



Who We Are

The Yale Network for Global Non-Communicable Diseases (NGN, pronounced “engine”) is a group of committed faculty from the Schools of Medicine, Public Health, and Nursing whose research, clinical practice, advocacy efforts, and teaching are focused on addressing non-communicable diseases both locally and globally. We are committed to supporting one another in our work because we fundamentally believe we can do more together than alone, and that interdisciplinary collaboration is the engine that will drive our success.

How We Came Together

NGN formed shortly following the US Investigators’ Symposium on Global NCD Research at Emory University in 2014. We met regularly and spent time learning about one another’s academic activities and goals. In Fall 2016, to grow our networks, we formally launched NGN with a university-wide symposium (*Fostering Cross-Campus Collaboration at Yale on the Global Non-Communicable Disease Crisis*) supported by the MacMillan Center Kempf Fund, the Global Health Leadership Institute, and the Yale Institute for Network Science. The Symposium was attended by nearly 100 members of the Yale community, many of whom have since been collaborating with NGN members on projects and activities.

What We Have Accomplished

Members of our network have longstanding relationships and ongoing projects in communities across Africa, Asia Pacific, Eurasia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and in vulnerable communities in the United States.

Research Activities: In 2018 NGN received a Hecht Global Health Faculty Network Award to sponsor our work on self-care among patients with NCDs in rural Uganda. We subsequently obtained a 2021 Hecht Global Health Faculty Network Award to focus on strengthening capacity among and between our international and Yale partners. NGN faculty have a strong track record of successfully competing for scientific grants from private foundations and federal sponsors (NIH K awards, R21, R01, and other mechanisms) and have consulted for the World Bank and U.S. Department of State. NGN members actively mentor trainees from the Schools of Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, and Yale College. We have published collaboratively on NCD-related topics, in high-impact journals including *JAMA*, *the Lancet* series, *Nature Genetics*, and *BMJ*.

Educational Activities: We teach and develop curricula for the Yale Schools of Medicine, Nursing, and Public Health. We train residents and fellows, develop training programs, and participate on multiple committees to improve care delivery here in New Haven, nationally, and abroad. We deliver lectures on global NCDs on campus and host outside speakers during campus visits.

Advocacy: Our members have served on advisory boards for organizations advocating for global health, and contributed to the *New York Times* op-ed page, *The Huffington Post*, *Time*, *The Hill*, and the *PLoS Translational Global Health Blog*.

NGN Founding Faculty



Nicola L. Hawley, PhD – *Associate Professor of Epidemiology (Chronic Diseases)*. Dr. Hawley's expertise is in the impact of non-communicable disease (particularly obesity, and hypertension) on maternal and child health. Her research focuses predominantly on Pacific Islander populations, although she has ongoing collaborations in South Africa, Uganda, Ghana, Mexico, and the US. Methodologically, Dr. Hawley employs a life-course approach that utilizes cross-sectional, cohort, and randomized controlled trial designs to address questions of causality and identify critical periods of susceptibility.



Evelyn Hsieh, MD, PhD (NGN Network Lead) – *Assistant Professor of Medicine (Rheumatology) and Epidemiology (Chronic Diseases)*. Dr. Hsieh's research integrates biomedical and behavioral methods to improve outcomes for rheumatic and musculoskeletal disease in countries in economic transition. This body of work includes mechanisms, epidemiology, and prevention strategies for osteoporosis, fractures and sarcopenia among individuals aging with HIV in China and Peru. In addition to serving as Network Lead for NGN, she chairs the Global Engagement Committee of the American College of Rheumatology and is Program Director of the Yale-CMB Global Health Leadership Development Program.



Tracy Rabin, MD, SM – *Associate Professor of Medicine (General Medicine)*. Dr. Rabin is an Internist and Pediatrician, Director of the Office of Global Health (Department of Internal Medicine), and Associate Program Director for Global and Community Health in Yale Primary Care Internal Medicine Residency Program. She co-directs the Makerere University-Yale University medical education capacity building collaboration which is based in Kampala, Uganda. Her areas of interest include both domestic and international global health and education; global health ethics; and the prevention and management of diabetes.



Jeremy Schwartz, MD – *Associate Professor of Medicine (General Medicine) and Epidemiology (Chronic Disease)*. Dr. Schwartz's work focuses on identifying and addressing gaps in NCD care in Uganda. His areas of focus include self-care, mobile health, clinical integration of HIV and HTN, and access to essential NCD medicines. He is a co-founder, and the US-based co-Director, of the Uganda Initiative for the Integrated Management of NCDs. Dr. Schwartz is Lead of the Yale Institute for Global Health Faculty Network Program.

NGN Faculty Members



Amit Achhra, PhD, MPH – *Assistant Professor of Public Health (Infectious Diseases)*. Dr. Achhra's research interests are in epidemiological studies in HIV/AIDS. Some of his notable work has focused on the impact of BMI and weight gain from antiretroviral therapy on diabetes and cardiovascular outcomes, dual-drug therapies for HIV/AIDS, inflammatory markers and clinical outcomes in HIV, and implementation research on improving HIV treatment outcomes in Asia-Pacific, amongst others.



Joshua Bilborrow, MD, MHS – *Instructor of Medicine (Rheumatology)*. Dr. Bilborrow has been a member of the Yale Rheumatology faculty since 2020. He is currently developing a rheumatology education and training curriculum for internal medicine residents and generalists with plans to conduct this program in Rwanda in 2022. His longer-term interests in global health include capacity building with academic medical centers in Africa and increasing opportunities for training additional rheumatologists to serve in their home countries.



Sharon Chekijian, MD, MPH – *Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine*. Dr. Chekijian’s research interests lie in global emergency medicine and include emergency care systems development in LMICs, unintentional injury prevention in LMICs, as well as stroke and cardiac care in LMICs. Dr. Chekijian has led and participated in projects in the Republic of Armenia, Uganda, and Iraq. She has consulted for the World Bank and the US Department of State and USAID. She is active member of the Stroke Initiative Advisory Task-Force for Armenia and was recently inducted into the Armenian Stroke Council.



Mayur M. Desai, PhD, MPH – *Associate Professor of Public Health (Chronic Disease Epidemiology)*. Dr. Desai’s work is in the application of epidemiologic methods to clinical and health services research. Most of his research effort is devoted to mentored, team-science projects in which he is leading or substantially contributing to the analytic and methodological aspects of the work. The overarching goal of his work – across various content areas – is to improve health equity in access, quality, and outcomes of care in a broad range of populations and settings.



Ashley Hagaman, PhD, MPH – *Assistant Professor of Public Health (Social and Behavioral Sciences)*. Dr. Hagaman is a qualitative methodologist who examines the complex collection of factors that influence depression and suicide in varying cultural contexts, particularly among vulnerable populations. She collaborates with several interdisciplinary teams around the world to develop and test innovative strategies to alleviate depression and enhance maternal health systems, with field sites in Nepal, Pakistan, and Ethiopia. She also contributes to the development of innovative qualitative and mixed methods to improve the study of evidence-based practices.



Sarah Lowe, PhD – *Assistant Professor of Public Health (Social and Behavioral Sciences)*. Dr. Lowe’s research focuses on the consequences of exposure to a range of potentially traumatic events for mental health and other domains of functioning. She examines long-term post-trauma mental health symptom patterns, the mechanisms leading from trauma exposure to outcomes, and the role of factors at various socio-ecological levels in shaping risk and resilience. She is currently working on a examining the intergenerational transmission of traumatic stress related to the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. She also teaches the YSPH course “Trauma and Health.”



Josefa L. Martinez, PhD, MHS – *Instructor of Medicine (General Internal Medicine)*. Dr. Martinez is a maternal and child public health nutrition investigator and implementation scientist with a focus on translating effective interventions into public health policy and practice in disparity populations. She has extensive experience using social and behavioral theory in research design, piloting, implementation, and evaluation.



Carol Oladele, PhD, MPH – *Assistant Professor of Medicine (General Internal Medicine)*. Dr. Oladele’s research focuses on social determinants of cardiovascular health disparities, with specific focus on the role of nutrition, healthcare quality, food, and built environments, including development of dietary assessment methodologies for African descent populations. Her research aims to generate evidence to support health policies and interventions to improve cardiovascular outcomes among racial/ethnic and immigrant populations. Dr. Oladele’s current work examines the role of food insecurity and ultra-processed food on disparities in hypertension incidence and control.



Oyere Onuma, MD, MSc – *Assistant Professor of Medicine (Cardiology)*. Dr. Onuma is a nationally recognized authority on global health and cardiovascular disease prevention. She served as a medical officer with the World Health Organization where she helped launch the Global Hearts Initiative to support governments in strengthening cardiovascular disease prevention and control. She is the author of multiple publications in *Stroke*, *Lancet*, *Circulation*, and the *New England Journal of Medicine*, among others.



Morgan Prust, MD – *Assistant Professor of Medicine (Neurology)*. Dr. Prust is dedicated to providing the best care to patients and their families who are suffering from acute neurologic illnesses such as brain hemorrhage, stroke, seizure, and traumatic brain injury. His research interests lie at the intersection of neurology, critical care, and global health. He is passionate about finding ways to improve outcomes from neurologic emergencies in resource limited settings.



Eleanor Reid, MD, MSc – *Assistant Professor of Medicine (Emergency Medicine)*. Dr. Reid specializes in defining the conditions and the context that make palliative care an essential, cost efficient, yet missing component of care in humanitarian and low resource settings. She is currently the Principal Investigator of a randomized controlled trial of early palliative care in Ethiopia and is collaborating with international partners on other projects at the intersection of palliative care and Emergency Medicine in East Africa.



Anna Rivara, PhD – *Associate Research Scientist in Epidemiology (Chronic Diseases)*. Dr. Rivara is an evolutionary anthropologist who focuses on human biology and the evolution of health and disease in modern populations. Her research aims are to better understand how immune and metabolic responses, in association with poverty and gendered pressures, construct noncommunicable and infectious diseases in women, and perpetuate poor health outcomes.



Erica Spatz, MD, MHS – *Associate Professor of Medicine (Cardiology) and Associate Professor of Public Health (Chronic Disease Epidemiology)*. Dr. Spatz is a general cardiologist and clinical investigator at the Center for Outcomes Research and Evaluation (CORE). Her clinical and research interests include the development of individualized approaches to preventing and managing cardiovascular disease, along with tools to help patients become more active in their healthcare decisions.



Donna Spiegelman, ScD – *Professor of Public Health (Biostatistics)*. Dr. Spiegelman's research is motivated by problems which arise in epidemiology and require biostatistical settlement. In particular, she focused on methods for study design and data analysis which reduce bias in estimation and inference due to measurement error or misclassification in the exposure variable. A particular current interest is risk-based monitoring of multi center investigations to enhance quality and prevent fraud. She has extensive expertise in troubleshooting and solving methodological issues that arise in longitudinal investigations, in clinical trials, and in large scale public health effectiveness evaluations.



Karen Wang, MD, MHS – *Assistant Professor of Medicine (General Internal Medicine) and Assistant Professor of Biostatistics (Health Informatics)*. Dr. Wang's work is at the intersection of health equity, informatics, and data justice with a focus on optimizing health and health-related information, data, and technology for marginalized communities. Her research goal is to improve the health of marginalized communities by engaging them in the collection and use of health data and improving the quality of social and structural determinants of health data, such as race, ethnicity, and residential address.



Nancy Ringel, MD, MS – *Assistant Professor, (Division of Urogynecology & Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery, Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Sciences)*. Dr. Ringel is a Urogynecologist and Reconstructive Pelvic Surgeon who spent several years working in international development prior to starting her medical career. She has worked in Zambia, Malawi, the West Bank, Ghana, and Rwanda on numerous clinical and global health systems strengthening projects. Her areas of expertise include global health delivery, health systems strengthening, mobile health, project management, program design and implementation, community-based interventions, and education and training.



Zhao Ni, PhD, BMedSci, RN – Assistant Professor of Nursing (*Mobile Health and Global Health (Chronic Diseases)*). Dr. Ni’s research focuses on using mobile technologies to prevent cardiovascular disease and HIV/AIDS. He has conducted international research at the interface of chronic diseases and mobile health in the U.S., China, and Nepal. His current projects are funded by the NIH and focus on developing artificial intelligence chatbots to promote HIV testing and prevention in Malaysia among populations at high risk for HIV. Dr. Ni is a contact PI and project director of a R21/R33 project and R21 project, respectively.



Isil Yildiz, MD, MPH – Assistant Professor of Pathology

Dr. Yildiz-Aktas is an Assistant Professor of Pathology at Yale School of Medicine. She is board certified in anatomic pathology and cytopathology. She also holds a master’s degree in public health from University of Pittsburgh. In addition to pathology practice, her interests lie in cancer screening and prevention, digital health and digital pathology and integration of AI, healthcare quality and patient safety, and global health. She has been selected as a 2023 American Society of Cytopathology/Bio Ventures for Global Health Ambassador.

She also serves as Digital Pathology Section Editor for National Standardization Guide Ebook that is being prepared by The Federation of Turkish Pathology Societies.



Kai Chen, PhD – Assistant Professor of Epidemiology (*Environmental Health*).

Dr. Chen’s research focuses on the intersection of climate change, air pollution, and human health. His work involves applying multidisciplinary approaches in climate and air pollution sciences, exposure assessment, and environmental epidemiology to investigate how climate change may impact human health. Much of his work has been done in China, Europe, and the United States.



Kaveh Khoshnood, PhD, MPH – Associate Professor of Epidemiology

(*Microbial Diseases*). Dr. Khoshnood is co-founder of Yale Violence and Health Study Group and a faculty member of the Program on Conflict, Resiliency, and Health at the Yale MacMillan Center. He is a trained infectious disease epidemiologist and has more than three decades of domestic and international experience in HIV prevention research among people who use drugs and other at-risk populations. His research interests include 1) epidemiology and prevention of HIV/AIDS, 2) research ethics, and 3) humanitarian health. His research is primarily focused on populations in China, Lebanon, and Bhutan.



Michael Beasley, MD, FACC – Assistant Professor of Medicine

(*Cardiovascular Medicine*). Dr. Beasley is a medical doctor who pursued more specialized training in advanced heart failure and transplant cardiology. He attends patients on inpatient cardiovascular wards at Yale New Haven Hospital at York Street and St. Raphael’s and sees patient at a clinic in Norwich, CT and works in cardiac catheterization labs in New Haven and New London. Dr. Beasley is also a Medical Corps Officer in the United States Navy Reserve.



Shelli Feder, PhD, APRN – Assistant Professor of Nursing. Dr. Feder is an organizational and health services researcher whose interests include palliative and end of life care delivery for people with non-cancer serious illness, health policy related to palliative and end-of-life care, medical informatics, and digital health interventions.



Norissa Haynes, MD – Assistant Professor of Medicine (Cardiovascular Medicine).



Robert McNamara, MD, MHS – Professor of Medicine (Cardiovascular Medicine). Dr. McNamara is trained in internal medicine and clinical cardiology. Nationally, he has worked with development of guidelines, data standards, and performance measures for the management of patients with atrial fibrillation and acute coronary syndromes. He works with the Yale New Haven Health System Center for Outcomes Research and Evaluation, the American Heart Association, and the American College of Cardiology to assess and improve outcomes for patients with acute coronary syndromes and other cardiovascular conditions through registry research, risk modelling, among other methods.



N. Abimbola Sunmonu, MD, PhD – Assistant Professor of Neurology

NGN Postdoctoral Associates & Research and Clinical Fellows



Diego M. Cabrera, MD – Postdoctoral Associate (Rheumatology, Allergy, and Immunology). Dr. Cabrera’s research interests include the musculoskeletal outcomes of infectious diseases like HIV and COVID-19, and age-related chronic complications of HIV. Under the mentorship of Drs. Evelyn Hsieh and Patricia J. Garcia, he has lead studies on long term musculoskeletal complications among Peruvian women aging with HIV, including osteoporosis, sarcopenia and vertebral fractures. Dr. Cabrera completed medical school at Cayetano Heredia Peruvian University and then an NIH Fogarty Global Health Fellowship in Lima, Peru.



Mikaili Charlemagne, NGN Research Fellow – MPH Candidate (Chronic Disease Epidemiology) Mikaili serves as NGN Research Fellow, where she plays a vital role in collaborating with the core NGN team to ensure the efficient coordination of faculty network activities and provides valuable support for ongoing research projects. Her academic pursuits and research interests are centered around the critical concept of health equity and its integration into the realms of chronic disease prevention, treatment, and outcomes for conditions like diabetes, sickle cell disease.



Rebecca Slotkin, MD – Postdoctoral Associate (Rheumatology, Allergy, and Immunology). Dr. Slotkin is currently working on a GHES funded project, supported by the Peruvian Ministry of Health, and mentored by Dr. Patricia Garcia and Dr. Evelyn Hsieh, to explore the existing capacity to provide noncommunicable disease management within Peruvian HIV treatment centers to provide comprehensive care for people aging with HIV



Stella Savarimuthu, MD – Clinical Fellow (Department of Pulmonary and Critical Care). Dr. Savarimuthu’s research interests lie in global health. She has worked in the Dominican Republic, Peru, Switzerland, Kenya, and Botswana.



Jinfeng Ding, PhD, MSN, BSN – Postdoctoral Fellow (CMB Global Health Leadership Development Program, YSM). Dr. Ding is a registered nurse in China and holds a PhD in population health. His research interests are in palliative care and health services. Dr. Ding has extensive experience in both quantitative and qualitative research. He is additionally a member of the Palliative Care Committee of the China Anti-cancer Association (CACAA) and Nursing Committee of the China Medical Education Association (CMEA).



Courtney Choy, PhD, MPH – *Postdoctoral Fellow (Chronic Disease Epidemiology)*. Dr. Choy's current research involves understanding the influence of school environments on modifiable risk factors, body size, and cardiometabolic disease markers among children in Samoa. She is broadly interested on child growth and development cardiometabolic disease, Asian-Pacific Islander population health, the application of longitudinal and multilevel analyses, and life course epidemiology.



Joselito Malca Hernandez, MD – *Postdoctoral Fellow (Global Health Equity Scholars Program, YSPH)* Dr. Malca is currently working on a Global Health Equity Scholars funded project, mentored by Dr. Patricia Garcia from *Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia* and Dr. Evelyn Hsieh from Yale University, to validate three screening tools for osteoporosis and sarcopenia among people aging with HIV in Peru. As secondary objectives, he is exploring their expectations regarding the aging process, and has translated and is validating the Episodic Disability Questionnaire among the same population, in partnership with Dr. Kelly O'Brien

from the University of Toronto. After his fellowship year, he is interested in applying for an MPH in Epidemiology of Microbial Diseases.