

# OU Public Health

FALL 2017

A Publication for Alumni and Friends of the University of Oklahoma College of Public Health



## Building a Legacy of Public Health

Promoting healthier tomorrows  
*through education and research today*



## Dear Alumni and Friends:

We've titled this issue "Building a Legacy of Public Health" because this college is committed to ensuring the future of public health through the advancement of education and research.

As many of you know, public health is all around us every day – from the food we eat to the communities within which we live to the efforts to prevent illness. Public health is the science of protecting and improving the health of people and their communities. It is at the core of our mission as we work to educate the next generation of public health professionals, researchers and academicians.

We do not fulfill our mission alone, however. We understand that quality and growth are built on a foundation in partnership with individuals and organizations equally committed to public health in our state, our nation and the world.

With the cost of education increasing, though, we realize that it is increasingly important to assist the newest generation of scholars financially as they work to achieve their goals. To that end, we have looked to alumni and friends for support. A growing number have stepped forward to assist in this effort.

In 2003, the college awarded three scholarships, totaling \$4,000. This academic year, 28 scholarships were awarded, totaling more than \$70,000. This year, the college also received a second \$1 million gift from alumna and former faculty member Leslie Hudson Ph.D., and her husband, Clifford Hudson, J.D. This gift expands the Hudson Fellows program, allowing talented young researchers greater opportunities to achieve their research objectives, to gain invaluable experience and to better prepare them for successful careers in public health. Already, this fellowship is proving its incredible value as our first fellows begin their careers.

We are grateful for the generosity of our current and past donors who realize investing in these talented students is an investment in the future of public health. Still, the need for additional student assistance is great. To continue to attract top candidates to our program, we need to continue to grow our endowed scholarship program as well as other funding sources, including corporate giving, corporate match programs, planned giving and more.

It's been said, "It takes a village to raise a child." It also takes a village to build a legacy of public health that ensures a healthier future for all. Thank you for all you do for the College and for public health.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Raskob".

Gary E. Raskob, Ph.D.

Dean, OU College of Public Health

Regents' Professor, Epidemiology and Medicine

## PROVOST'S MESSAGE



Protecting and improving the health of people and the communities in which they live.

This noble mission becomes reality only through special institutions like the OU College of Public Health. Five decades strong, the College is an indispensable member of the OU Health Sciences Center, advancing nationally recognized public health education, research, and service.

Dean Raskob has provided visionary and collaborative leadership of the College, growing key initiatives and building partnerships. He has connected with alumni and friends to increase student financial support and invest in the next generation of public health professionals. Through the generosity of Dr. Leslie and Mr. Cliff Hudson, the Hudson Fellows program has been a tremendous success, enabling the college to attract talented scholars in public health and advance their research. The convening power of this scholarship program reminds me of my own experience as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, bringing together high caliber post-graduate scholars who elevate the stature and impact of the entire Health Sciences Center.

The OU College of Public Health has an impressive history and an even brighter future ahead, thanks to the generosity of donors, the commitment of its faculty and staff, and the dedication of its students.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason R. Sanders".

Jason R. Sanders, M.D., M.B.A.

Senior Vice President and Provost, OU Health Sciences Center





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# Major Gift 50<sup>th</sup> Caps College's Year



Pictured from left are Dean Gary Raskob, Ph.D., Clifford Hudson, J.D., Leslie Hudson, Ph.D., Dr. Alfred Sommer, Dr. Jason Sanders

Fifty was a momentous year for the OU College of Public Health, capped off with another \$1 million gift to advance work at the college aimed at improving both health and quality of life in Oklahoma and beyond.

Dr. Jason Sanders, senior vice president and provost of the OU Health Sciences Center, and Gary Raskob, Ph.D., dean of the College of Public Health, announced the gift from Leslie Hudson, Ph.D., and Clifford Hudson of Oklahoma City at the annual Hudson Symposium in Public Health. The gift expands the endow-

ment created in 2015 through a previous gift from the Hudsons. As a result of their generosity, the college will be able to provide a total of five fellowships for research scholars.

"Improving the quality of life and longevity for the citizens of Oklahoma and the globe is the work of public health professionals, and the OU Health Sciences Center is proud to have been a leader in this field for more than 50 years now," said Sanders. "This gift helps fuel the work of talented research scholars and expert practitioners in a variety of areas within the ev-

*We are proud  
to support  
the continued  
mission of  
this college.*

er-expanding and increasingly important field of public health. We are extremely grateful to the Hudsons for their vision and continued support of these efforts.”

In 2015, the Hudsons also gave \$1 million to the college, funding two inaugural Hudson Fellows in Public Health, thereby advancing research focused on reducing nicotine addiction and teen pregnancy. The newest Hudson Fellows’ work will span a number of public health disciplines from biostatistics and epidemiology to occupational and environmental health.

“Through training, education and mentorship at the college, as well as the financial assistance provided through the Hudson Fellows in Public Health endowment, these students are able to focus their research skills on critical issues affecting public health in this nation,” said Raskob. “Our inaugural fellows have gone on to apply their research and training in new leadership roles in the field of public health. We believe the same will be true of our newest Hudson Fellows.”

The Hudsons’ support is an integral part of efforts to recruit and retain the best and brightest students to the graduate programs of the College of Public Health, he added.

“College of Public Health students are trained to identify issues, ask the pertinent questions, design and conduct research to answer those questions; analyze and interpret the resulting data; communicate to and advocate for the public. My training in public health gave me skills that are easily translatable into many aspects of my life. We are proud to support the continued mission of this college,” said OU College of Public Health alumna Leslie Hudson, Ph.D.

Dr. Leslie Hudson earned a bachelor’s degree in physical therapy, a master’s degree in public health and a doctorate in epidemiology from the University of Oklahoma. She also served as a faculty member in the OU College of Public Health, specializing in biostatistics and epidemiology. She continued her service with OU Health Sciences Center as a member of the advisory board of the College of Public Health.

Clifford Hudson is the chairman and CEO of Sonic Corp. He received a bachelor’s degree in history from OU, having attended with Phi Beta Kappa and



President’s Leadership scholarships. He received a law degree from Georgetown University. In 2001, he received the OU Regents’ Alumni Award, and in 2011 he received OU’s highest honor, an Honorary Degree in humane letters. Hudson currently serves on the board of the OU Foundation. ◀

## OU College of Public Health

# CORE VALUES

### EXCELLENCE

The College of Public Health strives to achieve excellence in all of its endeavors.

### INTEGRITY

The College of Public Health adheres to the highest standards of honesty, objectivity, transparency, fairness and ethical conduct at all times.

### PUBLIC SERVICE

The College of Public Health exists to serve the citizens of Oklahoma and the United States through efforts to

protect and improve their health, and to contribute to international efforts to improve the health of other nations.

### HEALTH EQUITY

The College of Public Health advocates the principle that all individuals have a right to the opportunity for a healthy life. The college is committed to reducing and eliminating health disparities among populations.

### RESPONSIBILITY

The College of Public Health strives

to make the most effective use of all resources it receives, to use responsibly all state, federal and private funding, and to leverage its resources into additional resources for the college, university and state of Oklahoma.

### PARTNERSHIP

The College of Public Health is committed to fostering collegial, productive partnerships with all stakeholders who share the vision of protecting and improving the public’s health.



# A Shared Passion: Public Health

## Hudson Fellows Prepare for a Future in Public Health

**T**hey come from different walks of life, different parts of the world, with different upbringings and different viewpoints, but there is a common thread that binds together five outstanding research scholars at the OU College of Public Health. They all share a passion for public health. These five also are members of the latest class of Hudson Fellows at the college.

### Ngoc Quyen Duong



Ngoc Quyen Duong is a doctoral student in biostatistics at the college. Born in Vietnam, she grew up in Minnesota, where she first conquered English as a second language and then quickly learned she also had a knack for numbers. Duong earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics and then a master's degree in statistics. It was a desire to use science and innovation to positively im-

pact people's lives that led to her interest in public health.

"Being a Hudson Fellow has given me opportunities to pursue my passion for research," Duong said.

Duong's research involves developing models to predict infants at risk for severe intraventricular hemorrhage (bleeding in the brain). Currently, there are no

effective methods of prevention. Her work aims to better predict at-risk infants utilizing measures taken from special, near-infrared headbands.

"With the hands-on experience and the education I am receiving here, I feel well-trained to be a successful researcher in my field," Duong said. "I hope to someday work on a clinical trial for a pharmaceutical company."

### Kaitlin McGrew



The road to public health began in nursing for Kaitlin McGrew, a doctoral student in epidemiology. McGrew worked as a nursing assistant for several years at a children's rehabilitation and long-term care center.

"I loved working with the children and their families. However, I continued to notice a lot of big-picture problems in my community that were contributing to the development of preventable health issues in the people with whom I worked. I felt I could make a larger impact on the health of Oklahomans

by pursuing a degree in public health," she said.

McGrew's research focuses on quantifying health disparities in Oklahoma and decreasing the burden of stigmatized illnesses such as Hepatitis C virus and substance use disorders. Over the past few years, she has been involved in several multidisciplinary projects aimed at eliminating Hepatitis C in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. McGrew believes both the challenging academic environment and the diverse research opportunities afforded to her at the

college will prepare her well for the future.

"The teaching opportunities and research experiences have been invaluable through my progression in the doctoral program," she said. "I think all of us in public health share the desire to find a job that improves the lives of people in our communities. I hope to have a career that combines teaching and mentoring students with conducting research to improve the health and quality of life for underserved populations of Oklahoma."

## June Dao



Even in high school in Vietnam, numbers and biology piqued the interest of June Dao, a doctoral student in epidemiology with a strong interest in cancer prevention.

"I became interested in epidemiology during my senior year, as it allows me to use my mathematical skills in my field of interest, medicine," she said.

Dao earned her master's in epidemiology from the OU College of Public Health before deciding to work to earn a doctoral degree as

well. Her research aims to better understand the spatial effect of environmental exposures on cancer. She is currently involved in multiple research projects, including one that is looking at benzene exposure and birth defects.

"My passion lies in preventive measures, which leave less negative impact on patients and allow for health care to be provided more economically," Dao said.

She is especially grateful to have been chosen as a Hudson Fellow.

"This fellowship provides me a

great opportunity to focus on my education and to get the necessary research experience for my future as an epidemiologist," Dao said.

She added that her education at the college has been rewarding in many ways. It has helped her to acquire essential knowledge for her professional career, but also practical skills through her work on a number of projects in a variety of fields.

"I believe that I will be prepared and well-equipped for my future public health career."

## Kathleen "Kae" Aithinne



It was while working in occupational safety at a manufacturing plant that Kae Aithinne first realized there was a field in which people focused on occupational and environmental safety and health. While earning her bachelor's degree in biology, she worked in a microbiology lab, learning techniques that have proven useful on the biological side of occupational safety and health.

A first-year doctoral student in

occupational and environmental health, Aithinne's research interests center on bacteria or viruses that can be suspended in liquids or aerosolized. She hopes to uncover new information that can lead to new mechanisms to reduce infection or re-infection.

"Receiving the Hudson Fellowship takes an enormous amount of financial and emotional pressure off of me and my family. It allows me to continue to work

toward my doctorate full time without worrying about accruing further debt," Aithinne said.

Upon completing her doctorate, she plans to work in biosafety and environmental microbiology as a Certified Industrial Hygienist at a national laboratory before returning to academia to teach and mentor future occupational safety and health industry professionals.

## Wei-Jen Chen



Wei-Jen Chen, a first-year doctoral student in biostatistics and epidemiology, traces his passion for public health to an awakening, of sorts, that happened while he was an undergraduate student in Taiwan, his native country.

"I entered Professor Yu-Mei Hsueh's Gene and Elements Species Laboratory to learn how to apply my textbook learning to research," Chen explained. "This experience changed my thinking about public health. I now believe that public health is not simply a title affiliated with doctors and hospitals, but that public health initiatives can improve health promotion and disease prevention,

and reduce the burden of disease on the health care system."

Chen's previous research focused on arsenic and urologic cancer in Taiwan. He now plans to research environmental influences in children's health and knows the Hudson Research Fellowship will be instrumental in helping him achieve his goals.

"With this support, I can receive more professional training and have sufficient resources to expand in depth and breadth my doctoral research," he said.

As a first-year doctoral student, Chen believes it is very important

for him to gain increased exposure to the programs and research opportunities available at OU. He also serves as a graduate research assistant and teaching assistant in the Biostatistics and Epidemiology Department. He believes such experience will better prepare him as a professional.

"In the future, I plan to commit myself to epidemiology research and to improve the field of epidemiology in Taiwan," Chen said, adding that he also hopes to educate many students in Taiwan to help expand interest in and to further enhance the field of epidemiology for future generations.

# Scholars Translate Training to Action





## Dana Mowls Carroll, Ph.D.

With a keen interest in smoking cessation research and skills honed at the OU College of Public Health while earning her doctorate, Dana Mowls Carroll, Ph.D., landed a postdoctoral fellowship with the Tobacco Research Programs at the University of Minnesota.

“My primary project is a Phase III randomized, open-label, multi-center clinical trial seeking to understand the impact of very low-nicotine content cigarettes in a complex tobacco and nicotine product marketplace,” she explained.

Her responsibilities include writing the Investigational Tobacco Product application and conducting a community surveillance of stores selling electronic cigarettes and supplies, convenience stores and tobacco retailers to inform the experimental marketplace. She also is responsible for day-to-day research activities, including Institutional Review Board duties, data safety, monitoring, coordination with other research aide personnel, recruitment, data collection and analysis, and the dissemination of findings in the form of multiple manuscripts.

Carroll also is co-investigator on a study seeking to understand mechanisms that contribute to high rates of smoking-related cancers among the American Indian population in Minnesota.

“I would not be where I am today without the OU College of Public Health. It provided an exceptional doctoral training program. I was able to pursue coursework, research and career development activities that resulted in my ability to smoothly transition from student to full-time researcher,” she said. “One of the things I value most is the opportunity I had while at OU to learn from my doctoral mentor, Dr. Laura Beebe. She poured her time and energy into me for four years. I will forever be thankful for her guidance and her willingness to integrate me into her tobacco research team.”

She credits the Hudson Fellowship with aiding greatly on her path to current and future success in public health.

“The Hudson Fellowship alleviated my financial need to have a graduate assistantship, and thereby provided me the ability to be fully devoted to my dissertation work and to spend more time applying and securing NIH funding for my dissertation and to complete it within two years. Being able to focus solely on my dissertation may seem small to some, but the effects on my career have been seismic. I couldn’t be more thankful for the Hudson’s and for my selection as an inaugural Hudson Fellow,” she said.

Carroll believes her background in tobacco control and epidemiology combined with her developing expertise in clinical trials will position her as a leader in the field of tobacco prevention and control.

## Jennifer Green Moore, Ph.D.

With a family filled with teachers, school administrators, social workers, physicians and researchers, it is perhaps no surprise that Jennifer Green Moore, Ph.D., loves what she does now. Moore is director and local health officer for the Riley County Health Department in Manhattan, Kansas.

“I get to see all aspects of public health: policy, clinical services, education, epidemiology, preparedness, environmental and enforcement,” said Moore.

In her health department leadership role, Moore serves as a steward of public dollars, working to ensure that every program implemented impacts behaviors, health outcomes or public health costs. Her coursework in measurement, research methods and program evaluation at the College of Public Health prepared her well for the position, as did her experience as a graduate research assistant.

“I aim to identify and implement evidence-based programs, and work to ensure every program includes quantitative and qualitative evaluation,” she explained, adding these are skills honed during her time as a doctoral candidate at OU.

As a local health officer, she also has a role in investigating communicable disease outbreaks. Moore said her coursework in epidemiology and advanced statistics prepared her well for this role, too. It was her participation in research projects as a graduate research assistant under her mentor, Roy Oman, Ph.D., though, that she values most.

“It allowed me the opportunity to work on the Power Through Choices Project, a randomized clinical trial evaluating teen pregnancy prevention programs for youth in out-of-home care. I gained experience in data collection, survey design, data cleaning, grant writing, data analysis and writing for scientific journals,” Moore said.

She added that her research interests have long been in the area of teen pregnancy prevention, contraception use and youth assets. In addition, Moore has a keen interest in health disparities.

“Now, I have the opportunity to address these disparities in tangible ways through a community-wide equity grant,” Moore said. “My research interests are being translated into practice to improve the health of Riley County.”

For Moore, the Hudson Fellowship meant the ability to focus on her research and dissertation without the stress of rising tuition costs, but it was more than just financial support.

“Dr. and Mr. Hudson also connected me with professionals in my area of interest – teen pregnancy prevention. I am thankful for their philanthropy and continued support of the College of Public Health,” she said. “There’s always a bit of pressure being the first of anything. You want to succeed and pave the way for future fellows. I am grateful the Hudsons gave me the chance to make a difference in public health.”

# From Research to Public Health

## *A Journey of Science Driven by Tenacity and Discovery*

“It’s a fantastic field, and you will feel good about what you are doing regardless of what you are doing.”

How a physician, renowned for saving hundreds of thousands of lives each year with a 4-cent fix, describes public health.

Alfred Sommer, M.D., M.H.S., best known for his research into vitamin A deficiency, was guest speaker at the 2017 Hudson Fellows Symposium, sharing highlights of a decades-long career in ophthalmology, epidemiology, micronutrient research, disaster relief and more.

Sommer proved that vitamin A deficiency dramatically increased childhood morbidity and mortality from infectious disease, and that a 2-cent

dose of vitamin A twice a year not only prevented and cured eye disease, but also reduced childhood deaths by 34 percent. As a result of his work, the World Health Organization, UNICEF and their partners now annually provide more than 400 million vitamin A supplements worldwide, literally saving hundreds of thousands of lives a year.

It sounds easy when written in a paragraph on paper. Yet, it was anything but for Sommer and his team of researchers, who spent years working to convince the world that their findings were not only valid, but that they mattered.

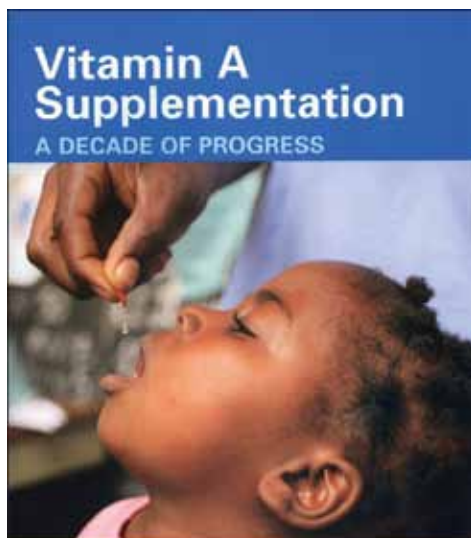
“It was really quite astonishing how hard it was. This first paper showed this close association. They didn’t try to prove or disprove it, they simply ignored it,” he said. “No one cared. Most kids with severe vitamin A deficiency are very sick. If left untreated, 95 percent will die.”

Sommer was undeterred. He went back to the field to collect still more data, conducting additional studies that verified again the initial findings. His determination propelled him forward.

“It was so antithetical to what people believed, but the data was rock-solid,”

Sommer said. “And once you have rock-solid data and you know it’s not wrong – that’s what gives you the ability to keep going. We knew we were right.”

Sommer soon learned that, as with



Dr. Alfred Sommer’s research led to the adoption of a global effort aimed at preventing blindness and death through vitamin A supplementation

many other aspects of life, economics is king. Research showing vitamin A could prevent blindness was not enough. However, when the data showed that prophylactic vitamin A could reduce mortality by 50 percent, public health leaders worldwide began to listen.

“How much do you spend to save one child’s life? It was most cost effective,” Sommer explained. “Half a billion vitamin A doses a year would save the lives of 300,000 children a year.”

Sommer is a staunch believer in the power of epidemiology and quantitative analysis of data in protecting and improving the public’s health. Perhaps it is no surprise that he was at the helm





Trained as an ophthalmologist and epidemiologist, Dr. Alfred Sommer first discovered the role of vitamin A deficiency in eye disease and blindness. (Photo provided by Dr. Sommer)



Dr. Alfred Sommer is pictured with the team of researchers who worked with him to identify vitamin A deficiency as the cause of child vision loss and deaths. Sommer believes strongly in the importance of educating the next generation of public health researchers and professionals; and several members of his research team went on to serve as faculty at the Johns Hopkins College of Public Health where Sommer served as dean from 1990 to 2005. Sommer currently is Dean Emeritus as well as a Johns Hopkins University Distinguished Service Professor. (Photo provided by Dr. Sommer)

of the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health when it moved from the brink of financial disaster to financial security, thanks to an enviable endowment that is fast approaching \$1 billion.

“My first year as dean was my worst year,” Sommer said. “The college’s endowment was gone when I took over, and we were running a \$3 million deficit. I was thinking, ‘The oldest school of public health was going to go out of business, and on my watch.’ We had done all the belt tightening we could do. So I went out and thought, ‘Who has money?’ Everything in life is about being at the right place at the right time.”

With his college on the brink of extinction, serendipity stepped in. Sommer and his wife were introduced to a new trustee, whose daughter was considering attending the same school his daughter had attended. That new trustee was businessman, politician and philanthropist Michael Bloomberg. They became friends, and soon Sommer said he got the opportunity to share his “three-minute elevator speech” about public health. Bloomberg was sold on it almost instantly.

*How much do you spend to save one child’s life? It was most cost effective.*

“He went around telling all of his fellow trustees that medical school is OK, but the school of public health is saving more lives than the medical school ever will,” Sommer said. Bloomberg became an advocate and a donor. Today, the college bears his name. He also inspired the college’s motto, a motto coined by Sommer himself — “Saving lives a million at a time.”

It’s a line that could be a motto for Sommer’s own life, as millions worldwide have been saved because of his vision, his work and his steadfast commitment to public health. ◀

# Protecting the Public's Health in a Time of Change

**T**ranslating existing data and research into public health advocacy and policy support in a non-partisan way is critical to protecting the public's health.

That was a core message in the Public Health Grand Rounds presentation delivered by John Auerbach, M.B.A., president and CEO of Trust for America's Health and former associate director for policy at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Auerbach spoke to a crowded auditorium of students, faculty and community leaders, pointing out five key trends that shape the environment in which public health exists in this country.



Dean Gary Raskob with John Auerbach and Terry Cline, Ph.D., former Commissioner of the Oklahoma State Department of Health and Secretary of Health and Human Services.

The first is the fact that, politics aside, nearly 20 million more Americans now have health insurance than before passage of the Affordable Care Act, commonly referred to as Obamacare. Auerbach said in Oklahoma there are approximately 146,000 more peo-

ple insured through the health care exchange, a change that allows for greater access to preventive health care and ultimately can result in reduced health care costs.

"How health care costs are paid is changing," Auerbach said, detailing the second important trend. "We are seeing a shift from a fee-based system to a value-based system. Why does that matter? Because moving to a value-based system gives you more flexibility in terms of how health care costs are paid."

The next important trend, according to Auerbach, is the emergence of new clinical care models. That means that a person goes into a health care system that oversees his or her total health. That shifts the focus to preventing illness, not just treating it. He said it also opens the door for new innovation in public health. He pointed out that treatment alone often is not adequate to ensure individuals achieve or maintain health. That's because so many factors influence their ability to follow their health care provider's advice. For instance, if a patient has been told to eat more fresh fruit and vegetables, but they have no car and no grocery store within walking distance, it is going to be very difficult for them to comply. Such an example points to the need for business, civic and community leaders to be engaged in public health discussions.

"Demographics are changing, but health care does not always reflect that," Auerbach said of the fourth critical trend shaping public health.

As an example, he pointed to the fact that the number of Americans over the age of 65 continues to grow, and yet there are not sufficient resources for dementia care.



"We need to be thinking not what we have, but what we need," Auerbach said. "Public health must work with other sectors – transportation, education, public safety. We need to bring everyone to the table to determine how policies and changes can positively impact public health."

Finally, at a time of growing need for public health outreach, advocacy and intervention, resources are dwindling, said Auerbach, detailing the fifth critical trend impacting public health in America.

"In general, public health has lost at the federal, state and local level," Auerbach said. "We need less focus on direct care and more positive public health policy. The focus has to be on laws and regulations that create an environment where it is easier for people to be healthier. Smoking is a prime example of that. We know that increasing the cost of tobacco products is the most effective way to drive down use."

Auerbach concluded that protecting the public's health will require a shift in thinking and funding as well as the implementation of evidence-based interventions that have been shown to be not only effective, but cost effective as well. ◀



PUBLIC HEALTH

# *In Action*



## **BUILDING A LEGACY** *The Power of Giving*



*The* UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA  
**Health Sciences Center**  
*College of Public Health*

# Mentor-Inspired Scholarship

**Gift Honors Professor by Investing in the Future of Public Health**



**M**ujahid Rizvi, M.D., was a young man who grew up in England and Pakistan. He graduated in medicine from The Aga Khan University in Karachi Pakistan and hoped to pursue a graduate medical education in the United States when he arrived here in 1998.

Rizvi landed in research at Johns Hopkins University and began building his resume.

“I knew how difficult it was to be selected for a competitive residency program. So I looked for research options to try to improve my chances. I also felt an additional degree, perhaps a master’s degree in epidemiology and biostatistics, would strengthen my research credentials, help with my ability to contribute to medical research and prove valuable to my clinical practice, too,” Rizvi said.

Rizvi saw opportunity in public health graduate education. OU College of Public Health professor James George, M.D., saw something in Rizvi, too, when they first met. Rizvi had come to Oklahoma City to visit his sister, who was working on a research project at the college with George and Sara Vesely, Ph.D., also a student at the college at the time.

“I was impressed by Mujahid, and asked



if he would consider working with us,” said George. “I didn’t think he would. I assumed he thought Johns Hopkins was much more glamorous, but he did come to work with us.”

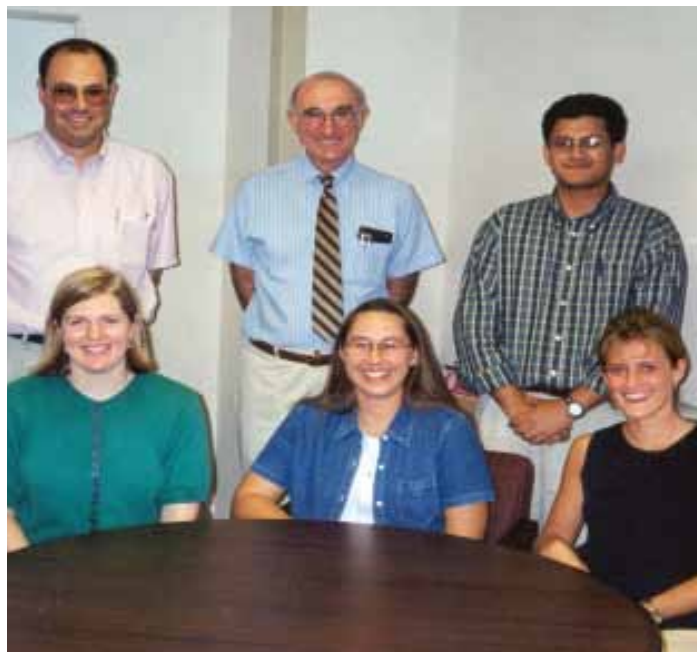
George said they told Rizvi that their requirement was that he enroll in the College of Public Health and complete an M.P.H. degree.

“Mujahid’s three years with us were valuable for everyone. He was an outstanding student. He published important papers. His paper describing the high frequency of severe adverse reactions to the common medical procedure of plasma exchange was his practicum project. It has endured for over 20 years as the principal citation for this procedure,” George said.

He described Rizvi as totally dedicated, humble and a joy to work with. George’s mentorship didn’t end with Rizvi’s graduation.

“He continued to help guide me through both my residency and fellowship,” Rizvi said. “He visited me in Gainesville, Florida, where I did my residency, and in Chicago while I was at Northwestern. And we still keep in touch after all these years. Of course, now we talk less about hematology and more about family, kids, Sooner football, politics and life.”

George beams with pride when describing Rizvi’s success, and Rizvi is filled with gratitude when discussing his mentor and friend.



Mujahid Rizvi, M.D. (right, back row) is pictured in this photo from the 90s with Dean Raskob and James George, M.D. (also back row) and Sara Vesely, Ph.D. (front row, left) and two other students at the college.

“I will always be indebted to Dr. George for helping me advance my career,” Rizvi said. “I was looking for a way to honor Dr. George and also to help the College of Public Health. Dean Raskob was very flexible in helping my wife, Erin, and me establish a named scholarship in his honor.”

The James N. George Scholarship in Biostatistics and Epidemiology was announced for the first time at the annual scholarship luncheon in 2011, taking Dr. George completely by surprise.

“I was deeply moved and I thought, ‘This is vintage Mujahid.’ He is much more than a great doctor. He thinks clearly of the future. He understands how he can help tomorrow’s students as we helped him 20 years ago,” George remarked.

Each year for six years now, Rizvi and his family look forward to hearing about the student who is the recipient of the scholarship. They believe there is no better way to honor one’s mentor than by helping another person with his or her education. George agrees.

“Today’s public health students are the guarantee of our nations’ health tomorrow. Our goal is to train students who, like Mujahid, will become community leaders, caring for the public’s health. For many students, though, the cost of education is overwhelming. Gifts like Mujahid’s are a critical resource,” George said. ◀



The Rizvi family honored mentor James George, M.D., by creating a scholarship at the college named for George. Pictured are Erin Brender, Sulayman Rizvi, Mujahid Rizvi and Rayan Rizvi with the family pet, Brady.

# Funding the Future of Public Health

## Endowed Scholarships Lay the Foundation for Success

*“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”*

Nelson Mandela

The education of tomorrow's public health professionals and researchers is at the core of the University of Oklahoma College of Public Health's mission. The college has made it a priority to increase the amount of financial support given to students through scholarships.

“We aim each year to attract top students to the college. As such, private giving has always been important, and we continue to work to increase our scholarship offerings for outstanding students, who strive to balance work, home and school,” said Dean Gary Raskob, Ph.D. “It is especially important in these challenging and uncertain economic times.”

Scholarships are established as endowed accounts with minimum balances of at least \$25,000. As the principal balances grow through the support of alumni and friends, the increase in earnings allows the annual awards to increase as well.

“Our goal is to get each scholarship's principal balance to a \$50,000 minimum. This generates annual earnings of about \$2,500 per year, which allows for the scholarship to be awarded in perpetuity,” Raskob explained.

Scholarships have been established to honor faculty members and mentors, former students, individuals and families, organizations, companies and corporations.

“We were motivated by the generosity of others who had given scholarships to me in my undergraduate days and to other members of our family,” said Mary Jane Calvey of the scholarship established in the Calvey family's name. “It is gratifying to meet the students and to recognize that we are sowing the seeds for the fu-

ture. A legacy can begin before you die and help more people in the present as well as in the future.”

Leslie Hudson, Ph.D., a former student and faculty member of the college, and her husband, Clifford Hudson, J.D., first established a scholarship in their family's name. They also created the Hudson Fellows program, which is helping talented scholars at the college advance their public health research and education.

“Educating and supporting the future generation of public health scientists is critical to improving the



Dean Gary Raskob presents Kaitlin McGrew with the 2017 Hudson Family Scholarship.

health of Oklahoma and the nation,” said Hudson.

In 2003, the college awarded just three scholarships, totaling \$4,000. In the 2017-2018 academic year, 28 scholarships were awarded, totaling more than \$70,000. ◀

# Educators Invest in Public Health

Several College of Public Health faculty members have made financial commitments to provide scholarships to further the education of future public health researchers, professionals and leaders. Three of them share insights into their decision to do so.



“The decision to pursue my master's degree at the College of Public Health was a real turning point that helped open many opportunities in my career. I have enjoyed great success in my career in medicine and public health, and I want current and future students in public health to have the same opportunities. As the cost of education continues to climb, scholarships play an increasingly important role in allowing promising students to complete this training.”

Dale W. Bratzler, D.O., M.P.H.



“I joined the faculty of the college in 1991 and my wife joined the faculty at the OU Health Sciences Center in 1994. At some point, we will be retiring, and an ongoing scholarship seemed like the best way to keep supporting students even after we retire. Because graduate education is expensive, the program a student chooses often comes down to an economic decision. Scholarships are essential in attracting and retaining highly qualified students.”

David Johnson, Ph.D.

“We have many exceptional students at the College of Public Health. A named scholarship is an excellent way to recognize their outstanding achievements and to encourage them to set and reach even higher goals. Many of our students have to study and support themselves simultaneously, and it's not easy. Scholarships can not only increase their confidence, but also help to meet their financial needs.”

Elisa Lee, Ph.D.



A growing number of scholarships named in honor of donors, faculty, mentors and individuals who have made positive contributions to advancing the field of public health are offered through the OU College Public Health. These scholarships play an integral role in ensuring the education of tomorrow's health care professionals, researchers and academicians by defraying some of the cost of graduate education. We are grateful to all of those who have or will join us in these efforts.

## Azimi Family Scholarship



The scholarship was established in 2017 by Mehdi Azimi, Ph.D., 1981 alumnus of the College of Public Health. Azimi has been involved in the consultation practice of development, implementation and administration of public and environmental health and risk management through promotion and prevention since 1978 for private companies, government agencies, health care facilities, hospitals and prison systems nationally and internationally. Azimi, who now owns his own risk management company and has a strong passion for environmental health, wishes to give back and support future public health professionals.

## Edward N. Brandt Jr. Scholarship



The scholarship was established in 2004 to honor Edward N. Brandt Jr., M.D. (1933-2007). Brandt was professor emeritus at the OU College of Public Health and College of Medicine, and an avid Sooner fan.

He served as dean of Graduate Studies and College of Medicine at University of Texas Medical Branch, the vice chancellor for health affairs at University of Texas System and as president at University of Maryland at Baltimore. He also served as executive dean for OU College of Medicine. Brandt was appointed by President Ronald Reagan as assistant secretary of health, Department of Health and Human Services. He was recognized by many as the godfather of women's health, increasing the national awareness of women's health and health care. He was an elected member of Institutes of Medicine and Fellowship in the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

## Dale W. Bratzler Scholarship



The scholarship was established in 2016 by Dr. Dale W. Bratzler, D.O., M.P.H., to provide scholarships to students pursuing an M.P.H. or M.H.A. degree in the area of health administration and policy. Bratzler is a physi-

cian with the university who has a strong commitment to helping OU students succeed and meet their professional goals and careers. A professor and associate dean in the College of Public Health, he also is an alumnus, earning his M.P.H. in 1996.

## Burns-Schaiff Scholarship



The scholarship was established in 2016 to honor Tim and Robyn (Burns) Schaiff. Robyn is a critical care pharmacotherapy specialist and works as

a cardiovascular senior medical director at Pfizer. Tim is a Ph.D. molecular biologist currently working for a start-up company developing point-of-care assays. The Schaiffs met while undergraduates at the University of Kansas. They both received their doctoral degrees from the University of Iowa and currently reside in the greater St. Louis area. The preference for this scholarship is to support practicum experience or research in the area of tobacco dependence cessation and/or tobacco prevention.

## Calvey Family Scholarship



Mary Jane Calvey

The scholarship was established in 2004 to honor the Calvey Family, supporters of the next generation of public health professionals. Harry J. Calvey (deceased) was active in the oil and gas industry in Oklahoma for many years. Kevin Calvey, J.D., served in the Oklahoma Legislature. Mike Calvey runs a successful venture firm. Cathy Calvey Chandler is a full-time mother and occupational therapist. Beth Calvey Bohanon, D.D.S., practices in Oklahoma City. Mary Jane Calvey runs an environmental consulting firm, Real World Management Solutions, and serves on the Board of Advisors for the OU College of Public Health.

## Ronald L. Coleman Scholarship



The scholarship was established in 2009 to honor Ronald L. Coleman, Ph.D. (1934-2008). Coleman served OU for 37 years, 15 years as chair of the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health. He

was an environmental toxicologist whose area of research focused on biochemical effects of carbon black, metals and petroleum products. He was recognized with several campus-wide awards for his commitment to students and outstanding teaching. He was a lifelong learner who was never limited by "the box" and believed success comes from persistence and hard work. He was widely published, including book chapters, national presentations and prestigious scholarly journals. He was a modest man, who didn't take himself too seriously and who valued personal integrity above all else. He was devoted to his faith, family, community and service.

## ConocoPhillips Occupational and Environmental Health Endowed Scholarship



The scholarship was established in 2011 by ConocoPhillips. ConocoPhillips' primary goal is to operate a safe and efficient business that protects communities and environments. These scholarships were created to help advance public health education at OU and target students whose career paths align with the company's goal. This endowment is the first corporate-sponsored scholarship in the college. The endowment enhances existing support by ConocoPhillips, including three-month summer internships and participation in programs that provide students access to career opportunities and ways to stay current in the field.

## COPH Advisory Board Scholarship



The scholarship was established in 2011 by the College of Public Health Advisory Board. Following the Scholarship Recognition Luncheon in August 2010, discussion was held at the COPH Advisory Board meeting about the growth of the college's scholarship opportunities, the impact scholarships have on students' lives and career development, and specific actions the board might take to help further this priority. A suggestion was made that the board establish a scholarship. Over the course of



the next few months, several members offered to give dollar-for-dollar matches, and through the commitment and generosity of the group, \$58,507 was initially raised for the endowment. As additional gifts to the fund increase the principal, the number of annual awards can expand.

#### **Roy B. Deal Jr. Scholarship**



The scholarship was established in 2001 to honor Roy B. Deal, Jr., Ph.D. (1919-2012). Deal earned his B.A. (1947), M.A. (1948) and Ph.D. (1953), all from the University of Oklahoma. He

served as general foreman with Boeing over the "experimental" shop on the first B-29, followed by a year in the U.S. Navy teaching radar technologies. He was an assistant professor in the Department of Mathematics at Oklahoma State University, including a year of study and research at University of Paris (Sorbonne). He was also was professor in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology at OUHSC (1967). Deal traveled the globe, with sabbaticals at the universities of Dublin, Manchester, London, Stockholm, Athens, and Pahlavia (Iran). He retired from OUHSC in 1985 with a distinguished career and awards too numerous to mention.

#### **David J. Falcone Memorial Scholarship**



The scholarship was established in 2001 to honor David J. Falcone, Ph.D. (1944-1996). Falcone earned his B.A. and Ph.D. from Duke University, and his M.A. from Arizona State University. He was regarded nationally and

internationally for his expertise in gerontology and long-term care. He was a faculty member at Duke University and served as associate editor for the *Journal of Health, Policy, Politics & Law*. Falcone was recruited to OU in 1992 to serve as chair and professor in the Department of Health Administration and Policy, and as associate director for the Oklahoma Center on Aging. He was recognized as a role model who intellectually stimulated and inspired students, earning the OUHSC Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award (1996). He was a major participant in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grants on long-term care and Oklahoma Rural Research and Demonstration Center.

#### **Rosetta Fisher Student Scholarship**



The scholarship was established in 2005 through the OU College of Public Health Alumni Association to honor Rosetta Fisher. Fisher was an OU employee for 33 years, the last 27 in the College of Public

Health. Her first position at the college was program admissions coordinator, handling recruitment, admissions, enrollment and graduation. She moved to administrative manager, overseeing the dean's office staff, college budget and first accreditation. Fisher ended her tenure as assistant to the dean. She was recognized with the Employee of the Month Award, International and African-American Student Association Award, COPH Alumni Association Service Award, and Regents' Award for Superior Service. She retired in 2005 and now pursues genealogy research and enjoys spending time with her grandchildren and nieces.

#### **James N. George Scholarship in Biostatistics and Epidemiology**



The scholarship was established in 2011 to honor James N. George, M.D. George is a George Lynn Cross Professor in the Department of Medicine (2005-present). He earned his medical de-

gree from Ohio State University in 1962 and trained in internal medicine and hematology at Vanderbilt University, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and the University of Rochester. He was on the faculty at the University of Texas in San Antonio, chief of OU Hematology-Oncology Section and director of the Hematology-Oncology Fellowship Program. George's current focus includes thrombocytopenia: describing the demographics, clinical course and outcomes of patients with immune thrombocytopenia, drug-induced thrombocytopenia and thrombotic thrombocytopenia purpura. He is active in the American Society of Hematology, having served as president in 2005.

#### **Edmund H. Gleason Scholarship**



The scholarship was established in 1998 to honor Cmdr. Edmund H. Gleason (1915-1986). Gleason received OU's first public health degree in 1949 (then housed in the Col-

lege of Arts and Sciences) using the GI bill (B.S. public health and sanitation). His first job following graduation was as the senior city-county sanitarian in Lawton, enforcing public health and state ordinances on food safety and overseeing implementation of a state-of-the-art sanitary landfill, which was subsequently used as a model for others. He participated in the Passage to Freedom (1954), a naval operation that evacuated over 1 million Vietnamese refugees from Haiphong south to Saigon. He received the Vietnamese Presidential Unit Citation and Secretary of the Navy Commendation for his efforts. Gleason received an M.P.H. in sanitary science in 1958 from UC-Berkeley. He had a distinguished military career as a public health officer in the U.S. Navy, with over 30 years of service.

#### **Henley Family Scholarship**



The scholarship was established in 2013 by E. Scott, Susie, Regan and Shannon Henley to support students who are pursuing an M.P.H. or M.H.A. degree in the Department of Health

Administration and Policy. E. Scott Henley, alumnus of the Department of Health Administration and Policy, earned his Ph.D. in 1981 from the College of Public Health. He is the president of Henley Associates, Inc. and serves a member of the COPH Advisory Board.

#### **Hudson Family Scholarship**



The scholarship was established in 2013 to assist students preparing for a community-based health practice. Priority is given to students who pursue a degree in the Department

of Biostatistics and Epidemiology. Leslie and Clifford Hudson are both graduates of the University of Oklahoma and have a long history of supporting the academic mission of the institution. Hudson received her M.P.H. in 1986 and Ph.D. in epidemiology in 1990. In the past, she served as an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology and is currently a member of the COPH Advisory Board. The Hudsons are involved in a variety of philanthropic activities in the state and nationally. Clifford Hudson is the chairman, president and CEO of Sonic Corp.



### Brent Hurd Scholarship



The scholarship was established in 2008 to honor Brent Hurd (1973-2005). Hurd earned a B.A. in Economics from University of Rochester. He was a member of Chi Phi Phi fraternity. He hosted a popular campus radio show and was a great DJ with extensive knowledge of music. He married his college sweetheart, Denise Brien, in 1998. Hurd was a natural athlete who loved to travel and hike. He was working as a research assistant at the Oklahoma State Department of Health and in the final year of earning a master's degree in health administration when his life was cut short.

### Johnson Family Scholarship



The scholarship was established in 2016 by Dr. and Mrs. David L. Johnson and their family to provide scholarships to students pursuing studies in the area of occupational and environmental health. The Johnsons are both long-time university employees with a commitment to helping OU students succeed and meet their professional goals and careers. Dr. Johnson, chair of the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health and associate dean in the College of Public Health, has been with the university since 1991, and Patsy Johnson, senior administrative manager in the College of Allied Health Department of Nutritional Sciences, has been with the university since 1993.

### Robert W. Ketner Scholarship



The scholarship was established in 1999 to honor Robert W. Ketner, Ph.D. (1925-1995). Ketner earned his B.A. and Ph.D. from OU, and Master of Social Work from the University of Colorado. He served as a psychiatric social worker in Kansas, faculty member in the OU School of Social Work, and later, in CPH's Department of Health Promotion Sciences. He was an inspired public health advocate in response to his own life experiences with polio and the stigma that surrounded it. His strongest relationships outside of family were with his students and faculty colleagues. Ketner was instrumental in keeping the CPH from being closed by

the Legislature in the early 1970s due to the severe budgetary crisis. He shared a strong bond with his twin brother, William.

### Elisa T. Lee Scholarship



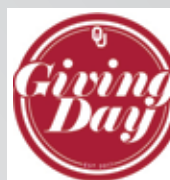
The scholarship was established in 2010 to honor Elisa T. Lee, Ph.D. Lee is a George Lynn Cross Research Professor Emeritus and Regents' Professor Emeritus in Biostatistics and Epidemiology, and served as dean of the college from 1994-2002. She was the founder and director of the Center for American Indian Health Research from 1994 to 2017, when she retired. She is devoted to research and training to improve health and reduce health disparities in the American Indian population. Lee spent over 30 years focusing on research in the Native American population, bringing more than \$50 million in research funds to OU, mostly from the National Institutes of Health. She has authored more than 250 technical papers in a variety of prestigious journals, primarily focused on Indian health and particularly relating to diabetes, cardiovascular disease and eye disease. Her book *Statistical Methods for Survival Data Analysis*, published by John Wiley & Sons, is now in its fourth edition and has been a popular textbook and reference. She served on numerous advisory committees and study sections of many federal and other agencies, including the NIH, Food and Drug Administration, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and Institute of Medicine.

### Dan J. Macer Scholarship



The scholarship was established in 1997 to honor Dan J. Macer (1917-2001). Macer earned his M.S. in health administration from Northwestern University. He retired as a major in the U.S. Army in 1946 and was awarded the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and Distinguished Unit Badge for exemplary acts while serving in WWII. He held senior executive positions in the Veterans Administration and U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and VA Medical Center in Oklahoma City. Macer also held leadership roles in various community organizations. He served as interim dean of CPH in 1980. He also served as president of Dan J. Macer Inc., in which he was a consultant to health fields, professional associations and health planners.

### OU Giving Day Scholarship



This scholarship was established to celebrate the gifts received from the College of Public Health OU Giving Day, held on Feb. 28, 2017. The college participated in the university's first-ever, 24-hour campus-wide campaign to raise funds directly to support student scholarships. Our goal was met thanks to the alumni, donors and friends of the college. The funds in 2017 are being used to support an M.P.H. student.

### Diane E. Riggert Scholarship



The scholarship was established in 2016 by Dr. Aaron Boyd and Tanja Krous Boyd to honor Tanja's mother, Diane E. Riggert, R.N., B.S.N., M.P.H., and to support a registered nurse pursuing a Master's of Public Health degree. Riggert is a CPH alumna and registered nurse who later earned her M.P.H. degree. She taught pediatric nursing, and upon completion of her M.P.H. from OU, she worked at the Seattle Children's Hospital, where she was the manager of Occupational Health Services.

### J.C. Watts Family Health and Wellness Scholarship



This scholarship was established in 2015 in memory of J.C. Watts, Sr. In 2015, the family of J.C. Watts, Jr. directed the funds be used to recruit and support students who study the health and wellness of diverse populations. J.C. Watts, Jr. is a nationally recognized athlete who played on the OU football team. He was named Orange Bowl MVP in 1980 and 1981 and inducted into the Orange Bowl Hall of Fame in 1992. Watts was the first African American congressman in the U.S. House of Representatives elected from Oklahoma. He served four terms in the U.S. Congress and continues his life's work today as a political consultant and advocate for autonomy in low-income families. Watts also served as president and CEO of Feed the Children. He and his wife, Frankie, reside in Norman.

# Your Gift Matters

**U**nwavering commitment to students remains our top priority, and the University of Oklahoma College of Public Health seeks your help to continue producing the next generation of health care professionals and leaders.

Scholarships remain a top priority for the College of Public Health. As education costs continue to rise, the need to support students through both merit and need-based awards becomes increasingly important. Scholarships allow the college to continue to attract top students and young scholars to the college, where they will train to be the public health professionals and leaders of tomorrow.

“By contributing to an established scholarship, or starting one of your own, you’re making a lasting investment in the future of public health in this state, this nation and the world,” said Kyn-dall Wahkinney, director of Alumni Affairs and Development at the college.

Department giving helps further the research and educational goals of individual departments within the college. Each department relies on gifts that assure excellence within their programs. Your donation may be used to support student assistantships, invite speakers with special significance to student and faculty members, upgrade and purchase classroom or laboratory equipment, or meet other needs that arise.

“All gifts, large or small, work together to support the OU Col-

lege of Public Health and are needed and greatly valued,” Wahkinney said.

She added some of the ways to give to the college include gifts of cash and/or securities, corporate matching gifts, memorial or tribute gifts and planned gifts.

“Planned giving is a wonderful way to show your support for the mission of the College of Public Health. It is also a way to accommodate your own personal, financial, estate-planning and philanthropic goals. Planned giving allows you to give to the college, while still meeting your current income needs and also taking advantage of current tax incentives,” Wahkinney said.

There are many ways to give, and knowing exactly which the best fit is for you can sometimes be challenging, but help is always just a phone call or email away.

“We are here to answer your questions, provide guidance and help you maneuver the process more smoothly,” she said. ◀



## COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

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- Oklahoma's only accredited college of public health
- One of only 59 accredited schools of public health in the nation
- A dynamic curriculum addressing local, national and global public health issues
- In-demand degrees with flexible options
- Top faculty with significant professional experience
- A robust and growing scholarship program
- More than \$700,000 in graduate student support
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The University of Oklahoma*

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# Honoring Public Health

## 2017-2018 Scholarship Recipients

### Azimi Family Scholarship

#### **Jacob Bartels**

Jacob Bartels is a doctoral student in the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health. His research involves the application of an innovative chemical assay to assess the oxidative potential of various industrial aerosol exposures in the occupational environment. Bartels plans on utilizing his research and educational experience to increase his practical knowledge in an industrial field before attaining his ultimate career goal of becoming a professor.

### Edward N. Brandt Jr. Scholarship

#### **Elizabeth Forsythe**

Elizabeth Forsythe is currently a third-year student in the OU College of Medicine. She spent much of 2016 coordinating a study with Dr. David Kem that focused on autoimmune mechanisms for diseases including Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome and Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome. Forsythe is a committed volunteer, having led women's health workshops in rural Peru and working at a free women's health clinic in south Oklahoma City. She is passionate about women's health and preventive medicine, and looks forward

to putting those passions into practice as a physician when she graduates in 2019.

#### **Melissa Q. Doan**

Melissa Doan is a second-year medical student in the OU College of Medicine. Having a deep connection to her community, she has a passion for non-profit work, especially Camp Kesem, a nationwide effort led by college students that supports children whose parent has been diagnosed with cancer. Doan has served in several leadership positions throughout her time at OU and continues to promote Camp Kesem's mission as an advisory board member and camp adviser.

### Dale W. Bratzler Scholarship

#### **Ashiq Zaman**

After earning his medical degree from the OU College of Medicine in 2012, Ashiq Zaman spent four years training in internal medicine and neurology. He currently is pursuing his Master of Health Administration. Dr. Zaman also serves as health editor of the Oklahoma-based news and commentary website, Non-Doc.com. In this capacity, he has written about public health and health policy, and has collaborated with health care leaders and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Zaman currently is an administrative resident at Mercy Hospital, where his interests and activities include quality and process improvement, lean transformation and patient safety.

### Burns-Schaiff Scholarship

#### **Jenn Dilley**

Jenn Dilley is a second-year Master of Public Health student in Epidemiology. She currently works as a graduate research assistant for a project aimed at combating the heavy advertisement of tobacco. Dilley is passionate about creating a higher quality of life at a population level, especially in Oklahoma.

### Calvey Family Scholarship

#### **Ozair Naqvi**

Ozair Naqvi is currently pursuing a Master of Science degree in epidemiology. He is keenly interested in outbreak investigation, notably of emerging and zoonotic diseases. Naqvi has contributed to community health on the local level with consumer protection at the Oklahoma City-County Health Department and worked at the state level on case investigations with Acute Disease Services at the Oklahoma State Department of Health. During the past academic year, he worked as a graduate research assistant on regional Zika and West Nile Virus preparedness workshops for Oklahoma. Following the completion of his master's degree, Ozair plans to pursue a Ph.D. in epidemiology.

## **Ronald L. Coleman Scholarship**

### **Kathleen Aithinne**

Kathleen “Kae” Aithinne earned a master’s degree in industrial hygiene and environmental health sciences from OUHSC. She completed a competitive internship at Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory in 2016. This is her first year in the Occupational and Environmental Health doctoral program and she is focused on occupational and environmental exposure to bio aerosols.

## **ConocoPhillips Occupational and Environmental Health Endowed Scholarship**

### **Taylor Reeves**

Taylor Reeves is currently a second-year student, working toward a master’s degree in industrial hygiene. Over the summer, Reeves worked as a graduate research assistant for Dr. Margaret Phillips, whose research focuses on occupational and environmental hazard exposure assessment as well as determinants of exposure. After graduation, Reeves plans to pursue a career in the oil industry.

### **C. Picard Cheyne**

C. Picard “Cody” Cheyne is a second-year master’s student in the Industrial Hygiene and Environmental Health program at the OU Health Sciences Center. Upon the completion of the M.S. and eventually a Ph.D. in the same field, he would like to stay within the realm of academia and conduct research within the fields of radiation and/or aerosols sciences. Apart from being a full-time student, Cheyne also is an infantry officer in the Oklahoma Army National Guard with two deployments in the past seven years of service.

## **COPH Advisory Board Scholarship**

### **Tyler Davis**

Tyler Davis is a fourth-year J.D./M.H.A. candidate, working on both a master’s in health administration from the College of Public Health and a juris doctor from the University of Oklahoma College of Law. As a student, he has served in leadership roles with the American College of Healthcare Executives Student Affiliate Chapter and the College of Public Health Student Association. Davis also has completed internships at St. Anthony Hospital and the United States Department of Justice, each with a focus in health law and health administration. Davis looks forward to a career in the health industry.

## **Roy B. Deal Jr. Scholarship**

### **Lance Ford**

Lance Ford is a second-year master’s student in biostatistics. He has worked in the OU Health Sciences Center’s Biostatistics and Epidemiology Research Design and Analysis Center, contributing to research projects in the departments of Neurology, Rehabilitation Sciences and Geriatric Medicine. Ford’s work includes assisting with data analysis for coated-platelet trends over time, vibration treatment interventions and a mental-health program assessment. He plans to continue to collaborate with researchers from across the campus in an effort to help reduce health disparities among Oklahomans.

## **David J. Falcone Memorial Scholarship**

### **Allison Jech**

Allison Jech is a second-year student working toward her master’s degree in health administration. Jech interned at the Oklahoma City Veterans Administration Medical Center in the summer of 2017, conducting LEAN projects within the Emergency Department. The focus of those projects was to decrease wait times and increase access for veterans. Jech also coordinated and implemented the Nurse First program, phlebotomy, and the addition of X-ray in the Emergency Department. She currently is working on a space utilization program at the VA.

## **Rosetta Fisher Student Scholarship**

### **Lindsay Denson**

Lindsay Denson is a doctoral student in epidemiology. Denson currently serves as epidemiologist for the Oklahoma Birth Defects Registry at the Oklahoma State Department of Health, where she is able to combine her knowledge and skills in both sonography and epidemiology. Denson’s work with the health department also has given her the opportunity to represent Oklahoma at the national level through the CDC’s Zika Pregnancy and Birth Defects Task Force. Denson has published five manuscripts and is primary author on four of them. Her overarching career goal is to continue to focus on improving the lives of women and children in Oklahoma through education and research.

### **Megan Kish**

With a degree in social work and a passion for health, Megan Kish is now pursuing a master’s in health promotion sciences. Before coming to the College of Public Health, Kish

worked with a non-profit organization in Columbus, Ohio, that aimed to create healthy communities through food education, access and advocacy. Her goal is to contribute to research that aims to protect the physical and mental health of children.

## **James N. George Scholarship in Biostatistics and Epidemiology**

### **Quyen Duong**

Quyen Duong is working toward her doctorate in biostatistics. She has a background in mathematics and statistics. Currently, Duong is working on her dissertation, which involves developing models to predict infants at risk for severe intraventricular hemorrhage using cerebral tissue oxygenation index measures from near infrared headbands. Duong also was named a 2017 Hudson Fellow in Public Health earlier this year.

## **Edmund H. Gleason Scholarship**

### **Meredith McGuire**

Meredith McGuire is a second-year M.P.H. student in epidemiology at the College of Public Health. Last year, she worked as a graduate research assistant with Dr. Sydney Martinez on the Cherokee Nation Cancer Research grant. She currently works in the surgery department at Norman Regional Healthplex, and as a scribe for Dr. James Bond at Oklahoma Sports & Orthopedics Institute in Norman. McGuire hopes to attend medical school next year, and to incorporate her master’s degree in her future studies and career.

## **Henley Family Scholarship**

### **Taylor Hayes**

Taylor Hayes studied biology at Texas Christian University, graduating in May 2017 with a Bachelor of Science degree. She currently is a first-year student in the Master of Health Administration program at the College of Public Health. Her career goal upon completion of her master’s degree is to work in administration at a cancer institute.

## **Hudson Family Scholarship**

### **Kaitlin McGrew**

Kaitlin McGrew is a doctoral student in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology. With a background in nursing, she is interested in the use of public health strategies to prevent and reduce harm from Hepatitis C and substance use disorders. She has been a team member on several projects working to-



ward elimination of Hepatitis C in the Cherokee Nation. McGrew has served as a teaching assistant, secretary of the BSE Student Association and vice president of the OUHSC Running Club. She also was selected as a 2017 Hudson Fellow in Public Health.

### **Brent Hurd Scholarship**

#### **Brenna Wallach**

Brenna Wallach is a second-year candidate, working toward her master's degree in health administration. She was a Carl Albert Executive Fellow at the Oklahoma Healthcare Authority in the Project and Planning Management Office during the summer of 2017. Wallach continues to work part-time at the authority. Her research interests include maternal and child health, quality improvement and assurance, and reducing waste through agency/organizational collaboration.

### **Inaugural Johnson Family Scholarship**

#### **Marcio Luis S. Bezerra**

Marcio Luis S. Bezerra is a third-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health. Born and raised in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, he graduated with distinction from the Brazilian Army Military Academy with a bachelor's in military science – artillery. He subsequently earned degrees in physical education and theology, as well as a master's in occupational and environmental health while still serving as an officer in the Brazilian Army. Bezerra currently is studying metal exposures from metal fabrication processes and ways to prevent health problems in exposed workers. Upon completing his doctorate and retiring from the army, his career goals include teaching in higher education.

### **Robert W. Ketner Scholarship**

#### **Sameer Vali Gopalani**

Sameer Vali Gopalani is a first-year epidemiology doctoral student. Prior to commencing his studies at the OU College of Public Health, Gopalani worked for more than four years as an epidemiologist at the local, regional, national (Government of the Federated States of Micronesia), and international (World Health Organization) levels to strengthen surveillance and response systems. His research interests include identifying and better understanding factors associated with human papillomavirus vaccination among adolescents and vaccine-eligible adults.

### **Elisa T. Lee Scholarship**

#### **Munim H. Deen**

Munim H. Deen is a second-year epidemiology doctoral student at the College of Public Health. He also is a graduate research assistant at the Oklahoma Public Health Training Center, where he is collaborating on online training course development, tribal health and emergency preparedness. His basic and translational research experience includes immunogenetics, bacteriology, cancer and advance directives. A former newspaper columnist and laboratory scientist, Deen aspires to a career in public health research, teaching and administration.

### **Dan J. Macer Scholarship**

#### **Sara Greenlee**

Sara Greenlee is a second-year student, working toward her master's degree in industrial hygiene in the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health. She interned at Exxon Mobil's chemical plant and refinery in her home state of Louisiana in the summer of 2017. There, she focused on reducing chemical hazards at the complex. With a dedication to worker safety, Greenlee's career goal is to work as a certified industrial hygienist.

#### **Whitney Dockery Miller**

Whitney Dockery Miller is working toward earning both her juris doctor and Master in Health Administration degrees through a dual degree program of the OU College of Law and the OU College of Public Health. She currently is interning for INTEGRIS Health's legal counsel and as an administrative intern. Miller also is a 2017 Office of Minority Health Youth Health Equity Model of Practice Fellow. She has worked at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Oklahoma; the law firm of Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer and Feld; the Office of Minority Health, National Indian Health Board; a Cleveland County judge; Legal Aid of Oklahoma; and the U.S. House of Representatives. Miller is passionate about work aimed at targeting American Indian and minority health disparities. Her ultimate career goal is to serve as general counsel for a hospital or to serve as a hospital executive.

#### **Xi Chen**

After graduating with a medical degree from China Medical University, Xi "Sophia" Chen came to the United States to further her education. She completed her master's degree in biostatistics in 2016, and decided to continue her education by pursuing a doctorate in biostatistics. Chen hopes to build a career in pub-

lic health and research, leading public health studies and collaborating with interdisciplinary investigators in medical research.

#### **Joseph Geresi**

Joseph "Joey" Geresi currently is pursuing a J.D./M.H.A. dual-degree from the OU colleges of Public Health and Law. He serves as president of the student affiliate of ACHE and previously served as treasurer of the College of Public Health Student Association. He has completed administrative internships with Stillwater Medical Center and the Oklahoma Heart Hospital and remains involved in various community organizations.

### **OU Giving Day Scholarship**

#### **Mudassir Farooqui**

Mudassir Farooqui is a second-year student working toward his master's degree in public health in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology. Farooqui freely admits that his ultimate career goal is an ambitious one. He hopes to one day resolve health disparities among underserved populations. Currently he is working in the area of cancer epidemiology, developing strategies for better diagnosis and survival.

### **Diane E. Riggert Scholarship**

#### **Tracie Rochester**

Tracie Rochester R.N., B.S.N., is a second-year student working toward her M.P.H. in health promotion sciences. Rochester has worked as a public health nurse specializing in maternal and child health for 18 years in Oklahoma. She is passionate about health and plans to continue her career as a public health nurse, working to improve the lives and health of Oklahomans.

### **J.C. Watts Family Health and Wellness Scholarship**

#### **Motahareh Amiri**

Motahareh "Moti" Amiri studied medicine in Iran before coming to the United States. She currently is a second-year student working toward her M.P.H. in epidemiology. Amiri also works as a research assistant with the Sooner SUCCESS program. The program has helped familiarize her with community service programs that focus on children with special needs. Amiri assists with developing methodologies to assess community needs and to help families who are raising children with disabilities. Her area of interest is chronic disease prevention and she hopes to work as a chronic disease epidemiologist after earning her master's degree.



# Oklahoma Public Health Pioneer



**H**e is 82 years young, and for almost two-thirds of those years, his work has centered on public health in Oklahoma. In fact, when the OU College of Public Health got its start in 1966, Jay Smith was there, one of its very first graduate students.

Two years earlier, Smith graduated with a degree in education. He landed a job teaching biology and chemistry in high school, but it took less than a year for him to realize that was not what he wanted to do with his life.

"There was an opening at the state health department for an immunization worker in Tulsa, and I thought I'd do that just for the summer. Now, 53 years later, I am still here," he said, chuckling.

He might never have advanced so far were it not for the OU College of Public Health.

"The school of public health was just starting, and I was excited to watch it begin," Smith said.

Much has changed at the college over the years.

"Back then, the college was located in an old home on a corner near the campus, and our administrative offices were in the house next door."

There were no offices for faculty. In fact, he remembers taking tests back in a small closet space of the home.

"It really has come so far," Smith said. "The field of public health has come a long way, too. It is more respected now than it was at that time. People had no idea what public health was back then. When the college was first accredited, many didn't know if people would come."

Smith came, and so did his classmates. He credits the education he received with advancing his long-standing career with the health department.

"When I became deputy commissioner for local health services in 1980, a position I held for about three to four years, there

was a need in counties for administrators, and I always wanted to do that, to be involved with providing services directly to the public. So I requested to do that," Smith explained.

He quickly learned that overseeing public health services in multiple counties would not be without its challenges.

"Many people think that you've seen one health department, you've seen them all, but not so. Each health department is different. So we have broad rules and overarching goals, but we have to go about implementing those in different ways, aligning our efforts with what it best for a particular county or population."

"I would define public health as the science of trying to make the population healthier and of guarding the public against catastrophes and epidemics. It is the science of improving quality of life. I think it is critical to have colleges of public health. I think there should be one in every state, but that's not how it is," he said, adding that it makes his heart feel good to see how far the college has come.

Today, Smith serves as regional medical director with the department, overseeing staff and services in five counties. At one time, his duties included oversight of health department clinical operations in 10 counties. He left behind a career as a high school teacher to pursue a career in public health, but he did not leave education.

"I am still teaching. I teach every day in one way or another. It's just not in the classroom," Smith said.

After more than half a century in public health, he's not yet sure he is ready to retire, either.

"It's a good job, and I enjoy it. I always have enjoyed public health. I guess that's why I stayed in it for 53 years," he said. "Life is good." ◀



# Preventing Infection to Protect Public Health

## Associate Dean's Expertise Plays Key Role in Publication of New CDC Guidelines

**W**hat is the best way to prevent infections that add billions a year to health care costs in this nation?

That's the question Associate Dean of the OU College of Public Health Dale Bratzler, D.O., M.P.H., and other experts set out to answer in an extensive review of research related to surgical site infection, the most common and most expensive health care-associated infection in the United States.



It is estimated that costs related to surgical site infections run from \$3.5 billion to \$10 billion each year in the United States. In an effort to reduce the burden of these infections on both patients and the economy, newly updated, evidence-based CDC guidelines developed by Bratzler and fellow authors were published this year.

"We know that surgical site infections occur in approximately 2 to 5 percent of patients undergoing inpatient surgery. We also know the cost of treating patients with a surgical site infection is almost one and a half times

that of treating patients without such an infection and that 77 percent of deaths among patients with surgical site infections are directly attributable to the infection," explained Bratzler. "Our goal was to come up with the best guidance based upon existing evidence in an effort to ultimately improve patient safety, reduce costs and positively impact overall public health."

Bratzler and fellow authors did an exhaustive review of approximately 5,000 studies published from 1998 to 2014. Their detailed analysis produced newly updated guidelines that cover 14 key areas. Some of their key recommendations include:

1. Advising patients to take a full-body shower or bath with soap or an antiseptic agent the night before surgery
2. Administering intravenous antibiotics prior to incision for most operations, including cesarean delivery
3. Applying an alcohol-based agent to the skin prior to surgery in most cases
4. Eliminating the administration of antibiotics after the surgery is over and refraining from application of antimicrobial agents to the incision
5. Maintaining normal body temperature in patients during surgery and controlling blood sugar in diabetic and non-diabetic patients after surgery.

"We have learned a lot through this review of current evidence. However, there are unresolved issues related to preventing surgical site infections that definitely warrant further study to better safeguard the public's health," Bratzler added.

The new guidelines were published in *JAMA Surgery* (*JAMA Surg.* 2017; 152(8):784-791. doi: 10.1001/jamasurg.2017.0904) and can be found on the CDC's website. ◀

# Food Pharmacy

## Evaluating the Impact of Food Insecurity on Public Health

When free medication and free medical care for patients with high blood pressure failed to bring blood pressure under control, a researcher at the OU College of Public Health wondered if food – the right food – might do the trick.

Marianna Wetherill, Ph.D., R.D. N., L.D., believed food insecurity might be impacting the effectiveness of medical interventions targeting hypertension.

“Food insecurity is just a term we use to describe limited access to a healthy, stable food supply at the household level,” Wetherill explained. “In Oklahoma, we estimate that one in every six adults and one in every four children is food insecure.”

Before coming to academia, Wetherill spent 10 years working in a practice-based setting with Oklahoma’s HIV/AIDS population, individuals disproportionately affected by poverty and who also struggled with food insecurity on a chronic basis.

“Some very interesting research came out in other states looking at the role of food insecurity, HIV transmission, medication adherence and quality outcomes. So I was interested in seeing what food insecurity looks like for this population in Oklahoma,” she said. “We did a statewide assessment of food insecurity among low-income individuals seeking HIV services and found that two-thirds of them had food insecurity, which is one of the highest documented levels of food insecurity in an HIV/AIDS population in the United States.”

That work triggered Wetherill’s interest in expanding her work. She began looking at food insecurity in other populations, partnering with a diverse network of food assistance providers that included the Regional Food Bank and the Community Food Bank of eastern Oklahoma. Many of those who count on food pantry sites on a regular basis cannot afford medical care. So we decided to bring healthy food and other health promotion activities to them in an effort to improve health outcomes.

“Food insecurity is a psychological stressor. It’s a physiological stressor, and we think it plays a role in not only the development of disease, but also the person’s ability to manage their disease,” Wetherill said.

At the intersection of research, observation and results, a program known as the Food Pharmacy was born. It’s a collaborative project based at OU’s Wayman Tisdale Clinic in North Tulsa, a specialty health clinic operated by OU Physicians.

“The clinic was home to the heart improvement project already. Funded by the George Kaiser Foundation, that project aimed to reduce stroke mortality among uninsured individuals in the area by providing free medical care and medication. Yet, their blood pressure still was not under control,” Wetherill said.

The Food Pharmacy added another dimension to the research – food. The idea was to provide patients with medically-tailored, shelf-stable foods and produce, as well as nutrition services in addition to medications and medical monitoring, evaluation and care.

Partnering with the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma, the Food Pharmacy provides patients with a box of food once or twice a month. The box is filled with foods such as unsalted nuts, olive oil, whole grains, beans, vegetables, fruits and canned fatty fish. Recipes and spices like



Marianna Wetherill, Ph.D., R.D.N., L.D., carries a box of food from the Food Pharmacy for Andy Tibbs. (Photo by Tulsa World)

turmeric, cumin, garlic and cinnamon, known for their anti-inflammatory properties, also are included.

“Many people living in north Tulsa don’t have easy access to healthy food options and are on a limited budget. Our goal was to remove those barriers and to help patients have regular access to healthy food, but also to try new foods,” Wetherill said.

The approach is having an impact with patients seeing improvements in blood pressure, glucose levels and weight. Wetherill believes such food interventions are not just helpful, they are essential.

“We know there’s an association between food insecurity and hypertension, as well as diabetes and obesity. Food insecurity also can have a detrimental effect on a child’s growth and ability to learn. So we have to intervene if we are going to improve the health outcomes of Oklahomans.”

The Food Pharmacy is funded by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Oklahoma’s Community Giving Program, under the umbrella of the Heart Improvement Project. ◀



# A Study in Stress

Studying Work, Stress and Health Among Hispanic Mothers through Community-Engaged Research

**S**tress impacts our lives and our health in many ways. Yet, little is known about the impact of stress among some of the most vulnerable workers.

Understanding the impact of stress on Hispanic working moms is at the heart of a study currently underway and spearheaded by a College of Public Health researcher.

Alicia Salvatore, Dr.P.H., M.P.H., assistant professor in the Department of Health Promotion Sciences, is going where few researchers have gone before in a carefully

been done on work stress and the effect of work on health, there is little research involving the most vulnerable workers: low-wage workers,” said Salvatore.

Hispanic workers and especially Hispanic women make up a larger portion of the workforce than before, both nationally and in Oklahoma, but little research has been done to evaluate how work is impacting their lives, their health and their families.

“So this study is a partnership with community-based organizations in an effort to

talk to the right folks in the community, to ask the right questions, evaluate those answers and to take our research findings and translate them into programs and policies that work,” Salvatore added.

Salvatore explained that many large-scale studies previously undertaken involved phone surveys, which left out a lot of people, especially lower-income workers. She believes one of the strengths of her study is the partnerships forged with or-

ganizations like the Community Service Council in Tulsa. Those partnerships have allowed her to work closely with people who live in the community. Women who are Hispanic moms also are partnering with Salvatore on the research, helping her overcome barriers that involve trust. The women assisting have been trained as

community health workers and have been working in the community for a while through the Community Service Council’s Power of Families project.

“These women are able to reach individuals in the community who may not be coming into clinics, who may not be picking up the phone and who may be reluctant to talk to someone from the health department. There’s a level of trust that happens when women from their own community and with similar backgrounds engage in this important conversation. It allows us to really do things that, as a university researcher, I could never do on my own,” she said.

It’s called community-based participatory research and it is the type of research that sets Salvatore’s soul on fire. It’s a research approach in which all people around the table, from researchers to the health department to those in organizations like the Community Service Council to community health workers and members of the community, partner in a way in which power is shared.

“We all have different passions. We have different talents and gifts. We do joint interpretation of the data and things like that with the understanding that we all bring strengths to the process,” Salvatore said. “They say, ‘It takes a village.’ And it really does take a village to truly understand what’s happening and then to do something about it.”

Salvatore believes it is the type of research that can raise awareness, build joint capacity in both university and community partners, and ultimately lead to change that positively impacts public health.

“The goal is to take these findings and to work with people in the community to share the results and then figure out what we can do to make a difference,” she said.

Once changes have been implemented, Salvatore said the research-community partnership will prove vital once again as they study how effective are the changes that have been made. ◀



designed and implemented community-engaged research study with Spanish-speaking working mothers in Tulsa.

“We know that stress impacts our lives and our health in many ways. Studies have shown stress is linked to negative outcomes from hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Yet while much research has

# Lifting the Smoke Screen

## Elevating Public Health Through Tobacco Research

Like many in this country, Laura Beebe, Ph.D., saw first-hand the toll smoking can take on family and loved ones. Her experiences triggered an interest in preventing chronic diseases that led her to the field of public health.

She completed a doctorate in epidemiology, and serendipity stepped in.

“The science linking tobacco to cancer, heart disease and other chronic conditions was established, and after the Master Settlement Agreement with tobacco companies, funding for tobacco control research and advocacy increased dramatically,” Beebe said. “I took advantage of those opportunities as a young faculty member, working at the state, tribal and national levels.”

Beebe successfully secured funding that launched her research interests in tobacco. She quickly learned that while health disparities traditionally have focused on race and ethnicity, tobacco-related disparities are a bit different.

“For tobacco-related disparities, education and socioeconomic status are by far some of the most important determinants,” she explained. “There is a strong inverse relationship between educational attainment and tobacco use: those with the least amount of education have the highest rates. Blue collar workers and young adults who bypass college and go ‘straight-to-work’ also have higher rates.”

Beebe’s research is not simply about factors that influence smoking behaviors, it also is about factors impacting the effectiveness of smoking-cessation programs. In fact, it is her applied evaluation research related to the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline that

she finds one of her most rewarding. The Helpline is funded through the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust.

“Since its launch in 2003, we have evaluated the efficiency and effectiveness of the service for TSET across multiple types of tobacco users, but we have also had the opportunity to overlay research projects within the context of the Helpline,” she explained. “We demonstrated that addressing weight concerns at the same time as smoking cessation among overweight smokers did not diminish quit rates. We also have identified factors related to e-cigarette use during quit attempts among smokers calling the Helpline.”

On the other end of the spectrum is research related to why people start smoking. Funded by the Oklahoma State Department of Health and CDC Prevent Block Grant, Beebe is in the field with a study called Project CHAT (Combating Heavy Advertisement of Tobacco).

“The tobacco retail environment has become critical to the tobacco companies’ ability to recruit and sustain tobacco users with point-of-sale advertising and promotions. We’re surveying the retail landscape throughout Oklahoma using a systematic approach, collecting rich data on tobacco products, pricing, promotion and placement, and seeing how it varies by neighborhood and retailer type,” she said.

It’s data that can help guide the selection of

evidence-based strategies aimed at keeping young people from starting to smoke and protecting disparate populations from tobacco industry strategies.

Ultimately, Beebe hopes it is work that is helping Oklahoma turn a corner with its poor health rankings.

“Our smoking prevalence rate recently dropped below 20 percent for the first time ever. Through my applied evaluation research I like to think we have had some



hand in that — providing evaluation results so that data-driven decisions are being made related to our state’s tobacco control programming,” she said. “Communities throughout Oklahoma are changing policies, programs and practices that emphasize a culture of health.”

Beebe credits research and collaboration with effecting this positive change for Oklahoma. ◀



# Exposures Examined

## Researcher Evaluates Impact of E-cigarettes

What do you get when you combine a love for tinkering and building, an aptitude for chemistry and an interest in protecting the public's health? You get a researcher much like Evan Floyd, Ph.D., an assistant professor of occupational and environmental health at the OU College of Public Health.

"What brought me to the field is the interesting blend of engineering and science that is possible in our discipline. We can affect people's health by preventing exposures and preventing sickness, but we can also express our creative and maker mentality, especially through research, by thinking of a better way to do something," he explained.

As a doctoral student, Floyd came up with the idea of utilizing a high-powered camera flash to release contaminants from a carbon surface, an approach he calls Photo-thermal desorption and one he continues to advance.

Electronic cigarettes are another focus of Floyd's research. Floyd is collaborating with social scientists interested in people's perceptions of use, intentions to quit and barriers to quitting. So they are switching smok-



Evan Floyd, Ph.D., works in his lab at the OU College of Public Health on a piece of research equipment he designed and built himself.

ers to electronic cigarettes and studying how that impacts smoking cessation.

"My role tends to be evaluating what are their devices? What do they look like? How do they perform? What kind of characteristics do their devices have? What's the nicotine profile in the people who use them? What is their blood uptake?" he said. "We're interested in how quickly these devices impact quitting behaviors."

Floyd's interest in occupational and environmental exposure to chemicals sparked another avenue of study related to electronic cigarettes – one that focuses on chemical exposures in the environment and in specific occupational settings. He knew many people shop for their e-cigarette devices and the chemicals used in them at so called "vape stores" and wondered about the people who work in those settings.

"In the occupational world, we have a really high threshold for how much particulate is allowed in the air. It's 5,000 micrograms per cubic meter, whereas in the environmental world, one annualized average is 35 and 150 for single excursions. Well, in these vape shops, I found a median of 7,200. So it's over the occupational level," Floyd said.

Noticing that many of the vape shops are located in close proximity to other businesses, often with adjoining walls, Floyd wondered about and began studying exposures of e-cigarette aerosols in those shops next door.

Floyd's scientific knowledge combined with an aptitude for building devices have allowed him to do things that have never been done before.

"I've adapted analytical methods to take an environmental measurement of aldehydes and carbonyls, and used it for single-puff measurement of electronic cigarettes, which has greater sensitivity than anybody has been able to express before. I did it with a thermal desorption gas chromatography mass spectrometer system," he said, the big words rolling off his tongue like a first language. "It's a boutique thing in the environmental world, but has really good sensitivity."

Floyd also has a keen interest in anything industrial hygiene related. That's as obvious as the beard on his face.

"The reason I wear a beard now is because I got hooked on wearing one when I wanted



to measure the effect of facial hair on respirator fit. So I grew my beard out to over an inch long, put on a respirator, measured how well it fit. Then I trimmed it down to half an inch, put on the respirator and measured; then trimmed to a quarter inch, eighth of an inch, no guard and then shaved it clean. I did all of these measurements just to demonstrate and pilot it," he said. "Well then I needed to do it again just to make sure my results were right."

Clearly, Floyd is a man as committed to advancing the field of public health as he is to his research.

"I guess the fascination with new knowledge is what is just incredible about being in the research arena and being in a university environment. I get to discover things that people didn't know before. I can investigate a problem that we can reasonably expect what the answer might be, but we just don't know," Floyd said, smiling. "And at the end of the day, I can come home and my kids will ask me, 'What did you do today?' and I say, 'Well, I demonstrated that a single puff of electronic cigarette produces this many nanograms of aldehydes.'" ◀

# The War on Science

## science

*noun* • sci·ence \ 'sī-ən(t)s \

The state of knowing: knowledge as distinguished from ignorance or misunderstanding

*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

**T**he intersection of science and politics took center stage as American novelist and filmmaker Shawn Otto shared insights into how even an educated population can sometimes be swayed into believing that for which there is no scientific evidence.

Otto was the featured speaker for an OU College of Public Health Grand Rounds presentation co-sponsored by the Robert M. Bird Society. He said science is outpacing the public's ability to understand it.

"We now are creating not just more knowledge, but more knowledge at a faster rate and a higher level," he said. "As science advances, for many, it is a bit like magic. They don't know how it works, just that it works. So science ceases to be a matter of knowledge and more a matter of belief."

Therein lies danger, he explained, because it puts you at risk for disinformation campaigns.

"It used to be mom, science and apple pie. Science was that important," Otto said of the view of science historically. "A scientist has to be conservative and progressive at the same time. A scientist won't accept anything on faith. They'll say 'show me the evidence.' Science is a method known to strip away all bias."

Today, though, Otto pointed out politics and media campaigns often overshadow facts. He pointed to several examples of this:

- Cities banning fluoride from their water supplies despite evidence showing the benefits of fluoride to dental health
- High-profile stars who add their voices to the already vocal anti-vaccine movement that believes vaccines trigger autism despite multiple studies refuting this claim
- All references to climate change being removed from the White House website within minutes of President Donald Trump taking office despite a growing preponderance of evidence for warming of the climate system, with much of that change attributed by scientists to human activity since the mid-20th century

"Science is never partisan, but science is always political," remarked Otto. "Currently, those with the loudest voice and the most money determine policy, not evidence."

Today, science is often removed from the public dialogue, he said, adding the media add to the problem because reporters are taught that balance means sharing both sides of an argument.

"Unfortunately, what happens is we tend to take one side with evidence and

the other side with opinion and we give them equal voice," Otto explained. "So you can understand how an educated person can come to believe things not rooted in scientific evidence. They become trapped in a manufactured virtu-



al reality web funded by well-planned and executed PR campaigns."

It is a formula that Otto said transforms democracy into autocracy.

"If the voices of science and reason stay silent, then the voices of vested interest will control all of the conversation," he warned.

The OU College of Public Health is committed to advancing the scientific understanding of public and global health, and to fostering evidence-based public health practice and policies. ◀



# Serving to Elevate the Public's Health

## Dean Chairs Oklahoma City-County Board of Health



Dean Gary Raskob, Ph.D., speaks with KWTU reporter Grant Hermes, who was working on a segment for a TV special on the state of Oklahoma's health.

OU College of Public Health Dean Gary Raskob, Ph.D., now brings his leadership skills to the Oklahoma City-County Board of Health. After four years as a board member, Raskob assumed the role of board chair in 2017.

"Dr. Raskob brings many strengths to the board and to Oklahoma City-County Health Department. These include his many years of experience in public health, research, teaching and collaboration," said Gary Cox, J.D., executive director of the Oklahoma City-County Health Department. "He believes in private-public partnership. As an epidemiologist, Dr. Raskob also brings keen insight into data and

Raskob. "I am proud to have this opportunity to serve as board chair and to help ensure the department achieves its goals to protect and elevate the health of Oklahoma County residents."

In 2017, the department issued its new Wellness Score, outlining improvements in many of the 14 measured health outcomes ranging from deaths due to heart disease to stroke, cancer and even suicide.

The Oklahoma City-County Health Department was among the first in the nation to be awarded accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board. Achieving accreditation is a mark of excellence, showing that the department is successfully delivering essential public health services to the public, including disease prevention, improved access to safe food and water, immunizations, and preparation for and response to health emergencies.

"With Gary's extensive experience, especially in serving on a variety of state and national boards, he brings keen insights into public health policy. He skillfully leads as chairman of our board," Cox added. "Dr. Raskob is particularly interested in tobacco control policy since it is the leading cause of preventable death in Oklahoma."

In addition to serving as board chair, Raskob serves on the executive committee of the Oklahoma Health Improvement Plan, the Oklahoma Tri-Board executive committee, as well as other leadership positions. ◀



Dean Gary Raskob, Ph.D., (third from left) represented the Oklahoma City-County Board of Health at the groundbreaking for the new Southern Oaks Wellness and Learning Campus. Joining him were (from left) Doug Kupper, Oklahoma City Parks director; Tim Rogers; Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett; former Oklahoma City Councilman Pete White; Oklahoma City-County Health Department Executive Director Gary Cox; Oklahoma City Public Schools Superintendent Aurora Lora; Oklahoma City Public Schools Board of Education Vice Chair Gloria Torres; and James Machell, Ph.D., dean of the College of Education and Professional Studies, University of Central Oklahoma.

how to use data to improve public health."

The Oklahoma City-County Health Department serves the residents of Oklahoma County by promoting and protecting health, preventing disease and promoting wellness.

"Public health departments play a critical role in not only protecting, but improving the health of individuals and communities," said

### Data Driven Decision Making

Through the use of expanded data sources, we are able to capture the value of our programs and showcase the importance of inserting public health principles into multiple sectors.

Wellness Score

Strategic Plan

Community Health  
Improvement Plan



Measurable Health  
Improvement



Grants and Community Programs are made possible by proving their effectiveness.



Clinical & Mental Health Services



Community Health Programs



Public Health Protection



Call (405) 427-8651 or learn  
more at [occhd.org](http://occhd.org)

### Regionalization

OCCHD continues placing regional campuses in zip codes showing poor health outcomes. The NE campus continues to expand and serve clients in a meaningful way, and the Southern Oaks Learning & Wellness Campus is set to open in Fall 2018.



### Partnerships

Partnerships, especially those with local hospitals, have been critical in implementing many successful pilot programs and increasing the use of community health workers.



**THD**  
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