by each doing what we can to make our labs and offices more environmentally friendly. In order to help you accomplish this goal, Harvard has a green office program that is aligned with the Harvard University Sustainability Plan. This certificate program is a point-based system designed to help you easily reach goals of greater sustainability. The application to be certified as a green office space is downloadable and very user friendly. **For more information contact Adam Meier:** adam_meier@harvard.edu or visit the website at: <http://green.harvard.edu/programs/green-offices>.



Energy Reduction

The Harvard Medical School Facilities Group would like to remind everyone to help reduce energy use over holiday breaks by following these few simple steps:

- **Turn off and unplug lights and computers**
- **Turn off any nonessential kitchen and office equipment** (coffeemakers, printers, copiers, etc.)
- **Turn off nonessential lab equipment** (autoclaves, water baths, refrigerated shakers, centrifuges, etc.)
- **Close fume hood sashes**
- **Keep vents, diffusers and radiators free of obstruction**
- **Close windows, shades and doors** (we have a history of open window freezes — please help)
- **Tightly close sink faucets**
- **Report any leaks, missing ceiling tiles or unusual noises to Facilities at 432-1901**
- **After break, do not double up on washing and sterilization loads**

Why is it important to conserve energy at Harvard Chan School?

We have a social obligation to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions whenever possible. By following the above simple steps, we can work together to significantly conserve energy and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions even when we're not here! So please join us in doing our part to reduce energy use over the break.

Thank you very much for your cooperation and support!
For emergency calls, please contact Facilities at 432-1901.



"Taken together, the habits, the attitudes, and the creativity of every one of us, we have the potential to make a great difference, not just for Harvard... but for the larger world and its future well-being."

Drew Faust, President of Harvard University

The 2015-2016 PDA Council



Christian Suharlim
President
Center for Health Decision Sciences



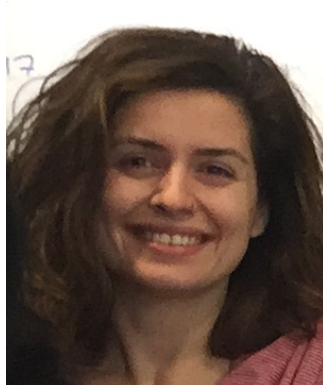
Fred Tabung
Vice President
Department of Nutrition



Gillian Franklin
Treasurer & DACDI Representative
Department of
Environmental Health



Mudit Chaand
Social Co-Chair
Department of Immunology
and Infectious Diseases



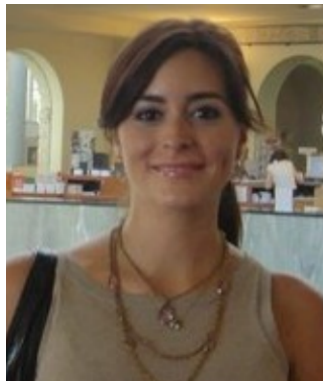
Konstantina Sampani
Social Co-Chair
Department of
Environmental Health



Manja Koch
Workshops Chair
Department of Nutrition



Dania Valvi
International Chair
Department of
Environmental Health



Sandra Pirela
Grants and Research Strategy Chair
Department of
Environmental Health



Mohamad Sater
Webmaster
Department of Immunology
and Infectious Diseases

The 2015-2016 PDA Council



Jacqueline Cohen
Secretary
 Department of Epidemiology



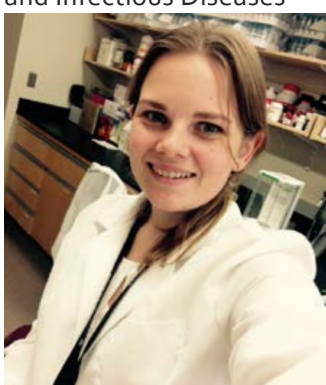
Usheer Kangee
Special Advisor to Council
 Department of Immunology
 and Infectious Diseases



Sylvia Ley
General Council
 Department of Nutrition



Felicity Brown
Recruiting Chair
 Department of Global Health
 and Population



Traci Brown
General Council
 Department of
 Environmental Health



Clara Burbano-Herrera
General Council
 FXB Center for Health and Human
 Rights



Elisa Ghelfi
Research Associate Representative
 Department of
 Environmental Health



Morteza Asgarzadeh
General Council
 Department of
 Environmental Health

...And You!

Please stay
 tuned and join
 the next PDA
 meeting!

**HARVARD**
T.H. CHAN**SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

Postdoctoral Association



Editor's Note

December 26th, 2015

The Crimson Chronicle's aim is to provide tips and tools for the postdoctoral fellows and research associates that may help to promote their professional development and enrich their experience at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. We hope that you have enjoyed reading and found the enclosed information of your interest. Your feedback is of great importance for the improvement of *The Crimson Chronicle*, as well as, for the ongoing work of the PDA Council. So please feel free to send your comments and ideas and join us to the PDA meetings!

As the editor of the *The Crimson Chronicle* Fall 2015 issue, I would like to thank all the members of the PDA Council for their constant efforts to optimize our daily experiences at the School, and in particular, Christian, Elisa, Jacqueline, Mudit and Traci for their extra efforts in the preparation of this issue. On behalf of the PDA Council, I would like to express our gratitude to Professor Karesten Koenen for the inspiring words she has shared with us.

I wish you all an enjoyable time during the holiday break and an inspirational and creative 2016!

Best wishes,

Dania Valvi, MD, MPH, PhD

PDA International Chair

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Harvard Chan PDA

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