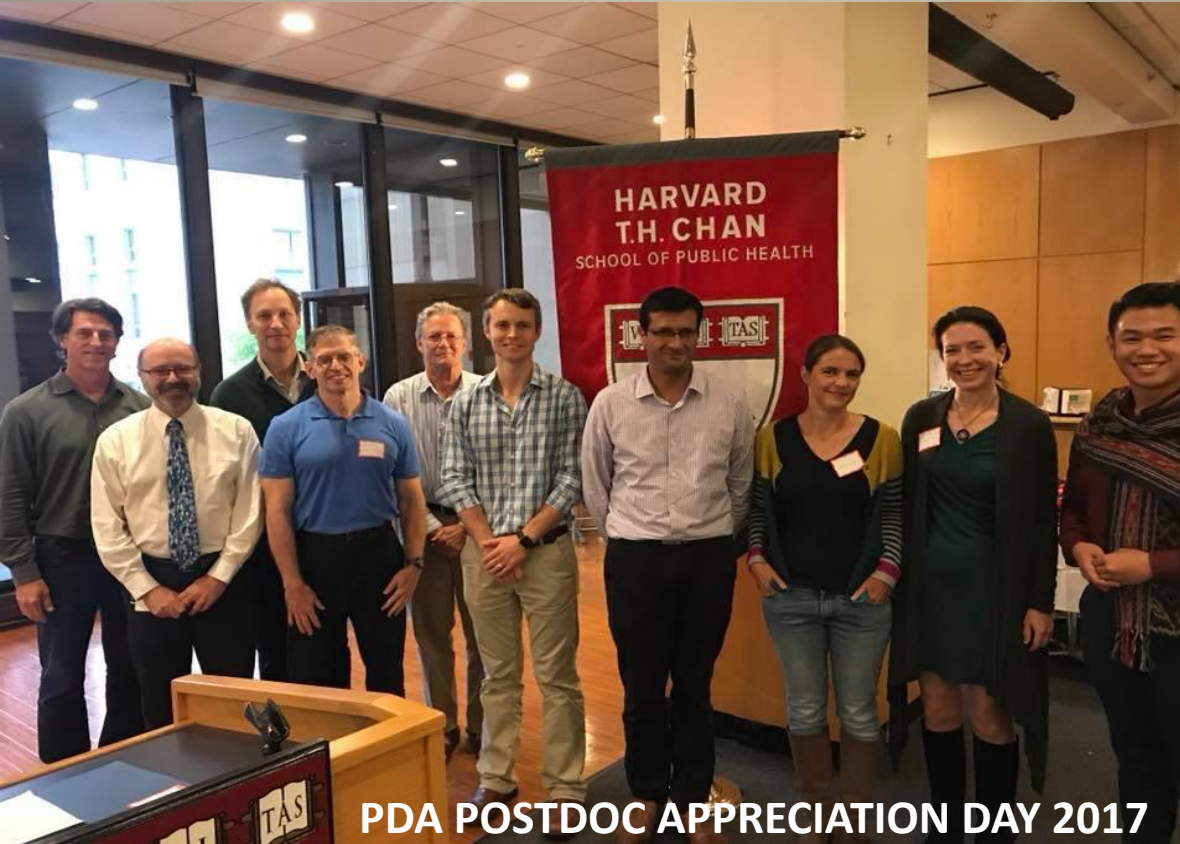


Fall 2017



PDA POSTDOC APPRECIATION DAY 2017



# THE CRIMSON CHRONICLE



**HARVARD**  
**T.H. CHAN**

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**SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

Postdoctoral Association

From Postdocs and Research Associates at HSPH



## From the Editor's desk

Dear Colleagues,

Festive greetings!

We are thrilled to share with you this fall issue of the PDA newsletter; The Crimson Chronicle.

I take great pleasure, as the Editor-in-Chief, in introducing our Crimson Chronicle in its new design and layout . We aim to improve and develop Crimson Chronicle further in every issue. With your contributions and feedback, we hope to continue to add helpful tips, articles, interviews and other useful resources, that best address our interests, goals and challenges as Postdocs and Research Associates.

In this issue, we are pleased to introduce the PDA council members for this term and their roles, the plan for the year ahead and news from the PDA president; Jackie, more about Nanocourses by Tia, a perspective on retirement plans by Lauren, the Research Associates corner by Sarah, socials updates from Aabha, and last but not least, an interview with Christian, an outstanding postdoc who shares useful tips and experiences as a research associate at HSPH.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this issue and we look forward to your contributions, feedback and suggestions!

**Happy holidays and best wishes for a wonderful new year!**

Sincerely,

**Reem Waziry**

Editor-in-Chief

waziry@hsph.harvard.edu

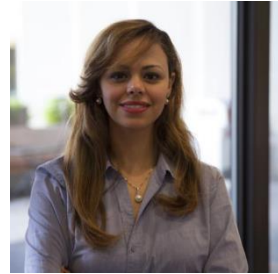
## HSPH PDA Council 2017-2018



**Jacqueline Cohen**  
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**Lucas Henneman**  
VP External Affairs



**Feiby Nassan**  
VP Internal Affairs



**Aisha Dickerson**  
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**Aabha Sharma**  
Social Co-chair



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## HSPH PDA Council 2017-2018



**Tia McGill Rogers**  
Educational Initiatives  
Chair



**Maria Andree Lopez Gomez**  
Grants and Research Strategy  
Chair



**Reem Waziry**  
Editor-in-Chief



**Sarah Mitchell**  
Research Associate Chair



**Lauren Cowley**  
General Council



**Christian Suharlim**  
Special Advisor to the  
Council

There are some vacancies on the council: Social Co-Chair, International Chair, and General Council positions. Please email ([pda@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:pda@hsph.harvard.edu)) or come to our next meeting to learn more!



**HARVARD**  
**T.H. CHAN**

**SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH**  
Postdoctoral Association



## Remarks from the PDA President

Dear Colleagues,

We are off to a wonderful start to the academic year! I am grateful to the members of the 2017-2018 PDA Council for bringing outstanding energy, excitement, and ideas to the table. This year, we are continuing to advocate for a higher minimum salary and childcare benefits on behalf of the postdocs and research associates at the school.

We have streamlined the PDA website and hope it will better serve prospective and current postdocs and research associates. We revised our travel awards guidelines to make the process simpler for both applicants and judges, and to increase the number of awards reaching more junior postdocs.

We are conducting our first Annual Survey to help us align our advocacy and activities with the needs and interests of our members moving forward. We hope to enhance the grant writing resources available for postdocs and research associates. We plan to continue to facilitate teaching and learning opportunities with the Nanocourse initiative, and provide opportunities to socialize with our peers at monthly social events.

Unfortunately, I will have to step down at the end of the year as I will be leaving my post at Harvard Chan to pursue further postdoctoral research and training at the Norwegian Institute of Public Health in Oslo, Norway.

I am excited for the opportunity, both personally and professionally. While I am sorry to leave before the end of my term, I am confident that the council will be in good hands, with plans in place for an excellent year!

**Happy & Healthy New Year to All!**

Sincerely,  
Jacqueline Cohen





## PH 101 Nanocourses

Staying abreast of the ever advancing landscape of public health requires the continuing education of the broader public health workforce. The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health's nanocourse initiative has become a promising tool for addressing the significant challenges that prohibit front line researchers from taking full advantage of the valuable educational resources available right within our very own walls.

To take maximum advantage of the expansive expertise of the scientific research community across the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health campus, and appeal to a wide variety of students, post-docs, fellows and faculty who don't traditionally participate in classes...We Need You!

We have sourced questions from previous and potential nanocourse instructors and compiled them into the list of frequently sked questions below.

### NANOCOURSE INSTRUCTOR FAQ

#### **What is a nanocourse?**

Nanocourses are a flexible way to introduce course attendees to specialized knowledge areas, in a condensed format. These courses are designed to bring individuals in the academic community up to date on a particular field, to offer insight into current topics, and to provide a foundation for further study in that field in a short period of time (typically about six hours total over two days).

#### **What type of nanocourses have been offered in the past?**

The PH101 series offers multiple nanocourse throughout the year on the specific topics within public health. The list of courses are proposed based on the availability of subject matter experts in these specific areas.

#### **What are the benefits of becoming a nanocourse instructor?**

A secondary objective of the course was to create opportunities for postdoctoral fellows and research associates interested in gaining teaching experience.

As a nanocourse instructor, you are eligible to receive a letter of completion, course evaluations, and the ability to add your experience to your teaching packet and CV.

#### **How are nanocourses structured?**

A nanocourse consists of two class meetings developed through close collaboration by instructors who are specialists in their fields. The first session is typically lecture based. These lectures provide a historical background and foundational introduction to a topic so that participants can appreciate the state of the field and contextualize the subsequent material. The second session is activity based.

#### **I want to develop a new Public Health Series nanocourse. What are the procedures?**

We accept nanocourse instructors and courses on a rolling basis. We encourage both new and previous instructors who are interested in developing new nanocourses or delivering an updated nanocourse that has been offered in the past to apply at any time.



*Continued from page 5-PH 101 Nanocourses*

We are currently recruiting instructors for our spring 2018 Public Health Series nanocourse offerings. Whether you have a fully developed course, complete with content, activities, and materials, or you just have an idea, we are here to help!

If you are interested in becoming a nanocourse instructor, please contact:



**Tia McGill Rogers**

Educational Initiatives Chair  
[tiamcgillrogers@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:tiamcgillrogers@hsph.harvard.edu)



## SPRING SOCIAL!

Keep an eye out for our Spring Events! In collaboration with other PDAs within the Longwood Medical Area, there will be a New Year's Social on January 18th 2018 from 6pm. RSVP emails will be sent out soon. There will also be a Soup Kitchen volunteering event on March 3rd 2018. Thanks to the success of Fall Happy Hour, we are planning a Spring Happy Hour and many other exciting events. Stay Tuned!

**Aabha Sharma**

[aisharma@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:aisharma@hsph.harvard.edu)







## PERSPECTIVE

Since joining Harvard university as a Postdoc in October 2016, I have come to realise that the employer provided benefits are very limited. As someone in full time employment, if I chose to put savings away for my retirement – my employer, Harvard, will not contribute towards these savings in any way. This, where I come from, is illegal. Starting from October 2012, the UK passed a law that meant all employers must offer a workplace pension scheme so that you, your employer and the government will pay into your pension if you are enrolled.

During my first days at Harvard, protests were going on regarding the benefits of catering staff which I fully supported. Little did I know that my benefits situation was not much better. In my excitement to move to a new country, start a new job and do the science that I love, I neglected to check that I would be provided with retirement benefits by my employer. I have always previously taken that for granted in my home country as my employee rights.

Harvard university is the richest university in the world with \$37.6 billion dollars in endowment (<https://www.harvard.edu/about-harvard/harvard-glance>), this is \$9 billion dollars higher than Yale the next richest university. However, neither of these universities offer employer contributions in the retirement benefits for their Postdocs. Many of the other Ivy League universities hold similar policies. It seems to be accounted for by a general attitude that there is high demand/competition to get a job at these top universities. It is worth noting however that both Oxford and Cambridge universities offer employer contributions to postdocs into their retirement schemes.



On September 13th Boston College won their vote to unionize graduate students, Boston University intends to vote soon and Harvard will vote again on their unionization after having won a petition to the NLRB on the illegitimacy of their vote in November 2016. Elizabeth Warren supports the unionization of grad students and so do I. I only ask, what about Postdocs too? If it's already too late for unionization in these difficult days, is it impossible to appeal to Harvard directly regarding the simple matter of retirement benefits?

Surely they want to retain their appeal to some of the best worldwide scholars who have their pick of all the international leading universities. If I was assessing again and put more thought towards my benefits and future financial security, I would be more likely to choose Oxford or Cambridge where it is illegal to not pay pensions. Or MIT in the same city as Harvard but offers up to 5% contributions to a 401K (<http://hrweb.mit.edu/benefits/401k>), or any other university that values their postdocs enough to provide retirement benefits.





*Continued from page 7-Perspective*

It is high time that this issue was addressed. Postdocs are usually the ground force for the essential research being done to progress society in numerous fields such as science, engineering, mathematics, humanities etc. In most cases, professors are very sympathetic to postdoc rights as it is a life stage that they have also passed through. Unfortunately, it's not the professors who govern the retirement benefits provided to us but rather the institutions that we work for. I have willingly trained for many years and chosen a career in which I will never earn large sums of money. However, I think that retirement benefits are the baseline of all employment packages and standards should be met for all employers.

Harvard will you support your hard working postdocs by providing them with the benefits needed to provide future financial security? Harvard pride themselves on supporting national and local social welfare issues, so now it's time for Harvard to lead the way not just in ground breaking research but also in fair benefits for all their employees too.



**Lauren Cowley**  
General Council  
[lcowley@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:lcowley@hsph.harvard.edu)

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## RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Hello! My name is Sarah and I am your Research Associate (RA) representative on the PDA Council for 2017-2018. My role is to work together with the PDA and the School to advocate for RA's. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any issues or suggestions!

Sincerely,

**Sarah Mitchell**

[smitchell@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:smitchell@hsph.harvard.edu)

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## First Annual PDA Survey

The PDA Council created its first general survey of postdocs and RAs, designed to help the PDA advance its advocacy goals and improve its programming and services. The survey should take around 10 minutes to complete. The Council took care to follow survey best practices, aiming for a short survey in which each question is targeted toward informing specific PDA policies and actions. Every response will help the PDA better serve and advocate for postdocs and RAs.



## Interview with Christian

• ***Tell us a bit about yourself***

My name is Christian Suharlim, I am a physician from Indonesia with experience practicing medicine in a rural area and some policy work with the Indonesian Ministry of Health. I came to the US for an MPH in health policy at HSPH in 2013, started my postdoc in 2014, and currently a research associate at the Center for Health Decision Sciences. My work focuses on resource allocation and economical evaluation of health interventions, particularly in low and middle-income countries. My current work focuses on the cost-effectiveness of immunization programs.

• ***Can you describe your journey at Harvard in three words?***

Exploration, Growth, and Excitement.

I came to Harvard with no experience in health economics. My MPH work helped me focus my interest into this field, with emphasis on health decision and cost effectiveness analysis. It has been an exciting time of self-discovery and growth.

• ***If you were to go back in time, what would you do differently as a HSPH post-doc?***

It's pretty hard to answer this question. Since my work is under the umbrella of Decision Sciences, I would like to think that any decision that I made was the optimal decision given the available information and conditions at that time. But, If I were to dig deep, I think I would focus on a single topic, allocate more time towards mastering my craft, and learn how to improve my grant writing skills.

***What are the experiences that you feel impacted you the most personally or professionally?***

Getting familiar with the word "efficiency". As mentioned before, being a physician by training, I have never been exposed to economic analysis and resource allocation perspectives. But always used the concept in a way or another on daily bases; "How can I minimize time on traffic and yet able to go to multiple dance classes?", "How can I do as many home visits during the week so that I can take Friday off?"...etc. These are helpful efficiency questions within the field of economics. I think If I had power to change education I would make everyone take economics courses.

• ***As a PDA president for almost three successive terms, what are the most important experiences you had or gained skills as a PDA council member and postdoc?***

You might be the best in whatever that you do and have the right answers, but if you are unable to package your message in a way that others could relate to, you'll end up being alone in your views and methods. A famous Indonesian quote says "*Tidak cukup hanya pintar, tapi juga harus pintar-pintar*", which means it's not enough to be smart (pintar), but it's also important that you are street smart (pintar-pintar). This would entail knowing about message delivery, understanding best timing and opportunity, and being diplomatic in your approach.



*Continued from page 9-Interview*

• ***What's your ultimate advice for new postdocs at HSPH?***

Get involved with the PDA.

I know being a Harvard Postdoc is busy enough with all the expectations that come with the title. As postdocs, with so many other personal responsibilities and commitments, we know that a “work-life balance” is such a distant goal.

PDA council members are fun people who also share the same life difficulty as you. Personally, being an active PDA member has been a very rewarding experience that helped me manage my work-life balance even better. I can assure you that the time you invest to join the PDA socials and events will yield fruitful returns.

• ***Would you like to share any additional tips or thoughts?***

Realistically, only one out of five postdocs get into a tenure track position. Postdoc is a training position that should prepare you for the next step of your career. So, use that time wisely. Your next step may well be in academia, industry, government, or maybe something else entirely. Go join career advancement workshops and networking events run by BPDA, HSPH, or HMS and investigate your options. Set expectations early on and discuss with your mentor. Your postdoc experience is for YOU. You shape this experience however you want it to be.

You're in the Harvard bubble, take advantage of it. If you like innovation, go find activities at the Harvard iLAB. There are TONS of workshops, seminars, and skill-building sessions through Harvard Catalyst, Nanocourses, IQSS, and many more.

If you're planning your next job search, go contact the HSPH Career Advancement office, they have resources and personnel that can offer help from CV, cover letter to job vacancies and related updates. If you are into the arts or shows, use the innings and outings, there are always awesome deals.

All in all, you'll do better as a postdoc if you enjoy your time here at Harvard. Give yourself permission to live a little. Find time for coffee with your new friends, go to the Arboretum or Museums, use your personal days to catch up on your favourite TV shows. It's only you who pushes yourself to be available 24/7. Your PIs have a life and you should too.



**Christian Suharlim**

Special Advisor to the Council  
[suharlim@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:suharlim@hsph.harvard.edu)





## Useful Links

### ❑ 2017/2018 schedule of events

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/pda/20172018-schedule-of-events/>

### ❑ Peer Grant Network

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/pda/peer-grant-network/>

### ❑ Postdoc Workshops and Courses

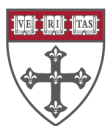
<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/faculty-affairs/postdoctoral-research-fellows/postdoc-workshops-and-courses/>

### ❑ The Harvard University Policy on Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment

[http://titleix.harvard.edu/files/title-ix/files/harvard\\_sexual\\_harassment\\_policy.pdf?m=1461104544](http://titleix.harvard.edu/files/title-ix/files/harvard_sexual_harassment_policy.pdf?m=1461104544)



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