

Science & Society

Yale SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Fall/Winter 2024

YSPH STEPS INTO THE FUTURE

CELEBRATING OUR
INDEPENDENCE

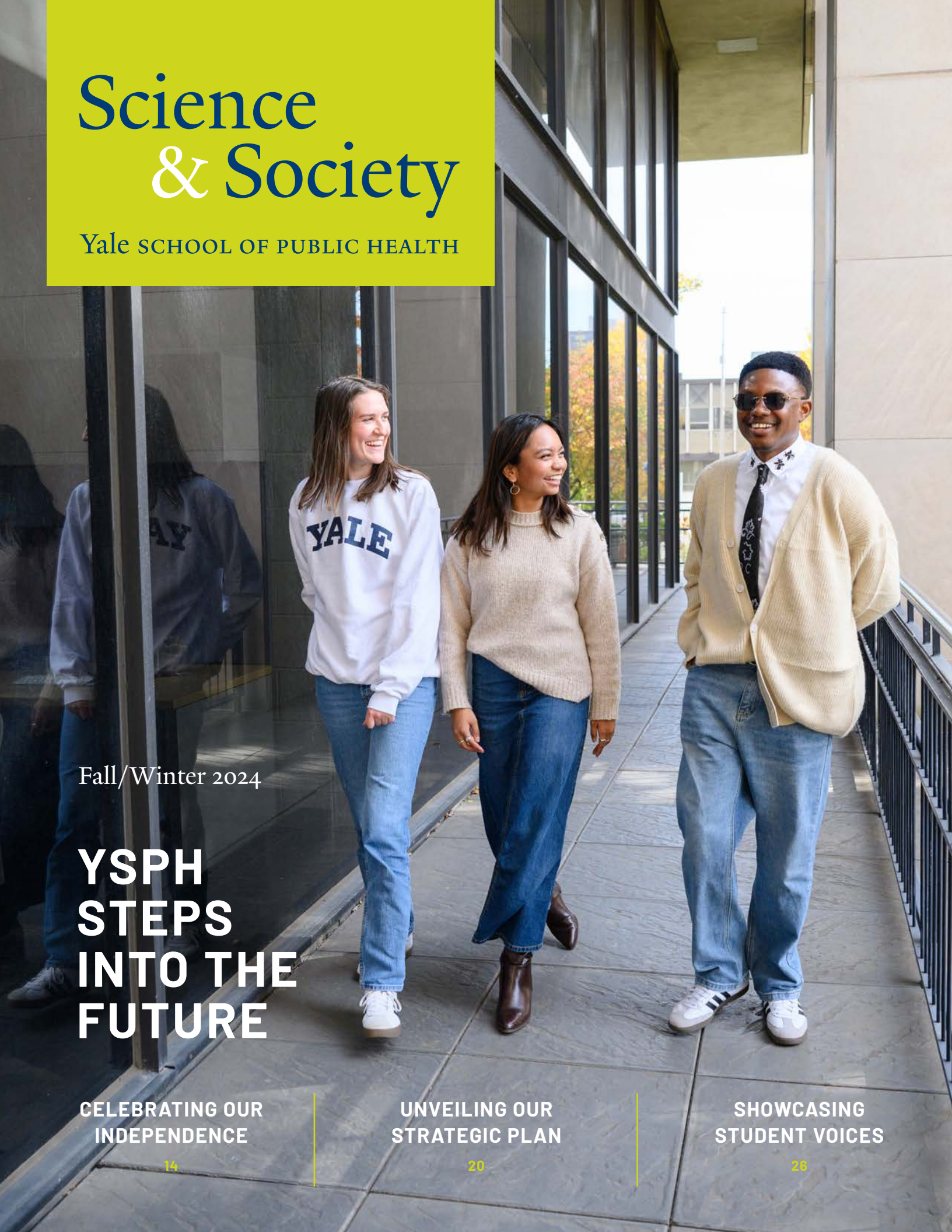
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SHARING PERSPECTIVES

PhD student Joy Lindsay makes a point in a class given by Dr. Ijeoma Opara. Ashley Nurse, a PhD student and teaching fellow, is seated next to her.

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YSPH STEPS INTO THE FUTURE

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On the cover: Students Olivia McCarthy, MPH '26, Samantha Seneviratne, MPH '25, and Don-Pedro Ume, MPH '25, step into the future of public health.



Photo by Mara Lavitt

“More than ever,
the world needs
thoughtful public health
scientists, educators,
and change-makers
who are committed
to creating both high-
quality knowledge and
frameworks that move
knowledge into systems-
level change.”

DEAN MEGAN L. RANNEY, MD, MPH

DEAN'S MESSAGE

Linking science and society makes public health foundational to every community

WELCOME TO THE YALE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH MAGAZINE, complete with a new name that reflects our newly independent school's aspirations, strengths, and vision for the future.

We have leaned into this long-awaited moment with the release of our first-ever school-wide strategic plan. As you'll read in our special independence section, our bold five-year strategic plan articulates a fresh vision for the future: one in which YSPH links science and society, making public health foundational to communities everywhere. It builds on our exceptional past and present to meet the health needs of the moment. I'm so grateful to all — staff, students, alumni, and faculty — who helped craft it.

The articles in this magazine highlight how we are already realizing YSPH's new vision, priorities, and areas of scholarly focus. Our world-class scholars are working on topics ranging from protecting cities from the health effects of climate change to creating community-based solutions to gun violence, to identifying chemical additives replacing menthol in cigarettes, to defining the role of “forever chemicals” in cancer cell migration, and to presenting research about a new noninvasive test that could dramatically alter the global malaria testing landscape.

You'll also read about how our community of friends and alumni are helping to ensure that this scholarship is translated into real-world impact. The generosity of the Yale community is essential as we work to support our

researchers, students, and practitioners in doing this essential work.

Finally, you'll learn how you can join us to celebrate our and others' public health successes. In particular, I invite you to join us at an upcoming Leaders in Public Health Speaker Series conversation.

More than ever, the world needs thoughtful public health scientists, educators, and change-makers who are committed to creating both high-quality knowledge and frameworks that move knowledge into systems-level change. Thank you for joining us in this essential work.

And I look forward to seeing you on campus!

Yours,
Megan L. Ranney, MD, MPH
Dean, Yale School of Public Health
C.-E. A. Winslow Professor of Public Health

“ We know that the discipline of public health—the ways in which we think about how we ask questions, how we gather data, how we develop interventions and prove that they work or don't work, and then most of all, how we disseminate out—is foundational to a healthy community.”

MEGAN L. RANNEY, MD, MPH

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“Seeing gun violence as a public health issue allows us to conduct necessary research that will help us identify what *really* would lead to a reduction in violence and an increase in hope for those left behind.”

NELBA MÁRQUEZ-GREENE
YSPH ACTIVIST IN RESIDENCE



SHARED HUMANITY

Addressing gun violence

IN THE NEW SHARED HUMANITY podcast and video series, host Nelba Márquez-Greene talks to the humans behind the headlines of gun violence. They tell their stories, discuss solutions, and teach us how we can best support them. Through powerful narratives and evidence-based insights, each episode empowers listeners to act toward positive change and hope.

Márquez-Greene is the Yale School of Public Health’s activist in residence. Her daughter, Ana Grace, 6, was one of 20 students and six administrators and teachers who were killed in a mass shooting at Sandy Hook School in Newtown, Connecticut on Dec. 14, 2012.

“Public health gives us the tools and the means to address gun violence where it is needed most—in the communities where families are devastated, lives are broken, and loved ones are left to make sense of the unimaginable. Using the same evidence-based practices that gave us seat belts in motor vehicles, safer workplaces, improved sanitation, more accurate information on the health impact of smoking, vaccines, and the eradication of infectious diseases like polio, we can address firearm injury and gun violence,” she said.

“Seeing gun violence as a public health issue allows us to conduct necessary research that will help us identify what *really* would lead to a reduction in violence and an increase in hope for those left behind.”

Left: Nelba Márquez-Greene in the podcast studio.

LEADERS IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Dean’s Speaker Series



DEAN MEGAN L. RANNEY’S Leaders in Public Health Speaker Series showcases real-world leaders and provides students and others an opportunity to learn about different career trajectories, how important public health decisions are made, and what lies ahead for the future of public health.

Students got an inside look at how decisions are made at the top of the public health pyramid on September 30, when Dr. Karen Hacker, MD, MPH, BA ’77, director of the CDC’s National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Promotion, visited the school for an hour-long discussion with Ranney.

Another recent speaker, Dr. José Bauermeister, PhD, MPH, the founding faculty director of the Eidos LGBTQ+ Health Initiative at the University of Pennsylvania, discussed LGBTQ+ health, systems-level interventions, and community engagement on October 23.

Join us virtually for future discussions. Find the schedule here: sph.yale.edu/liph

Above: Dr. Karen Hacker (right) in conversation with Dean Megan L. Ranney.

CITIES ARE UNPREPARED FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Proactive action is needed around the world for resilience

HALF OF THE WORLD’S POPULATION lives in cities, and that proportion is expected to increase to 70% by 2050. With their large populations and infrastructure that is vulnerable to floods and other extreme weather, many of the world’s cities are unprepared for climate change.

Proactive action is needed to make cities more resilient to climate change and capable of protecting community health, according to a new report by the Yale School of Public Health, the Resilient Cities Network, and The Rockefeller Foundation.

The report, “Urban Pulse: Identifying Resilience Solutions at the Intersection of Climate, Health, and Equity,” is based on a survey of nearly 200 city leaders in 118 cities and 52 countries about their preparedness for responding to climate-related health threats. Less than half of the cities reported having a climate resilience plan, and only one in four indicated that their plan addressed climate and health. The research was funded by The Rockefeller Foundation, which also said that it will invest more than \$1 million to help cities implement the report’s recommendations.

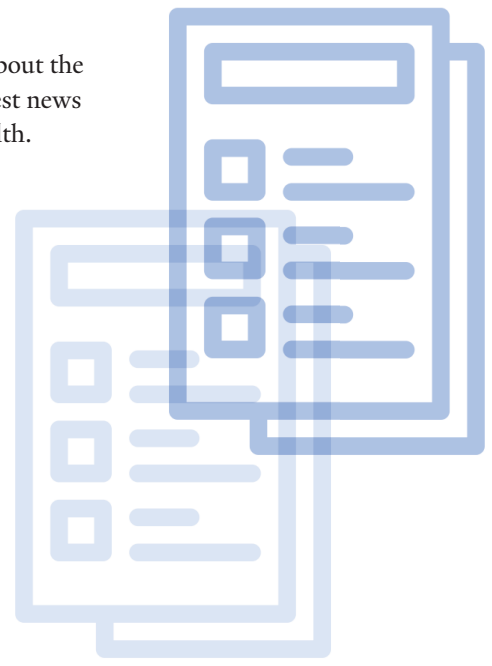
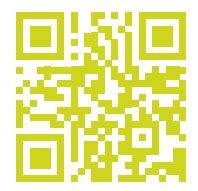
Read more: sph.yale.edu/citiesclimateaction

Matt Kristoffersen

LATEST NEWS

Research advances detailed online

USE THE QR CODE to read more about the research advances as well as the latest news from the Yale School of Public Health.



NONINVASIVE MALARIA TEST

Could be a global game changer

ALMOST HALF of the world’s population is at risk of malaria infection, with children and pregnant women at the highest risk of getting sick and dying from the disease. Current methods to detect this potentially deadly infection rely on obtaining an invasive blood sample, and each test has significant limitations that restrict its utility.

In new research published in Nature Communications, Yale School of Public Health epidemiologist Dr. Sunil Parikh, MD, MPH, and colleagues from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and Cameroon present a new noninvasive test that could dramatically alter the global malaria testing landscape by providing reliable, safe, and sensitive testing to low- and middle-income countries that have been plagued by the deadly mosquito-borne disease.

Best of all, the new test can detect malaria without taking a single drop of blood.

The test is performed using a device called a Cytophone that applies targeted lasers and ultrasound to detect malaria-infected cells circulating in the bloodstream, said Dr. Jillian N. Armstrong, a former PhD student in Parikh’s lab and one of the study’s lead authors. About the size of a table-top printer, the Cytophone prototype uses photoacoustic technology that can determine whether infection is present within minutes via a small noninvasive probe that is placed on the back of a person’s hand above a targeted vein.

Read more: sph.yale.edu/malariatetest

Zoe Beketova



PFAS TOXICITY

Study suggests cancer cell migration

A **YSPH STUDY** found that two “forever chemicals” promoted cancer cell migration, suggesting these chemicals could contribute to cancer metastasis in living organisms.

The group of industrial chemicals called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), known for their persistence in the environment and potential toxicity, are commonly found in drinking water, dust, and consumer products. All can shed water and resist penetration by oils. They are notorious for their ubiquity, their exceptional environmental stability, and their suspected toxic effects.

The chemicals show up in the blood of newborns, of people living in sub-Arctic Indigenous communities, in fish and mussels, even birds’ eggs.

No level of PFAS in the body is considered safe, and they have been linked to a litany of health problems, including cancers. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classified perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), a common PFAS, as carcinogenic to humans and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS), another common PFAS, as possibly carcinogenic to humans.

No studies have addressed the relationship between PFAS and colorectal carcinoma (CRC). However, firefighters experience this type of cancer at higher rates than the general population and they are heavily exposed to PFAS at work. About 80% of CRC cases are thought to be related to environmental exposure of some kind. But what the chemicals might be doing to initiate or spur on this type of cancer has been unclear.

The Caroline Johnson Laboratory studies CRC with metabolomics, a tool that measures fluctuating levels of thousands of small molecules like amino acids, lipids, and proteins in a biological sample.

The research is part of an ongoing quest by scientists to better understand the exposome—that is, all environmental influences upon a person from conception until death, including biological, chemical, environmental, social, and so on. Because PFAS are so widespread, almost everyone is exposed.

Read more:
sph.yale.edu/cancerCellmigration

Jenny Blair

80%

THE PERCENTAGE OF COLORECTAL CARCINOMA THOUGHT TO BE RELATED TO ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURE

CHEMICAL ADDITIVES

Shown to be in ‘non-menthol’ cigarettes

RESEARCHERS HAVE FOUND that some “non-menthol” cigarettes, marketed as an alternative in states where menthol cigarettes are banned, use synthetic chemicals to imitate menthol’s cooling sensations. This finding could undermine current policies and the expected FDA ban on menthol cigarettes meant to discourage new smokers and reduce health risks.

In a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, researchers from the Yale School of Public Health, the Center for Green Chemistry & Green Engineering at Yale, and Duke School of Medicine identified a synthetic flavoring agent known as WS-3 in the newly introduced “non-menthol” cigarettes that delivers similar, or stronger, cooling sensations as menthol but without the minty aroma or taste.

Flavored tobacco products such as menthol cigarettes tend to reduce tobacco’s harsh effects making them particularly popular among young people and those just starting to smoke. Historically, menthol cigarettes have also been aggressively marketed towards African Americans, with up to 90% of African Americans who smoke using menthol cigarettes. Sustained tobacco use can cause nicotine addiction, severe respiratory problems, cancer, numerous other adverse health conditions, and death.

Read more:
sph.yale.edu/chemicaladditives

Colin Poitras

LEANING INTO DATA SCIENCE & DATA EQUITY

“YSPH can lead change by embracing the principles of data equity and fairness in everyday analysis of research data.”

DR. BHRAMAR MUKHERJEE, PHD

THE YALE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH (YSPH) is creating a robust data science and data equity (DSDE) program that aims to transform public health research through data science discoveries and equitable implementation, and to provide data analysts with a new, collaborative career path in academic public health. The DSDE educational programming will enable the next generation of public health leaders to master core data science concepts.

The comprehensive DSDE strategy addresses topics ranging from new technology, including artificial intelligence, to global social change.

“Health equity refers to the principle that all individuals should have the opportunity to attain their highest level of health,” said Dr. Bhramar Mukherjee, PhD, who leads the DSDE initiative. Mukherjee is senior associate dean of public health data science and data equity; Anna M.R. Lauder Professor of Biostatistics; professor of epidemiology (Chronic Diseases) and of statistics and data science.

The initiative “involves ensuring that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, age, political belief, geographic location, or other personal attributes and circumstances. Similarly, data equity represents an ethos where all individuals in the world should benefit equally from data science innovations and products; communities across the globe should have equitable representation in terms of quality and availability of data.”

A priority of the school’s 2025–2030 strategic plan is to “shape the future of public health data science and AI.”

“Our team is excited to be part of this school-wide, strategic vision,” Mukherjee said.

Above: Dr. Bhramar Mukherjee, PhD



Photos by Mara Lavitt



Dr. Bhramar Mukherjee, PhD

A Future Data Services Enclave

In building a strong academic data science workforce, Mukherjee imagines a community of DSDE analysts who are well-paid and have clear career paths, and whose work includes sharing reusable analytics and best practices with each other. The future Data Services Enclave will offer “quick turnaround services” such as basic data cleaning and formatting, visualization and coding, and AI assistance. She calls it “a good home for practicing data science with a mission.”

The DSDE Task Force

In September, the DSDE Task Force, which is responsible for guiding and implementing the school’s DSDE strategy, was appointed. Members of the task force represent various departments at YSPH and Yale, including Biostatistics, Social & Behavioral Sciences, Epidemiology of Microbial Diseases, Health Policy Management, Chronic Disease Epidemiology, Environmental Health Sciences, as well as Yale School of Medicine, the Data-Intensive Social Science Center (DISSC), and graduate students.

The task force discussed DSDE’s vision, mission, and aspirations for public health data science, with a special focus on ensuring that data science is practiced in an equitable way and drives equitable decisions.

“This is a defining moment for data science,” Mukherjee said. A Congressional bill, the Data Sciences and Literacy Act of 2023, was introduced proposing a grant program for data literacy, data science, and statistical education, and President Biden signed an executive order for safe, secure and trustworthy use of AI in October, 2023.



“Data equity represents an ethos where all individuals in the world should benefit equally from data science innovations and products; communities across the globe should have equitable representation in terms of quality and availability of data.”

DR. BHRAMAR MUKHERJEE, PHD

“AI is possibly going to play a major role in our lives, in our scholarship, and in our future,” Mukherjee said. “But biased data collection, measurements, and exclusionary cohorts for training AI models coupled with blindly trained algorithms can result in harmful and incorrect conclusions. This results in misguided policies that make inequity and disparity worse. The voices of those that are unseen in the datasets remain unheard.”

A DSDE definition

“While data science leans on computer science, statistics, and domain science, and has a very well-established definition, our ideation of data equity revolves around four core areas: advocating for representative, high-quality data collection across the world; studying populations that continue to be underrepresented in scientific studies; invoking best practices around generalizability, representativeness, and causality in our current data analysis; and focusing on algorithmic fairness, accountability, transparency, and the ethics in AI. This focus is what sets DSDE apart,” Mukherjee said. The DSDE work at YSPH builds on and leverages the existing rich landscape of data science and AI at Yale. “YSPH can lead change by embracing the principles of data equity and fairness in everyday analysis of research data,” she said.



What is next?

DSDE must elevate and transform public health training and research in the coming years by growing four areas of investment:

1. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Equip the next generation of public health leaders with an essential mastery of core data science and AI skills needed to drive innovative research and foster equitable health outcomes.

2. SERVICES AND RESOURCES

Offer a suite of services and resources to support public health research and data science efforts with scalable and nimble implementation.

3. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Create engaging workshops and networking opportunities designed to foster a collaborative community of public health researchers and data scientists who are connected with partners at Yale and beyond.

4. RESEARCH PROFILES

Develop innovative methods and tools that promote equitable health outcomes and drive positive social change.

Jane E. Dee

About Dr. Bhramar Mukherjee

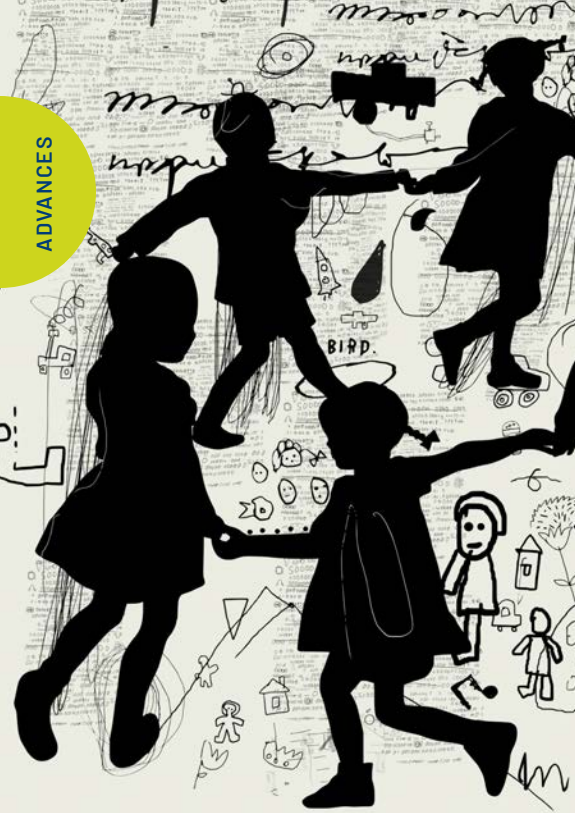
Dr. Bhramar Mukherjee, PhD, is the Anna M.R. Lauder Professor of Biostatistics and professor of chronic disease epidemiology at the Yale School of Public Health (YSPH). Mukherjee serves as the inaugural senior associate dean of public health data science and data equity. She holds a secondary appointment in the Department of Statistics and Data Science and is affiliated with the MacMillan Center and the Institute for the Foundations of Data Science. She serves on the Yale Cancer Center Director’s Cabinet.

Mukherjee joined the YSPH faculty on August 1, 2024, as the inaugural senior associate dean of public health data science and data equity. She assumed the Lauder chair previously held by Dr. Paul D. Cleary, PhD, the school’s former dean.

She is a leader in the field of biostatistics, with pioneering contributions in the integration of genetic, environmental, and healthcare data. Her research interests include analysis of electronic health records, studies of gene-environment interactions, shrinkage estimation, data integration, and assessment of multiple environment pollutants. Her collaborative contributions have focused on cancer, cardiovascular diseases, COVID-19, exposure science, environmental epidemiology, and reproductive health.

Read about Dr. Bhramar Mukherjee:
sph.yale.edu/mukherjee-appointment

For more about the DSDE initiative >
sph.yale.edu/dsde



MATERNAL VACCINATION DURING PREGNANCY

COVID-19 vaccine protects newborns and pregnant women

INFANTS LESS THAN 6 MONTHS of age have among the highest rates of hospitalization with COVID-19 compared to other age groups. While infants 6 months of age and younger are not eligible to be vaccinated for COVID-19, they may be protected by maternal vaccination during pregnancy.

The Yale School of Public Health’s Emerging Infections Program recently participated in a CDC study that highlights the importance of COVID vaccination to protect pregnant women and their newborns. The study examined 1,148 infants hospitalized with COVID-19 from October 2022 to April 2024.

Among the study’s key findings were that infants with COVID-19 frequently have severe illness with approximately 1 in 5 admitted to the intensive care unit, and almost 1 in 20 requiring mechanical ventilation.

Conversely, the percentage of infants hospitalized with COVID-19 whose mothers had been vaccinated during pregnancy decreased from 18% during October 2022–September 2023 to less than 5% during October 2023–April 2024, said Dr. Linda Niccolai, PhD, professor of public health and director of the CT EIP, which contributed Connecticut data to the study collected by Yale CT EIP Program Manager Kimberly Yousey-Hindes, MPH ’07.

Nine infants died in the hospital; all were born to mothers with no record of vaccination during pregnancy, Niccolai said. “Health care providers should be prepared to discuss the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines with their pregnant patients, and the risks to themselves and their infants associated with not being vaccinated.”

Read more: sph.yale.edu/maternalvaccination
Megan Kernis

“Health care providers should be prepared to discuss the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines with their pregnant patients, and the risks to themselves and their infants associated with not being vaccinated.”

DR. LINDA NICCOLAI, PHD



HEALTH & VERITAS PODCAST

Weekly news and ideas in health care

DRS. HOWARD FORMAN AND HARLAN KRUMHOLZ, two Yale physician-professors, discuss the latest news and ideas in health care and seek out the truth amid the noise.

Produced with the Yale School of Management and the Yale School of Public Health, new episodes are available every Thursday. Subscribe to *Health & Veritas* on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, YouTube, or your favorite podcast player.

NEW PROGRAM HELPS STUDENTS LISTEN WITH COMPASSION



“Sometimes the simplest interventions are the most effective. We wanted to begin as we mean to continue, so orientation was an excellent starting point for this effort.”

SUSAN NAPPI, MPH ’01

WHAT BEGAN AS A CONVERSATION about the need for more people to listen with compassion and empathy in a conflict-driven world is now a program for new students.

Compassionate Dialogue was introduced this year as a mandatory part of orientation for incoming students. This session on active listening, based on Indigenous practices, is part of a larger effort at Yale University to help make students feel more comfortable – to make them feel that they belong.

Susan Nappi, executive director of the school’s Office of Public Health Practice and one of the initiators of the program, believes the orientation component is the first such program implemented at a public health school. She was delighted that it was a success.

In a post-orientation survey, in which 51 of the over 150 students responded, nearly all students (99%) said the session was either very or somewhat helpful and informative.

“Sometimes the simplest interventions are the most effective,” said Nappi, MPH ’01 (Chronic Disease Epidemiology). “We wanted to begin as we mean to continue, so orientation was an excellent starting point for this effort. I am grateful to Randi for her willingness to scale up this session to serve all of our incoming students,” she said, referring to Randi McCray, associate director of the school’s Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.



Susan Nappi (left) and Randi McCray

“I believe the skill of listening to each other is essential – even when perspectives are different – because it allows us to get to the heart of what unites us: our values,” McCray said.

“Everyone wants a society in which they can be included, respected, and honored in their full humanity. However, the different perspectives on how we can achieve this vision are often what divides us in our approaches,” she said. “Listening with compassion allows [people to hold on to their] values while allowing space for the values of others. Without listening, we cannot find common ground or a path forward.”



Compassionate Dialogue was introduced this year as a mandatory part of orientation for incoming students.



“As future health professionals we will often find ourselves in spaces where it is essential to step back, evaluate critical issues, and, most importantly, show compassion to those we work with. This experience not only pushed me to reflect on my personal motivations for entering the field, but also allowed me to listen to the stories of my peers.”

ANTIGONE ANTONAKAKIS, MPH ’26

way of life,” McCray explained. “It feels inauthentic as a DEIB [diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging] practitioner not to bring these practices into our work when there is an opportunity. It is mainly because it uplifts the gifts these cultures have for us when it seems that we cannot stay in relationships and communities across different perspectives.”

Initially, McCray wasn’t sure Compassionate Dialogue would work in such a large setting as student orientation, with more than 150 students taking part. However, 21 people from across the university, 15 of them from the Yale School of Public Health, volunteered to be facilitators. At orientation, students were placed in groups of 8–10 for a 90-minute Compassionate Dialogue gathering.

The program proved to be a positive learning experience for facilitators and students alike.

“It was great to be in a small group and have deeper conversations with the new students,” said Kelly Shay, MS, senior associate director of the YSPH Career Management Center. “I loved being part of this, to get to know some of the new students and help create a sense of community, which is in my opinion one of the best things about YSPH.”

According to Nappi, the idea grew from a conversation with Dr. Gregg Gonsalves, PhD ’17, BS ’11, associate professor of epidemiology (Microbial Diseases).

“Gregg was talking to some of us about the communication challenges surrounding the humanitarian crisis in Gaza,” she said. It resonated with what she was hearing from students about the need to find common ground in the current polarizing climate by listening to another’s position and concerns with compassion and empathy.

When McCray joined the school in March, and Nappi told her of her desire to implement a conflict-navigation program, McCray suggested adding Compassionate Dialogue to orientation.

Moving through conflict

Compassionate Dialogue is rooted in the Indigenous practice of dialogue circles, which allow people to engage in an experience where everyone is treated equally and with respect. In the Indigenous tradition, dialogue circles are a way of life, embracing a philosophy that embodies holding spaces for diverse perspectives and practicing values that extend beyond the physical participation of the circle.

McCray said Indigenous groups and tribes of the African diaspora have long used these traditions as a way to move through conflict. First Nations members in Canada began teaching the circle practice to non-Native people in the early 1990s, and it’s currently used in professional, educational, and community spaces. The circles have become a tenet of restorative practices within the educational and criminal justice systems, she said, and have generated transformative relationships across differing perspectives and positions of perceived and inherited power.

“The Indigenous pathway honors the cultural contributions of Native American groups with these practices as a

The challenges, she said, involved getting students to open up.

“For one or two of the questions, it was hard to get a lot of in-depth discussion going when the students were reluctant to speak up. You had to be okay with pauses and silence. That is an important part of the process and one that, as a facilitator, I learned to embrace.”

A supportive forum

Dr. Brandon Nappi, D.Min, M.Div ’01, executive director of leadership programs at the Yale Divinity School (and the husband of Susan Nappi), said students told him that Compassionate Dialogue was the highlight of their orientation. They were able to discuss a variety of topics – from professional interests to career opportunities to concerns about persistent health disparities, and questions about their own self-care.

“Our small group unfolded with energy and ease,” he said. “Students were thankful for a supportive forum to be in conversation with each other about issues – both personal and global – that brought them to Yale. The small-group structure with facilitated dialogue created space for the salient hopes and concerns of student life.”

Antigone Antonakakis, MPH ’26 (Health Care Management), went into the session not knowing what to expect. She hoped she would connect with peers and gain a tangible skill but was concerned that she wouldn’t be able to contribute meaningfully to the conversation.

Her worries proved to be unfounded. “We surpassed my expectations and engaged in meaningful dialogue,” she said.

“As future health professionals we will often find ourselves in spaces where it is essential to step back, evaluate critical issues, and, most importantly, show compassion to those we work with. This experience not only pushed me to reflect on my personal motivations for entering the field,

but also allowed me to listen to the stories of my peers,” she added.

Grace Williams, MPH ’26 (Health Policy), also didn’t know what to expect. “I was hoping to enter a conversation that was free of judgment and filled with respect,” she said. At first, she was apprehensive, because the conversation not only covered public health, but was also personal, “which can be scary when you’re talking to 10 people you just met,” she said. But it was “incredibly easy.”

“At the end of our session, we reflected on what we learned by this practice. I realized I loved having a conversation where I didn’t immediately have to give my thoughts as a response but could instead listen and think about what is said. And I knew other people were truly listening to me without judgment, but instead with curiosity.”

Williams said her group has formed a group chat as a result of the experience and has since met again to discuss their classes, stresses, and life in general. They also discuss how Compassionate Dialogue should be implemented more frequently in their scholastic and daily lives.

Susan Nappi said the hope is now to build on the success of this introduction and flesh out additional opportunities for training and support.

“We are fortunate to have a supportive wellness counselor, Diane Frankel-Gramelis, and other individuals across YSPH who embody these practices,” she said. “By developing a systems approach – including institutionalizing our ways of being, providing teaching supports, and offering ongoing opportunities to practice – we hope to embed these approaches to conflict and dialogue into the very ethos of our school. Plans are under way to develop more opportunities for training.”

Fran Fried

CELEBRATING OUR INDEPENDENCE & UNVEILING OUR NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

By Jane E. Dee

FOLLOW
THE
TIMELINE >

Right: Dean Megan L. Ranney



DR. MEGAN L. RANNEY, MD, MPH, took to the stage to give the Yale School of Public Health’s first-ever state of the school address on October 17, 2024, as the first dean of the newly independent professional school.

Ranney discussed the school’s history and its many “successes and statistics” from the past year. She also focused on the future, unveiling an ambitious and detailed strategic plan for YSPH for the next five years. The plan, Ranney said, charts a path forward “toward creating the field of public health that we all believe in for the 21st century.”

The school’s Alumni Association President Kathe Fox, PhD ’81, and Yale University Provost Scott A. Strobel welcomed Ranney. Strobel praised Ranney’s “endless energy and dedication to the faculty, students and staff, alumni, and community members.”

Strobel recalled the decision two years ago to make YSPH an independent school under the leadership of University President Emeritus Peter Salovey.

“Whether we’re talking about climate change, the COVID pandemic, cancer, or any of the other myriads of threats to our physical and mental well-being, we need public health policies and practices to guide solutions,” Strobel said.

“It’s a simple fact: Yale cannot be a world-leading university of the 21st century without excellent public health research, teaching, and practice,” he said. “To bolster this excellence, Yale must support a school of public health equal in standing to its other professional schools.”

In February 2022, the University pledged \$150 million of endowment toward the Yale School of Public Health, which made it possible to take the first steps towards independence. The university also committed to improving the school’s space and is now in the process of planning a



Yale Provost Scott A. Strobel

new building “that matches the excellence of our students, faculty, and staff,” Strobel said.

“Dollars and buildings are important, but they’re nothing if not directed by an ambitious leader with a clear-eyed strategic plan. And that’s where Dr. Megan Ranney comes in,” Strobel said, referring to Ranney as “a dean of the highest caliber.”

“Megan, thank you for making the Yale School of Public Health your home,” he said.

LINKING SCIENCE & SOCIETY

Ranney came to Yale in July 2023 from Brown University where she served as deputy dean of the School of Public Health, believing “this was a moment of paradigm shift, for the field of public health, for higher education, but also for the globe as we move out of the COVID pandemic and get to chart our future together.”

Since her arrival, the school collectively developed a vision statement that “articulates the paradigm shift that we are looking forward to,” she said. The vision statement reads: “Linking science and society, making public health foundational to communities everywhere.”

“We thought it was incredibly important to signal that as a graduate and professional school, we are committed to not just conducting outstanding science, but also making sure that it gets out into the world. That’s what makes us different perhaps from some of our colleagues in other



Listening to Dean Ranney’s State of the School address.

“I am so inspired and motivated, I just want to get working! (We’ve been working all along, but now I’m really invigorated!) The vision, mission, strategic initiatives, and research areas of focus are so aligned with our school, but they challenge us. They challenge us to think bigger, think bolder, to collaborate more with people we maybe never thought to collaborate with across the University, but also external partners. It is a paradigm shift, but I think the school is ready for this.”

MELINDA IRWIN, PhD, MPH
SUSAN DWIGHT BLISS PROFESSOR
OF EPIDEMIOLOGY
ASSOCIATE DEAN OF RESEARCH, YSPH
DEPUTY DIRECTOR, YALE CANCER CENTER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (PUBLIC HEALTH), YALE CENTER
FOR CLINICAL INVESTIGATION

1915 FOUNDING



The Yale School of Public Health traces its roots to 1915 under the leadership of Charles-Edward Amory Winslow. A world-renowned public health authority and a proponent of social medicine, Winslow influenced health policies locally, nationally, and internationally.

1920

DEFINITION OF PUBLIC HEALTH



In 1920, **C.-E. A. Winslow defined public health**, shaping its future. His comprehensive framework still inspires the field today. In Winslow’s classic 1920 definition, public health is the “science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting physical and mental health and well-being.”

1946



ACCREDITATION

In 1946, the department earned recognition as a nationally accredited school of public health, making Yale’s program one of the oldest accredited public health schools in the country.

"I'm really excited about the vision that has been laid out. We have strategic and inspiring leadership from the dean, which I appreciate. And the strategic plan was done collectively with my colleagues and peers. I envision a future of public health where we have clean energy, and we make a responsible energy transition where we can have technology and growth, but not sacrifice communities."

NICOLE DEZIEL, PHD, MHS
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF EPIDEMIOLOGY
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCES

departments. And it's core to why many of us have come to public health," Ranney told the approximately 300 faculty, staff, students, and alumni who attended the historic event.

"I think it informs so much of what we are already doing and certainly helps light the way to the future," she added. She began her address by talking about the school's impact,

emphasizing its world-class research, education, and community involvement.

Faculty Research

The school recently welcomed six ladder-track faculty, including Dr. Bhramar Mukherjee, PhD, the school's first senior associate dean of public health data science and data equity. YSPH also welcomed 20 new research faculty.

In 2023, the school contributed 1,176 research publications, of which about 800 were from primary YSPH faculty. So far this year, the school has produced 905 publications.

Ranney also shared that, compared to peer schools from the Association of American Universities (AAU), YSPH faculty are ranked:

- 2nd in articles by faculty members
- 4th in overall research impact
- 4th in citations per faculty member

Students

Student enrollment has stabilized since the pandemic and is up 50% since 2020. While most of the country's schools of public health have seen a decrease in the number of applicants, YSPH has seen a 20% increase in applications this year.

The current Master of Public Health class is the school's most diverse since it began tracking diversity metrics among its classes, Ranney said. Of the current MPH students at YSPH:

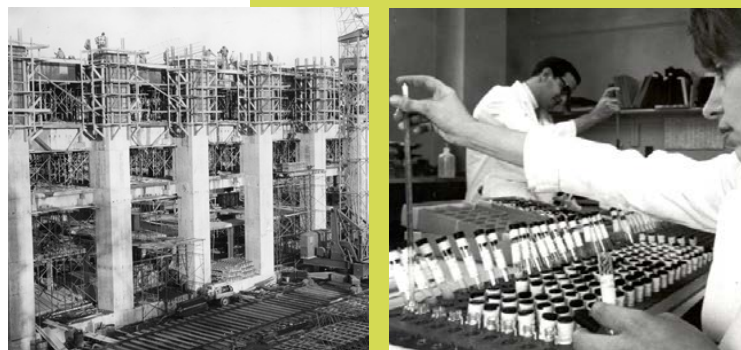
- 41% are international students
- 25% are underrepresented minorities
- 18% are first-generation undergraduates
- 37% are first-generation graduate students

"I'm excited that many of the goals for the future keep us rooted in who we are—an institution that's focused on innovative research and teaching—but are also pushing us as faculty to think about where the world is going. What really inspired me was hearing about a focus on the health care ecosystem and its connection to people's lived experiences, and how, as researchers, we can more critically think about how different sectors are integrated, with the goal of developing equity-minded policies and practices."

OLIVIA KACHINGWE, PHD, MPH
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH
SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Yale
SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC
HEALTH

1964



YALE ARBOVIRUS RESEARCH UNIT

The Rockefeller Foundation moved its viral labs from New York to Yale, funding much of the Laboratory of Epidemiology and Public Health's construction. This move established the Yale Arbovirus Research Unit, attracting leading global experts in arthropod-borne virus infections, including Max Theiler, who received a Nobel Prize for his work developing a Yellow Fever vaccine.

1974

YALE CANCER CENTER



In 1974, the Yale Cancer Center opened as one of the first National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers. Since then, it has been recognized as a national leader in cancer research, prevention, detection, and treatment.

1982

DIAGNOSIS-RELATED GROUPS (DRGs)

Adopted by Medicare in 1982, a system called the Diagnosis-Related Groups categorized ailments and treatments into standard categories. DRGs set fixed fees, reducing average U.S. hospital stays, a practice that encourages hospitals to expedite treatment.

- The average age is 26
- 78 MPH students are enrolled in joint degree programs across the university
- YSPH provided \$8.3 million in financial aid to students in the class of 2024-2025

Ranney also discussed the school's Executive MPH Program and its MS and PhD programs.

A hybrid remote and in-person program, the Executive MPH program “represents a tremendous diversity of future public health leaders, with many folks coming from entirely outside of public health, others coming from policy, business, frontline health care workers, or other positions,” she said. “And again, they represent tremendous diversity and the future of what leadership in public health will look like. Many of them have experienced health challenges and/or the structural challenges that we know affect health themselves.”

Biostatistics and Health Informatics are the largest MS concentrations and 91% of MS students are international. “Our PhD program is both one of the most selective in the country and has one of the highest yields of any public health PhD programs in the country,” Ranney said. Over the past five years, there have been 86 PhD graduates; 200 students have enrolled in the program.

Community Involvement

“Our community engagement knows no bounds,” Ranney said. The school's Office of Public Health Practice has placed 234 students in internships, of which 40% were co-designed with the community and 14% were conducted in low- and middle-income countries. “Again, illustrating that global reach of our school,” she said.

“I can look at each of you and identify the organizations that I now know that you work with. That makes a difference,” she added. We’ve had over 450 volunteer hours served, not counting those research or educational partnerships, 11 community service events, and more than 81 meetings with community partners.”



Audience members listening to the State of the School address.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The 2025-2030 strategic plan “encapsulates the excitement and the vision of the community,” Ranney said. “Our mission is to educate and equip the best public health scientists, practitioners, and leaders to develop systems-level solutions for a healthier society.” Ranney continued, “Hopefully, all of you will feel that this strategic plan reflects your hopes and dreams for the future, not just for our school, not just for our field, but also for the globe.”

YSPH is committed to conducting outstanding science and making sure that its science gets out into the world.

We “know that the discipline of public health – the ways

“I think this moment, as an alumna, is so pivotal as we’re redefining who we are as a school and how we’re forging ahead. We’re going through this big-tent moment where we’re bringing everyone in who has the expertise, interest, passion, and understanding that we need to move forward in public health, and health care. For me, as a clinician working in health care management and delivery, what I found so inspiring about what Dean Megan Ranney presented is the realization that we need to take a first crucial step to make change happen.”

LISA D. JONES, RN, MPH '04
HEALTH CARE CLINICIAN
& CLINICAL INFORMATICIST IN MARYLAND

in which we think about how we ask questions, how we gather data, how we develop interventions and prove that they work or don’t work, and then most of all, how we disseminate out—is foundational to a healthy community,” Ranney said.

“Our work is inherently about equity and about making sure that this skill set and the opportunity to live a healthy life is available to everyone regardless of what family they were born into, what country they were born into, or what historical injustices their community has suffered,” she added.

Six Strategic Priorities

“Our values have remained unchanged,” Ranney said. “We are committed to the values of innovation, leadership, justice, community, and of course, inclusion. And as I look around this room today, I know how much all of these matter to each of us,” she added.

“Our strategic priorities, however, are brand-new.”

The strategic plan’s six priorities are longer-term, organizational strategies “that we’re committed to putting in place to allow us to achieve and fulfill on that mission of educating and equipping the best scientists, practitioners, and leaders, but also to enable us to achieve that vision, that linkage of science to society,” she said. “These are the structural factors that we know need to be in place in order to fulfill what we see as our vision and mission.”

READ THE SCHOOL’S SIX STRATEGIC PRIORITIES ON THE NEXT PAGE >>

1980s

NEEDLE EXCHANGE

In the late 1980s, as AIDS devastated the U.S., activists and Yale public health researchers in New Haven proposed a radical solution: a government-run clean syringe program for drug users. Despite initial opposition, by 1990 Connecticut authorized New Haven’s needle exchange program, saving countless lives and inspiring similar initiatives nationwide.



1997

CIRA

Established in 1997, the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS—CIRA—unites faculty from 16 disciplines and 11 departments throughout Yale. CIRA supports innovative, interdisciplinary research to advance HIV prevention and treatment, and eliminate health disparities.

01.

CREATE PATHWAYS FOR TRANSLATING OUTSTANDING SCIENCE INTO LOCAL AND GLOBAL HEALTH IMPACT.

We will both conduct world-class research and develop entrepreneurial frameworks that use our scholarship to tangibly improve societal well-being.

02.

EDUCATE GENERATIONS OF PUBLIC HEALTH LEADERS.

We will ensure that our students excel in understanding, conducting, and using rigorous science to advance population-level health.

03.

FOSTER INTER-CONNECTED, INCLUSIVE, AND INTERDISCIPLINARY PUBLIC HEALTH COMMUNITIES, WITHIN AND BEYOND YALE.

We will invest in building resilient public health communities in our school, at Yale, in New Haven, Connecticut, and beyond.

04.

SHAPE THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC HEALTH DATA SCIENCE AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.

We will meld ethics and equity with cutting-edge methods to shape how health-oriented data science is structured and used.

05.

ENHANCE TRUST IN THE SCIENCE AND PRACTICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH.

We will support our students, faculty members, alumni, staff, and external partners in serving as trusted spokes-people for, and translators of, public health science.

06.

ACHIEVE STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES THROUGH OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL EXCELLENCE.

We will strengthen the administrative and financial management systems that are fundamental to our ability to achieve our mission.



2007

CARE

Founded in 2007 at the Yale School of Public Health, the Community Alliance for Research and Engagement—CARE—is now co-housed at Southern Connecticut State University and YSPH. CARE focuses on improving health for people in New Haven most impacted by disparities, through research, practice, and engagement.



2020

COVID RESPONSE

In 2020, YSPH experts significantly influenced COVID-19 response efforts. They contributed to Connecticut's vaccine advisory committee, assisted New Haven with contact tracing, and played a key role in national advisory groups, including a White House task force on health equity.



Scholarly Areas of Focus

1. HOW PLACE, SPACE, AND CLIMATE IMPACT HEALTH.

“This is everything from the built environment to exposure to chemicals, to, of course, the effect of climate change on physical, emotional, and social well-being. We not just examine it and describe it, but we also develop interventions to help mitigate it,” Ranney said.

2. REDUCING HARM FROM INTERSECTING EPIDEMICS.

“We in public health know that no epidemic ever exists in isolation, whether it’s the topic that I spend most of

my time working on, violence as a public health problem, whether it’s HIV, COVID, or obesity. We know that these epidemics are deeply intersecting and also often have common underlying root causes.”

3. THE COST OF AND CONNECTION TO THE HEALTH ECOSYSTEM.

“We’re committed to both illustrating the impact of the current Byzantine system in the U.S. and beyond. But also helping to make it simpler, helping to make it stronger, making sure that families as well as patients and healthcare providers can achieve their best outcomes for those who they love,” said Ranney, who is also an emergency physician.

4. THE HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGY.

“This is one that I think is really fun and interesting because we have no idea what technologies are going to come next,” she said. “I think this is core to so much of the work that many of you do. But it’s also a big space for us to lean into.”



Scan the QR Code to read the full strategic plan online >

“Hopefully, all of you will feel that this strategic plan reflects your hopes and dreams for the future, not just for our school, not just for our field, but also for the globe.”

MEGAN L. RANNEY, MD, MPH
DEAN, YALE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
C.-E. A. WINSLOW PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH



2024

SCHOOL INDEPENDENCE

For the first time in the school’s nearly 110 years of existence, we are a fully independent and self-supported school at Yale.

Left: Monica Gomes, MPH ’25, Pargol Arab, MPH ’25, and Don-Pedro Ume, MPH ’25



This page: Bryn Redal, MPH ’25 and Varshini Batti, MS ’25

“I was struck by the effort to include our communications as part of what we’re doing as public health scientists. I think it’s true, even in basic science, that what we do in science is to investigate facts about the world, and then communicate our findings to others. In public health, it’s even more true that we need to not just do our science, but communicate it to others, because communication is not just part of the science, but also part of the practice of public health.”

JEFFREY TOWNSEND, PHD
ELIHU PROFESSOR OF BIOSTATISTICS
PROFESSOR OF ECOLOGY AND EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY

“

STUDENTS RESPOND

How do you envision the future of public health, and what does it mean to you?

”

INTEGRATIVE

“I envision a future in public health centered around developing a more integrative health care system. I see data playing a pivotal role in guiding corporations and health systems to enhance patient care, ultimately impacting health care on national and global scales.”

VARSHINI BATTI, MS '25
HEALTH INFORMATICS



EQUAL

“I envision the future of public health as one where health equity is prioritized. I think it's important to understand that not everyone is privileged to access health care, particularly those populations that are disproportionately affected by chronic and infectious diseases. As public health experts, we must champion policies that ensure people are met where they are.”

DON-PEDRO UME, MPH '25
EPIDEMIOLOGY OF MICROBIAL DISEASES



ACTION

“I envision a future of public health where we, as trusted voices, advance climate action and protect the health of the most vulnerable populations from climate change.”

CRISTINA ARNÉS SANZ, MPH '25
EPIDEMIOLOGY OF MICROBIAL DISEASES,
CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH





WELLNESS

“To me, public health is about ensuring that people live not only longer, but healthier and happier lives. By emphasizing prevention, we can invest in holistic wellness, providing robust mental health support alongside accessible physical health resources. Creating environments that promote wellness through education, nutrition, and physical activity will empower individuals to take charge of their health. It’s truly inspiring to envision a future where public health prioritizes inclusivity and prevention, paving the way for healthier, thriving communities.”

MICHELLE LY, MPH '25
HEALTH POLICY

COLLABORATIVE

“I envision the future of public health as one that harnesses the power of data-driven insights, interdisciplinary collaboration, and global partnerships to address complex health challenges. I hope the world can treat public health as a global cause and aggregate all possible resources to serve all humans.”

HOUMIN XING, MS '25
BIOSTATISTICS



ACCESSIBLE

“I envision the future of public health as having great health equity. As time progresses, public health and medicine will further overlap, revolutionizing our community’s potential for full equality and accessibility to health. I believe this generation will take a large step toward realizing this, which fills me with incredible pride. I look forward to seeing the outcome of our hard work.”

SHIVANI SALUJA, MPH '26
SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES



SUSTAINABLE

“With rising environmental issues like climate change, food insecurity, and pollution, prioritizing environmental health is crucial to addressing health inequities. I hope to see progress in the form of sustainable policy and legislation that values the interconnectedness of the environment and humankind!”

JANHAVI KULKARNI, MPH '26
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCES



IMPACTFUL

“I envision the future of public health as a time when we create opportunities for change in the treatment of marginalized communities, especially in our health care system. This means using the opportunities and resources available to me, to make the best impact I possibly can on my community.”

OGHENETEFIKE OKOTETE, MPH '26
HEALTH CARE MANAGEMENT

INTERCONNECTED

“The future of public health emphasizes the intrinsic interconnectedness of human, environmental, and planetary health. As we face more complex global challenges—climate change, environmental degradation, and growing health inequities—public health will need to evolve into a more integrated and systems-based approach focused on preventive care and resilient communities.”

BRYN REDAL, MPH '25
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCES





HOLISTIC

“The future of public health, to me, emphasizes connectedness around the world and the importance of holistic health care systems to prevent and treat/cure health issues. Diversity of thought and reliance on scientific evidence will play a huge role. We will view past shortcomings as lessons and apply them to current and future public health legislation!”

BETTY DEREGE, MPH '25
HEALTH POLICY

HEALTHY

“I see the future of public health as one that emphasizes keeping people in all parts of the world healthy. I hope to see a field that develops in a post-COVID society and relies on our previous shortcomings to prevent future pandemics.”

OLIVIA MCCARTHY, MPH '26
SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES



MULTIDISCIPLINARY

“The future of public health will be shaped by a multidisciplinary approach, leveraging innovation and community engagement to improve health outcomes. For me, this future means not only contributing to research but also implementing it for prevention, promotion of health equity and to empower communities to lead healthier lives with longevity.”

CECILIA JIYE LEE, MPH '25
CHRONIC DISEASE EPIDEMIOLOGY



COMMUNITY

“The future of public health is centered on the voices of young people and championing their wants, needs, and health. To me, public health is about working with communities to achieve their goals and using my privilege and position in public health to champion equitable health for communities.”

NIMISHA SRIKANTH, MPH '25
SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES



RELIABILITY

“I see the future of public health focusing on reliable information and early detection as central to effective global health strategies. I see myself in research and teaching, contributing to a future where these efforts lead to healthier communities and a significant reduction in chronic disease burdens.”

BERNARD FREMPONG, MPH '26
CHRONIC DISEASE EPIDEMIOLOGY

ACCURACY

“I see public health becoming more tech-driven and focused on equity. AI, big data, and wearables will enable us to track and predict health trends in real time, making prevention a priority. What this means to me is the ability to impact underserved populations with lower costs and higher accuracy.”

KEVIN LAI, EXECUTIVE MPH '26
INFORMATICS





"One size does not fit all in public health. This is why it is so important that both the school and the discipline of public health be independent ...Public health thinks differently; acts differently."

KATHE FOX, PHD '81,
PRESIDENT, AYAPH

WELCOME BY KATHE FOX

Highlights from the Alumni Association president



THE YALE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH ALUMNI, over 8,000 strong, form a web of knowledge and action that sustains and changes the world using micro and macro actions. This magazine documents many examples but it could never cover all of them. Today, as YSPH enters its new and independent existence at Yale University, I am writing to remind and thank each of you for what you do for public health every day.

In the early 20th century when many schools of public health were being established, almost all were part of, or in the shadow of, a medical school. The practice of medicine and public health were very closely tied. Many public health solutions, such as vaccines, were medical solutions,

others such as clean water and sanitation were not.

As both professions matured it became very clear that public health was a discipline in its own right with strong ties to the social sciences, engineering, analytics, and the like. It was public health that brought attention to cultural differences, first in how individuals responded to treatment recommendations, and later to biologic differences between genders and ethnic populations. Today, medicine and public health are partners for healthy communities, and we even see medicine looking to public health for prevention and treatments that were never considered 25 years ago. Physicians talk about prescriptions for a healthy diet or exercise. They look to environmental scientists for solutions to poor air quality and climate change.

Sadly, there is perhaps no stronger evidence of the need for public health and its communication strategies than the COVID-19 pandemic. Physicians could neither cure nor adequately curb the spread of COVID; many people died, some unnecessarily. The public health interventions, even when applied haphazardly, helped, and bought the world time until vaccines were available. YSPH, its current faculty, staff, and students, as well as you, the alumni, worked ceaselessly

to slow the spread and calm fears. We all could have done better; regardless, our efforts were critical.

Thinking like a public health professional, not a clinician, meant that we started with data, considered the community as a whole, and recommended and implemented multiple, population-specific solutions. One size does not fit all in public health. This is why it is so important that both the school and the discipline of public health be independent from medicine. Public health thinks differently; acts differently.

Very few things make me prouder than being a public health professional. My career, and my retirement, have been devoted to using my expertise to help individuals and communities live healthy, productive lives. My individual impact is small, but our collective strength is unparalleled.

And so today I say congratulations to Yale University for recognizing the importance, strength, and knowledge of the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health of the Yale School of Medicine and letting us fly. Welcome to the School of Public Health of Yale University!

Thank you,
Kathe Fox, PhD '81
President, AYAPH

8K

THE NUMBER OF THE ALUMNI
COMMUNITY OF THE YALE SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Left: Kathe Fox, PhD '81, speaks at the State of the School.

DATA, LEADERSHIP, & COLLABORATION AT THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

A gift from Indra Nooyi and Raj Nooyi will help train tomorrow's public health leaders

YALE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH has long emphasized both data science and data-driven health leadership. Equitable data science makes transformational and impactful research possible, resulting in innovations that advance and improve public health, from identifying new cancer treatments to creating guidelines reducing pollution's health impact.

A new two-part gift to YSPH builds on this fundamental focus on data, while supporting an ongoing, collaborative educational program with the Yale School of Management (SOM). The gift, from former PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi, a 1980 graduate of the Yale School of Management, and her husband, Raj Nooyi, will advance the school's efforts to train students as leaders in data-driven public health improvement of people's wellbeing at local, national, and global scales. The Nooyis have previously supported YSPH with an endowed professorship.

"I am so grateful to Indra and Raj for their strategic, farsighted support of these two important programs," said YSPH Dean Megan L. Ranney, MD, MPH. "We can't be great public health data science leaders without investment — or without partnerships."

Leading the Way with Data

"The Yale School of Public Health has a long record of accomplishment in data-driven, impactful research. During the COVID-19 pandemic, its researchers provided policy-makers in Connecticut and internationally with timely data-driven insights to help guide emergency response. The school also educates future leaders who use public health data science and data equity to enable transformational research in the face of quickly changing methods, technology, and societal shifts," Indra Nooyi said. "That track record was a significant factor in our decision to support the school."

The Nooyis' gift creates an endowed data science resource fund that can be used to advance teaching and research at the school. For example, recent research showed that RSV vaccines would decrease illness and death if deployed like flu shots and was used to develop a dynamic new tool for evaluating the effectiveness of large-scale public health interventions. In April, the school held an international gathering to improve equity in accessing and using high-quality health data. But as sources of data explode and artificial intelligence becomes more powerful, YSPH must expand its efforts to remain a leader in the field.

The Nooyis' gift has enabled YSPH to recruit one of the world's most influential public health data scientists. The school recently appointed award-winning statistician Dr. Bhramar Mukherjee, PhD, as its inaugural Senior Associate Dean of Public Health Data Science and Data Equity. The deanship, made possible by the Nooyis' gift, is an important new leadership position that reflects the school's focus on data science as a critical pillar for the future of public health.

"Dr. Bhramar Mukherjee works at the cutting edge of public health data collection and analysis, with an eye towards global data equity," Ranney said. "Her recruitment advances our goal of leading the future of public health data science."

A Collaborative Degree

A portion of the Nooyis' gift supports the continued success of the Health Care Management Program, run by YSPH and the Yale School of Management. Students take classes at both schools, earning a Master of Public Health degree in healthcare management, and can pursue an MBA. Graduates of the program have become leaders of hospitals, public health systems, and health startups.

Photo by Robert A. Lisak



Raj Nooyi and Indra Nooyi with Dr. Albert Ko, MD, the Raj and Indra Nooyi Professor of Public Health.

Dr. Howard Forman, MD, MBA, a professor at both schools and a diagnostic radiologist at Yale New Haven Hospital, directs the program. "Our program is the best in the country, and the Nooyis' support will help us remain financially affordable to students," Forman noted.

One of the marquee events of the Health Care Management Program is a yearly conference that brings over 500 health care professionals to Yale SOM, including many of the program's current students and alumni. The event celebrated its 20th year in 2024. "The conference draws on academic rigor but emphasizes practice," Forman said. "It's a place where alumni and students can learn from each other."

Ranney notes that YSPH is Yale's newest independent school, transitioning from being a department of the Yale School of Medicine. "That means gifts like these have an outside impact. Indra and Raj's gift allows our school to continue to grow as world leaders of public health."

"The Yale School of Public Health has a long record of accomplishment in data-driven, impactful research...The school also educates future leaders who use public health data science and data equity to enable transformational research in the face of quickly changing methods, technology, and societal shifts..."

INDRA NOOYI, MBA '80,
FORMER CEO, PEPSICO

YSPH RECEIVES MAJOR GIFT TO SUPPORT EMERGING HEALTH CHALLENGES

THE YALE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH has received a significant gift from Yale College alumnus Dr. Charles Nolan, MD, BA '59, and his wife, Eleanor Nolan, to fund rapid-response research teams to address urgent public health challenges.

The Charles and Eleanor Nolan Emerging Health Challenge Fund empowers Dean Megan L. Ranney, MD, MPH, to direct resources swiftly toward response and research on emerging global health crises, including pandemics, addiction, climate change, and gun violence, under the direction of YSPH faculty members.

A primary motivation for supporting the Yale School of Public Health stems from its recent transition into an independent school within Yale University, the couple said.

Having worked in public health for 30 years in Seattle, Charles Nolan was intrigued to learn that YSPH was to become an independent school. He and Eleanor Nolan met with Ranney to learn of her plans for the school and to ask how they might help her realize her vision. “She didn’t hesitate,” Charles Nolan recalled. “She said right away: ‘I would like to have the capability to react quickly to emerging health threats, infectious and non-infectious.’”

Ranney noted that the Nolans’ generosity will enable YSPH to address critical public health issues with greater speed, agility, and scientific rigor. “Charlie and Eleanor wanted to ensure that YSPH is able to respond to future health crises as they arise – whether they be infectious diseases, climate events, or anything else unexpected where time is of the essence,” Ranney said. “The flexibility of this funding will allow our faculty to immediately jump into action without having to wait for slower-moving research funds to materialize. Importantly, this gift enables us to link science and society in real time – thereby helping communities everywhere to achieve health.”



Eleanor Nolan and Dr. Charles Nolan, MD

Charles Nolan’s career has shaped his understanding of public health’s pivotal societal role. Early in his career, while practicing public health in Seattle, he helped combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and worked extensively on tuberculosis in the U.S. and abroad.

Reflecting on his career, he emphasized the growing recognition of public health’s importance in today’s world. “The creation of an independent School of Public Health shows that Yale University recognizes the critical role that academic schools of public health play in improving the health of populations throughout the world, through research, and training desperately needed public health professionals. With this move, Yale is now poised to take its rightful place among leaders in academic public health and to make even more substantial contributions to this important global effort.”

The Nolans’ connection to Yale runs deep. After graduating from Yale College in 1959 and pursuing his medical and public health career, Charles Nolan maintained strong ties to the University through reunions and trips with fellow alumni. He and Eleanor Nolan co-chaired the 60th Yale College reunion, and this past May, they attended his 65th reunion. “Our connection with Yale has enriched our lives,” he said.

Matt Kristoffersen



Ted Witek, MPH '82

CRITERIA FOR THE YALE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH’S Distinguished Alumni Award includes leadership in public health as an outstanding teacher, researcher, or practitioner; exceptional contributions to public health practice; and a sustained contribution to community and society.

Dr. Theodore Witek, MPH '82, DrPH, checks all those boxes. The YSPH alumni awards committee noted that Witek has “an extraordinary level of achievement in all of these areas and a very distinguished career in the field of public health.”

Witek received the Distinguished Alumni Award at the Association of Yale Alumni in Public Health (AYAPH) Awards Luncheon on October 17, 2024, at the New Haven Lawn Club.

For over 40 years, Witek has made significant contributions to the field of public health, first as a researcher and later as a corporate executive and academic. His research on the impact of air quality on respiratory illness was cited as evidence to strengthen air quality standards in the U.S. Clean Air Act.

Witek dedicated decades of his career to the development of pharmaceutical drugs to treat respiratory airflow obstruction. Applying the model of induced viral infection,

TED WITEK IS YSPH’S DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS FOR 2024

he worked on a team that attenuated upper respiration infection using ICAM-1, the soluble fraction of the viral receptor for rhinovirus. He also applied laser Doppler velocimetry to measure nasal blood flow.

He was known in the pharmaceutical industry for applying a public health framework to his work by ensuring that public health concepts were included in clinical trial designs.

Witek also studied global pandemic preparedness in the years before the COVID pandemic, evaluating preparedness in the U.S., Canada, and South Korea.

“The future of public health,” he said, reflecting on his time at YSPH, “is based in foundational leadership competencies of embracing complexity and uncertainty, in order to ensure that we are poised to do our good in a changing world.”

Witek earned his BS from Quinnipiac College followed by his MPH at Yale and his DrPH at Columbia University. He also earned an MBA from Henley Management College in the United Kingdom. As stated in his nomination letter, “He studied for one reason only: to be satisfied and certain that his achievements and expertise would enable him to move the goalpost forward for the communities he served.”

“The future of public health is based in foundational leadership competencies of embracing complexity and uncertainty, in order to ensure that we are poised to do our good in a changing world.”

TED WITEK, MPH '82

After decades in industry, Witek became a professor and senior fellow at Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto. In 2020, he was named director of the University of Toronto’s Doctor of Public Health program, the first such degree offering in Canada. In addition to mentoring future public health leaders, he remains focused on new therapeutics to improve patient care.

Jane E. Dee

ALUMNI NEWS

DR. HEIDI BOERSTLER MPH '81, DrPH '87, is professor emeritus of health administration, law and ethics at the business school, University of Colorado, where she still teaches health law in the Executive MBA/HA program. In addition, she is a part-time graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania, pursuing an MPhil in the School of Liberal and Professional Studies. Her research involves collecting and analyzing turning point narratives in a culturally and ethnically diverse sample of older Americans. She is having a ton of fun!



DR. JOHN BROWNSTEIN, PhD '04, was recently named one of the Fierce 50 of 2024. The Fierce 50 honors the people who are

trailblazing in health care innovation, health equity, social impact, breakthrough research, and patient advocacy. Through his work as senior vice president and chief innovation officer at Boston Children's Hospital, his research team mines data on social media platforms, blogs and chat rooms to investigate budding health threats that could develop into full-blown pandemics. In addition to early detection, the team monitors ongoing threats and publishes seminal studies on vaccinations and masking. The group has been working together for years, building the foundational technology to support the early detection of H1N1 flu, Zika virus, Ebola, and now mpox. Brownstein co-founded HealthMap, an early detection tracking system, and was a creator of the website Global.health to focus on modeling and responses during the first 100 days of a viral outbreak. His team also collaborated

with the White House to build Vaccines.gov. Brownstein leads the Innovation and Digital Health Accelerator at Boston Children's. He helps founders launch new companies and consults for outside startups in fields such as telemedicine adoption.

Hartford HealthCare recently announced the appointment of **GINA CALDER**, BS '05, MPH '08, MBA '22, as the next president of the central region, which includes MidState Medical Center in Meriden and The Hospital of Central Connecticut in New Britain. "Gina is uniquely qualified to lead this dynamic region," Hartford HealthCare President and CEO Jeffrey Flaks said. "I am proud to announce this during National Women's History Month since she will be our first Black female regional president." During Calder's career, she has advanced "safe, supportive and inclusive clinical care and work environments."



DR. IONA CHENG, PhD, MPH '01, is co-leading a new study to uncover the causes of cancer in Asian Americans through a \$12.45 mil-

lion grant from the National Cancer Institute. Cheng received her PhD at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. She currently holds several positions including professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at the University of California, San Francisco; head of the Cancer Epidemiology Division; and co-investigator of the SEER Greater Bay Area Cancer Registry.



KATHRYN FINNEY, MPH '00, recently received the Heinz Award for the Economy for disrupting the status quo in the tech field and

boldly breaking down barriers that have long hindered Black and Brown women from entering the startup ecosystem. Named one of the most influential women in tech, Finney has innovated, led, advocated

for, and started programs that foster economic, financial and social opportunities for BIPOC-owned businesses across the U.S. She is the founding managing partner of Genius Guild, a Chicago-based venture firm that invests in high-growth startups that are led by diverse founders using the social determinants of health framework to build market-driven solutions. Finney is the author of The Wall Street Journal bestseller "Build the Damn Thing: How to Start a Successful Business if You're Not a Rich White Guy," which offers a battle-tested guide to help every entrepreneur succeed. She shares her journey on her podcast, "Build the Damn Thing," to further equip and encourage Black founders and women entrepreneurs.



National Institute of Animal Agriculture recently welcomed **DR. HEATHER FOWLER**, VMD, PhD, MPH '11, as co-chair of the

Antibiotics Council. Fowler is the director, producer and public health veterinarian at the National Pork Board where she oversees public health as well as occupational safety and health issues as they relate to swine production in the U.S. The purpose of the Antibiotics Council is to seek to enhance an animal agriculture industry that is aligned with judicious antibiotic use policies and practices.

SARAH ANNE GUAGLIARDO, MPH '10, is an epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, leading the CDC's work on the Oropouche virus. She is the first author of a recent paper in Emerging Infectious Diseases on the virus' reemergence in the Americas, and its risk for spread in the U.S. and its territories.

DR. REBECCA KATZ, PhD, MPH '98 recently released her latest book, "The Outbreak Atlas." Designed for the general public, this book provides an overview of outbreak activities alongside more than

100 engaging case studies and visuals to guide readers through the complexity involved in outbreak preparedness, response, and recovery. "The Outbreak Atlas" lifts the curtain on the rationale and interconnectedness of outbreak responses across different fields and at various levels, presenting accessible information that ensures a shared understanding of the essential activities to control an outbreak.



WILLIAM J. LEE, MS '09, was recently recognized as one of the nation's Top 40 Under 40 Leaders in Health by the National Minority Quality

Forum for his work at the intersection of epidemiology, law, and policy to reduce patient risk and advance health equity among minoritized and underserved populations. Lee leads the Scientific Practice Group of Kershaw Talley Barlow, P.C., a nationally recognized plaintiffs' mass tort and class action firm in Sacramento, CA.



DR. JENNIFER MANDELBAUM, MPH '16, PhD, received the 2023 Early Career Award from the American Public Health Association's Public Health Education and Health Promotion section. She was also

recently named to the Boston Congress of Public Health's 40 Under 40 in Public Health. Mandelbaum is a mixed-methods research manager at Athenahealth, where she uses data to examine ways to advance health equity and improve the business of health care. She is also a part-time faculty member in Tufts University's Department of Community Health.

DR. ROCK G. POSITANO, DPM, MPH '89, has authored the book "Street Smart: The Primer for Success in the New World." Written for Millennials, it is compelling and relevant to anyone. He is the director of the Non-Surgical Foot and Ankle Service

at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City and is internationally renowned as a medical pioneer in the non-surgical approach for the treatment of foot and ankle disorders. He is also on staff at the New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical College and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. Positano is a clinical associate professor at the Yale School of Public Health and an advisory member of the Yale School of Management Council of Global Advisors and the Yale School of Public Health Leadership Council.

DR. K.C. RONDELLO, MD, MPH '94, has been named chair of the board of trustees of the Hunterdon Healthcare System ("Hunterdon Health") and the Hunterdon Medical Center. Rondello has served as a trustee of Hunterdon Health since 2016. He also has served on the board of directors of Hunterdon Healthcare Partners, Hunterdon's Independent Practice Association, since 2020. A disaster epidemiologist deeply engaged in the nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, he is a clinical associate professor of public health and emergency management at Adelphi University in New York. He was elected a fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine in 2020 and earned the Certified Emergency Manager (CEM®) credential of the International Association of Emergency Managers in 2013.



TAMMY SNYDER, MPH '08, president and chief operating officer (COO) of Rochester General Hospital (RGH), has been named among

the nation's "Rising stars: Healthcare Leaders Under 40" by the influential publication Becker's Hospital Review. The Becker's Healthcare list identifies 67 next-generation leaders whose focus on development, innovation, and improved outcomes is enabling their organizations to thrive at a time of substantial industry change. Snyder joined RGH in 2022.



OLIVIA SWEETNAM, MPH '11, MSN '11, has been named the new chief executive officer at Grace Cottage Family Health

& Hospital in Townshend, Vermont. The chief nursing officer at Grace Cottage since February 2024, Sweetnam was vice president of hospice quality and clinical practice at Amedisys from 2021 to 2023, and held multiple leadership roles in quality, operations, and medical staff management at Ochsner Health Systems in Louisiana from 2013 to 2021. "Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital is a rare gem in the world of health care," said Sweetnam. "It is a shining example of personal and compassionate care, and I am proud to lead this wonderful organization into the future."



DR. THEODORE WITEK, MPH '82, DrPH, was appointed professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto

and the inaugural director of Canada's first Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) Program. He also serves as a senior fellow at the school's Institute for Health Policy Management and Evaluation.

HAVE AN UPDATE? Your classmates want to hear about you! Send your news (and photos) to ysph.alumni@yale.edu.

IN MEMORIAM



**EDITH SYLVIA
NEEDELL BAUM**,
MPH '75, of Fairfield,
Connecticut, died on
February 22, 2024,
with family by her
side. She was mar-

ried for 62 years to her late husband, Dr. S. James Baum, MD. She attended the Juliard School of Music and the University of Bridgeport and earned a master's degree in public health from the Yale School of Public Health. Immersed in philanthropic endeavors, supporting meaningful causes, and serving on many boards and committees throughout her life, she was an active community member in Fairfield and the Greater Bridgeport area. She was affiliated with local associations and served on the board of directors of Grasmere Eldercare Center, Jewish Family Services, and LifeBridge. She was a long-time member of Congregation B'nai Israel. For nearly four decades, she sold homes for William Raveis Real Estate Southport.



**CONSTANCE
AUSTIN BEAN**,
MS '50, longtime
resident of Wayland,
Massachusetts, wife,
mother, author and
advocate of environ-

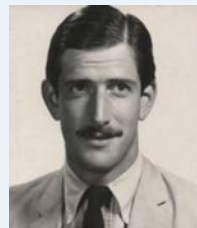
mental and women's health issues, died December 18, 2023. She was predeceased by her husband, Orville E. Bean in 2019 and her son, David R. Bean in 2022. Born March 25, 1928, in Providence, Rhode Island, she attended Lincoln High School. She earned her BA from Mount Holyoke College in 1949 and a Master of Public Health degree from Yale University in 1950. She was a co-founder of the Boston Association of

Childbirth Education, Inc. An author, she wrote eight books, the most recent being "Nine Lives and Counting—A Memoir of Hope, Caring, and Healing." She was a member of the American College Health Association, Education Section, and the International Childbirth Education Association. After her retirement from MIT, she devoted herself to elevating awareness and promoting proper treatment of Lyme disease, which she herself was affected by, through research, publications and speaking engagements.



**HAOTIAN
(TIAN TIAN)
CAI**, MPH '16, died
December 5, 2023, in
a bus accident while
traveling in Egypt.
Born August 13, 1988,

she arrived in Fairbanks, Alaska with her mother when she was 3 years old from Anhui, China. She attended the University of Chicago where she studied anthropology, graduating with honors. At Yale, she was awarded the Francis Black Memorial Scholarship, the Lindsay Fellowship for Research in Africa, and the Thomas Rubin and Nina Russell Global Health Fellowship. Her academic journey launched her into a career as an epidemiologist, first with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and later with Doctors Without Borders. She published numerous studies related to health interventions and traveled extensively in Africa. She was a prolific knitter, an accomplished curler with Yale's curling club, a scuba diver, a stand-up paddleboarder, and a dancer of all styles. She is survived by her parents, Hengjin Cai and Xiaoying Fan, numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends.



**DR. KIRBY ORRIN
KLOTER**, MS, MPH
'74, ScD, formerly
of Old Saybrook,
Connecticut, and
Sarasota, Florida,
died July 13, 2023,

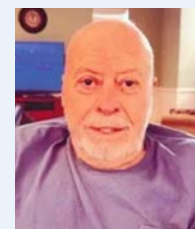
at Lawrence + Memorial Hospital in New London, Connecticut. He graduated from the University of Vermont in 1967 with a BS in zoology, served two years in the Peace Corps in Africa in Basutoland (now Lesotho), and returned to Connecticut where he completed an MS in clinical parasitology at the University of Connecticut in 1972 and his MPH at Yale. Subsequently, he returned to Africa and spent time researching in Senegal. He received a ScD in tropical medicine from Tulane University in 1981. He worked as an entomologist in New Orleans, then as a professor at the University of Florida, Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory. In the 1990s, he worked with the Branford Connecticut Inland Wetlands Department and taught biology courses at the University of New Haven, Albertus Magnus College, and Mitchell College. He also taught secondary school biology at St. Bernard's Catholic High School in Montville, Connecticut.



JOHN A. LUTZ,
MPH '84, a long-time
YSPH advocate,
volunteer, and AYAPH
board member, died
on July 24, 2024,
after a brief battle

with acute myeloid leukemia at age 64. He earned his bachelor's degree in chemistry at SUNY Oneonta in 1980 and spent his early career at Bassett Medical Center in Cooperstown, New York. He advocated

for patient care throughout his career as a health care leader. He joined Albany Associates in Cardiology in 1989, later serving as CEO. In 1997, he was a major driver in the formation of Prime Care Physicians and was CEO until his transition to national consulting in 2006. In 2020, he joined Capital District Physicians Health Plan in Albany, New York, as executive vice president of integrated delivery services where he was a leader in the strategy and execution of the CDPHP affiliation with Community Care Physicians. He was a candidate for Florida's Sarasota County Hospital Board, for which he was actively campaigning at the time of his illness.



**THOMAS ROBERT
MAYHUGH, SR.**,
MPH '62, of Pensacola,
Florida, died on June
13, 2024. He was
born in Princeton,
Indiana and grew

up in Louisville, Kentucky. He graduated from the University of Kentucky College of Pharmacy in 1952, then enlisted in the Air Force serving in the Korean and Vietnam wars. He received a Master of Public Health/Hospital Administration degree from Yale University in 1962 and a master's degree in business administration from George Washington University in 1967. He retired from the Air Force as a lieutenant colonel in January 1973, and returned to Louisville where he began working for State Farm Insurance. He also maintained his pharmacy certifications and continued to work part-time as a pharmacist until 2002. He was involved in many service clubs including the St. Matthews Kentucky Lions Club, the Kentucky Chapter of The Retired Officers' Association, the Louisville Kentucky Chapter of the Military Order of the World Wars, National Sojourners, the Air Force Association, the Pensacola Historical Society, and the Pensacola Heritage Foundation. He had been a Mason since 1963.

BREAKING BOUNDARIES Remembering Dr. Gregory Tignor

ALTHOUGH HIS FATHER'S DREAM was for him to earn a Doctor of Medicine degree, Gregory Tignor, DSc, professor emeritus of epidemiology, explained that as a Black man living in a segregated U.S. society, "the options that your father saw for you were few. You could become a colored teacher, a colored preacher, a colored doctor, or a colored lawyer. Whatever you became, your being was always prefaced by being colored."

Dr. Tignor was born in Washington, D.C. on September 15, 1938, the youngest of three sons of two inspiring educators, Madison W. Tignor and Ethel P. Tignor.

His parents, he said, "never dared dream of a time and place in this country where a young Negro boy could aspire to becoming a professor at a predominately white university."

Tignor, who retired from the Yale School of Public Health in 2000, died at his home in Hamden on May 9, 2024.

He earned his Doctor of Science degree at Johns Hopkins University in 1969. After leaving Johns Hopkins he arrived at Yale where he joined the internationally known Yale Arbovirus Research Unit (YARU) as an arbovirus researcher studying viruses transmitted by blood-sucking arthropods such as mosquitoes, ticks, and biting midges.

He was an integral member of YARU, instituting stringent rules for biologic safety in laboratories where viruses were being studied. The safety reforms included

anti-smoking regulations in laboratories; the use of one of the first biological safety hoods, and personal protective equipment with respirators; the adoption of devices used to avoid mouth pipetting; and ensuring that laboratories operate under negative pressure.

"Due in part to the success of some of these measures, Dr. Tignor was elected as a councilor of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, and was appointed to a committee that was making recommendations to the Centers for Dis-

ease Control to reduce the risk to laboratory workers from arboviruses," Johns Hopkins reported when Dr. Tignor received that school's The Knowledge for the World Award in 2011.

His research focused on the identification, characterization, and pathogenesis of zoonotic viruses that cause

encephalitis in humans, including rabies, Ebola, Rift Valley Fever, and Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever. While conducting research in the field, he became known for developing spotted slides that could be used for rapid diagnosis with only small drops of serum.

After his retirement, he served as a consultant to the State Department's Agency for International Development and as president of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences.

A graveside service to celebrate his life and legacy was held on May 18, 2024, at Whitneyville Cemetery in Hamden.

Jane E. Dee



IN MEMORIAM CONTINUED



ROSARIO (SARO) PALMERI, MPH '70, died on October 30, 2023. Born in Palermo, Italy in 1931, he earned his medical degree at the

University of Palermo, and subsequently came to the United States where he interned at Union Hospital in Fall River, Massachusetts. He completed his residency at Worcester City Hospital, Worcester, Massachusetts, and joined a private pediatric practice in Quincy, Massachusetts. He moved to Wethersfield, Connecticut to work at the Connecticut Department of Public Health as a pediatric specialist and was involved with the Yale University Child Study Center. He obtained a master's degree in public health at Yale. Following his retirement as chief of the Handicapped Children Section of the Connecticut Department of Public Health, he and his wife settled in Wellesley, Massachusetts where he consulted for the Massachusetts Disability Determination Services. During his lifetime he contributed to numerous areas of research and practice in the field of early child development.



DR. RUBY TOMBERG SENIE, PhD '84, died on September 26, 2023, at the age of 87 following a long and distinguished

career as a scientist, researcher, public health nurse, and educator. She received a BS from Cornell University in 1957, a BSN from Cornell School of Nursing in 1975, an MA from Teachers College, Columbia University, in 1978, and a PhD from Yale School of Public Health in 1984. Over the

course of her career, she was director of the department of community health at Beth Israel, an assistant professor in the department of community medicine at Mount Sinai, a senior epidemiologist in the women's health and fertility branch at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an associate epidemiologist of breast surgery at Memorial Sloan Kettering, a seminar leader in epidemiology at Cornell University Medical School, and an associate professor of public health at the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University.



SAMUEL BLATCHLEY WEBB, JR., BA '61, MPH '63, died peacefully on his 85th birthday, January 7, 2024. He

was a resident of Palm Beach, Florida. He was born in New York City and attended the Buckley School and then Groton School, graduating in 1957. He graduated from Yale University in 1961 before earning a master's in public health from the Yale School of Public Health in 1963. Upon his honorary discharge from the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, he earned his PhD from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1970. He served as a tenured professor at Yale and was director of the Yale Program in Hospital Management. He also served as assistant to the president at the University of Vermont. For many years, he was a board member and then president of both the Kingsley Trust Association in New Haven, Connecticut, and the Shelburne Museum in Vermont. He was also a board member at Groton School, and the Buffalo Bill Center of the West in Cody, Wyoming.

She was a prolific knitter, an accomplished curler with Yale's curling club, a scuba diver, a stand-up paddleboarder, and a dancer of all styles.

REMEMBERING
HAOTIAN (TIAN TIAN) CAI, MPH '16

SEND OBITUARY NOTICES TO
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ALUMNIFIRE



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Photos by Mara Lavitt

AWARDS & HONORS

Celebrating our school's leaders in public health



Appointments, honors, and awards reflect Yale School of Public Health's longstanding involvement and leadership in public health locally, nationally, and globally.

DR. BHRAMAR MUKHERJEE, PhD, the Anna M.R. Lauder Professor of Biostatistics and senior associate dean of public health data science and data equity, has been chosen as the 2025 president-elect of the Eastern North American Region (ENAR) of the International Biometrics Society, one of the largest and most impactful professional statistics and biostatistics societies. The society advances biological science through the development of quantitative theories and the application, development, and dissemination of effective mathematical and statistical techniques.

Mukherjee also is the President's Invited Speaker for the **65TH ISI WORLD STATISTICS CONGRESS 2025**. She "is renowned for her work in integrating genetic, environmental, and health data. With over 390 publications and numerous awards, including election to the U.S. National Academy of Medicine, she brings invaluable expertise to our conference," the ISI announcement reads.

DEAN MEGAN L. RANNEY, MD, MPH, was honored as one of 50 individuals and companies driving advances in medicine, fostering innovation, and shaping the future of biopharma and health care. The honor was bestowed by Fierce Life Sciences and Fierce Healthcare, which

named Ranney one of their Fierce 50 health leaders for 2024. The Fierce family of online publications covers business and policy news in a broad range of health-related industries through such online outlets as Fierce Pharma, Fierce Biotech, Fierce Hospitals, Fierce Health Finance, and others. Ranney was honored in the Social Impact category for her leadership, research, and advocacy in working to prevent firearm injuries.

YSPH Digital and Social Media Strategist **KAYLA STEINBERG** is the recipient of the 2024 YSPH Staff Award for Outstanding Service. The Workplace Survey Committee's Staff Award Selection Subcommittee was particularly impressed by the praise Steinberg received for her "creativity, knowledge of public health, and mastery of social and digital media to deliver important, engaging, and timely health information to the public."

DR. DANIEL CARRIÓN, PhD, MPH, assistant professor of epidemiology (Environmental Health), was recently chosen to be the Climate and Health Scholar for the National Institute of Minority Health Disparities for 2024–2025. The National Institutes of Health's Climate and Health Scholars Program was established in 2023 to help build climate and health research capacity at the NIH. The purpose of the program is to support NIH institutes, centers, and offices in developing a stronger base of climate and health knowledge.

Associate Professor of Public Health (Health Policy) **DR. JACOB WALLACE**, PhD, served as co-author of a paper entitled "Conditional Cross-Design Synthesis

Estimates for Generalizability in Medicaid," which won the Outstanding Statistical Application Award from the American Statistical Association. The paper was also honored with the American Society of Health Economists' 2024 Willard G. Manning Memorial Award for Best Research in Health Econometrics. The paper was published in the journal *Biometrics* in December 2023. The awards are in recognition of his study on the casual effects of managed care plans on the cost and quality of care.



DR. IJEOMA OPARA, PhD, MPH, associate professor of public health (Social and Behavioral Sciences), was named a 2024 Aspen

Ideas: Health Fellow in recognition of her work with citizen researchers to reimagine public health in communities of color. Opara and **DEAN MEGAN L. RANNEY**, MD, MPH, took part in the Aspen Ideas: Health Conference and the Aspen Ideas Festival in June. The two events combine for more than 100 sessions and over 300 speakers including some of the top minds in the fields of health, politics, business, journalism, literature, and entertainment.



DR. TERIKA MCCALL, PhD, MPH, MBA, assistant professor of biostatistics (Health Informatics), was recognized for her

efforts to use innovative technology to reduce public health disparities and to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. McCall is the inaugural recipient of the

International Society for Research on Internet Interventions' (ISRII) Extraordinary Contributions to Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Award, which is given to an ISRII member who is an early- to mid-career professional whose research uses innovative technology to reduce public health disparities. The award highlights the recipient's use of technologies such as mobile apps and wearables. McCall's expertise is in user-centered design and usability testing of digital health tools. She created a prototype of a smartphone app, WellSis, to support Black women with managing their mental health.

The Breast Cancer Research Foundation (BCRF) Scientific Advisory Board and its Board of Directors recently announced its \$60.2 million commitment to fund breast cancer research in 2023–2024, supporting more than 250 scientists at leading academic and medical institutions, including eight grants at Yale Cancer Center and Smilow Cancer Hospital. **DR. MELINDA IRWIN**, PhD, MPH, is the recipient of the Westchester Women's Award in Memory of Marla Mehlman. Her research examining the effects of lifestyle interventions and their integration into a personalized care plan has been funded by the BCRF since 2013. Her team has completed the first year of a phase III clinical trial, The Lifestyle, Exercise and Nutrition Early after Diagnosis (LEANer) Study. Irwin is the associate dean of research and Susan Dwight Bliss Professor of Epidemiology (Chronic Diseases), Yale School of Public Health; deputy director (Public Health), Yale Center for Clinical Investigation; and deputy director, Yale Cancer Center.

Associate Professor of Epidemiology (Environmental Health Sciences) **DR. KAI CHEN**, PhD, delivered the plenary lecture on climate change epidemiology at the World Congress of Epidemiology 2024 in Cape Town, South Africa in September. Chen is co-faculty director of the Yale Center on Climate Change and Health. The topic of his presentation was "Climate Change: What Should All Epidemiologists Be Thinking About?"

Two faculty members in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, **DR. IJEOMA OPARA**, PhD, MPH, associate professor of public health, and **DR. TRACE KERSHAW**, PhD, department chair and Susan Dwight Bliss Professor of Public Health, are partnering with faculty from two historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) as part of a new research grant program instituted in the spring by Yale University. The partnerships are funded by grants from the University's new Alliance for Scholarship, Collaboration, Engagement, Networking and Development (ASCEND) initiative.

DR. JEANNETTE ICKOVICS, PhD, Samuel and Liselotte Herman Professor of Social and Behavioral Sciences, received the 2023 Martha May Eliot Award from the American Public Health Association (APHA) in recognition of her work on group prenatal care.

The Yale Pepper Center collaborated with **DR. HEPING ZHANG**, PhD, Susan Dwight Bliss Professor of Biostatistics, and **DR. JOHN HWA**, MD, PhD, professor of medicine (Cardiovascular Medicine) at Yale School of Medicine, to obtain new funding for their work in Alzheimer's

disease or related dementias. They were each awarded \$250,000 in direct costs by the National Institute on Aging as an administrative supplement to the Pepper Center grant.



Grants from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences will fund the projects led by **DR. ZEYAN LIEW**, PhD, MPH,

through 2029. Liew, associate professor of epidemiology (Environmental Health Sciences), and his team will evaluate whether maternal and child exposure to higher levels of neurotoxic chemicals, including perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and pesticides commonly found in commercial and household products may influence the risk for developing cerebral palsy.

DR. NICOLE DEZIEL, PhD, MHS, associate professor of epidemiology (Environmental Health Sciences), and **DR. AMY BEI**, PhD, assistant professor of epidemiology (Microbial Diseases), were selected to participate in the National Academy of Medicine's (NAM) Emerging Leaders Forum in Washington, D.C. The invitation-only event is a cornerstone of NAM's mission to recognize and engage early- and mid-career professionals who have shown exceptional promise, achievement, and leadership in health policy, health care, biomedical science, and related fields.

The Yale Institute for Global Health (YIGH) selected **DR. NICOLA HAWLEY**, PhD, associate professor of epidemiology (Chronic Diseases), to receive the 2024

AWARDS & HONORS CONTINUED



Hecht Global Health Faculty Network Award. The award is intended to lay the foundation for recipients’ successful pursuit of additional funding opportunities. Her project, affiliated with the Yale Network for Global NCDs (NGN), will focus on adapting and pilot testing an intervention designed to promote mental health among adolescents in American Samoa.

Professors **DR. HONGYU ZHAO**, PhD, and **DR. MARK GERSTEIN**, PhD, have been awarded a \$1.9 million grant from the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) to advance the Developmental Genotype-Tissue Expression (dGTEx) project. This landmark initiative aims to unravel the complexities of gene expression patterns across developmental stages, providing critical insights into genetic influences on health and disease. Zhao, Ira V. Hiscock Professor of Biostatistics, and professor of genetics, and statistics and data science, and Gerstein, the Albert L. Williams Professor of Biomedical Informatics, and professor of molecular biophysics and biochemistry, computer science, and statistics and data science, will lead the multidisciplinary effort. The grant, in the form of a U01 award, is intended to support cooperative research initiatives that address specific scientific areas of interest.

DR. AKIKO IWASAKI, PhD, Sterling Professor of Immunobiology and professor of epidemiology (Microbial Diseases), was awarded a grant by the Lupus Research Alliance (LRA) to investigate a possible cause of lupus. The 2023 Dr. William E. Paul Distinguished Innovator Award provides up to \$1 million over four years

for Iwasaki to study whether the immune system’s reaction to viruses can trigger lupus.

The Academy of Behavioral Medicine Research elected **DR. JOAN K. MONIN**, PhD, associate professor of public health (Social and Behavioral Sciences), to become a fellow. Election to the society is reserved for those with a proven record of national and international behavioral medicine research excellence. The academy comprises several hundred eminent senior investigators, all of whom have been elected to membership through a highly selective process. Monin was nominated for election into the academy by her peers and the resulting vote of approval by the membership committee and executive council was unanimous.

The Connecticut Emerging Infections Program (EIP), directed by **DR. LINDA NICCOLAI**, PhD, associate dean for academic affairs and professor of epidemiology (Microbial Diseases), received a five-year \$19.5 million grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The award will support continuation of the program that was established in 1995. The Connecticut EIP is one of 12 funded sites in the U.S., creating a national network for monitoring infectious diseases and population health.

DR. ROBERT PIETRZAK, PhD, MPH, professor of psychiatry and of public health (Social and Behavioral Sciences), was recognized by the Psychology Service of VA Connecticut Healthcare System with the Distinguished Psychology for Scientific Advancement Award. Pietrzak is director of the Translational

Psychiatric Epidemiology Laboratory at the National Center for PTSD at the VA Connecticut Healthcare System, and was honored for his groundbreaking research and significant advancements in the field of psychiatric epidemiology and veteran mental health.

For the second year in a row, **DR. DONNA SPIEGELMAN**, ScD, Susan Dwight Bliss Professor of Biostatistics, was named a top female scientist by Research.com. Yale’s highest-ranking female scientist on the list, she was ranked 27th of the best female scientists in the U.S. Position in the ranking is based on a researcher’s overall H-index, which incorporates both the productivity of the researcher and their citation impact. The ranking of top female scientists comprises leading researchers from core science areas and was based on a detailed evaluation of 166,880 profiles on Google Scholar and Microsoft Academic Graph.

DR. JOSEPH ROSS, MD, MHS ’06, professor of medicine (General Medicine) and of public health (Health Policy and Management), and **DR. KAREN WANG**, MD, MHS ’12, assistant professor of internal medicine (General Medicine) and assistant professor of biostatistics (Health Informatics), are members of a research team that was awarded \$3.1 million from the National Institute of Mental Health to promote health equity. The project will evaluate drivers of disparities in agitation care and workplace violence and identify patient-centered interventions that will also ensure staff safety using group model-building techniques with patients, security officers, and clinicians.



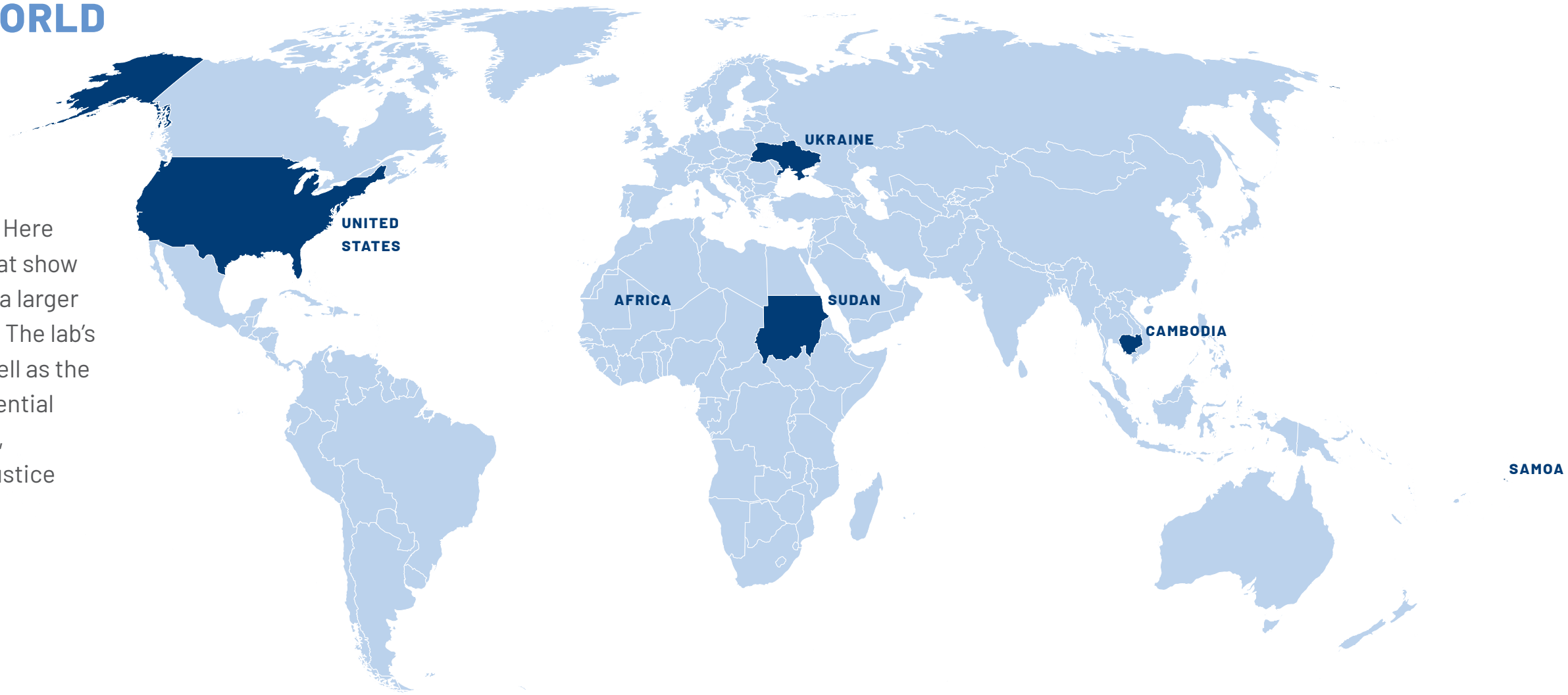
DATA EQUITY CONFERENCE BRINGS LEADERS TOGETHER TO REDUCE HEALTH DISPARITIES

A global and diverse group of leaders from academia, government, health care, and private industry gathered in April for a conference on *The Role of Data in Public Health Equity and Innovation*.

From left: Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, MD, MHS ’06, the inaugural associate dean for health equity research at Yale School of Medicine, founding director of Yale’s Equity Research and Innovation Center (ERIC), and director of Yale’s Center for Community Engagement and Health Equity; Professor Bola Owolabi, director of Healthcare Inequalities at the National Health Service (NHS) England, and NHS Improvement; and conference organizer Kaakpema “KP” Yelapaala, MPH ’06, senior fellow in public health, and faculty director of InnovateHealth Yale.

YSPH AROUND THE WORLD

Global health is a core part of our school. Here are a few recent examples of our work that show our collaborations around the world; and a larger story on the Humanitarian Research Lab. The lab’s detailed real-time reports on Sudan as well as the ongoing war in Ukraine have been an essential resource for world leaders, policymakers, humanitarian organizations, and global justice advocates.



CAMBODIA
In 2024, YSPH faculty helped to launch a new health economics program in Cambodia. Dr. Robert Hecht, PhD, BA '76, professor in the practice (Microbial Diseases), is collaborating with colleagues at Cambodia’s National Institute of Public Health (NIPH) to establish a Master of Public Health in Health Economics and Financing (MPH-HEF) program. Hecht and Dr. Chhea Chhorvann, MD, director of the NIPH, and dean of the School of Public Health in Cambodia, are co-leading the project.

SAMOA
Dr. Nicola Hawley, PhD, associate professor of epidemiology (Chronic Diseases), researches maternal and child health and how it is affected by obesity and diabetes. Hawley’s research has found evidence that both genetic and environmental factors play a role in the development of obesity. Hawley and her former student Courtney Choy, MPH '16, a postdoctoral associate at YSPH, have been studying obesity for nearly a decade in Samoa, an island country where they are conducting the first longitudinal study of child health in the Pacific.

AFRICA
A groundbreaking new pan-African initiative supported in part by a Yale Planetary Solutions grant will explore innovative financing solutions for the co-management of ecosystems and public health in Africa. The initiative, entitled Ecosystems, Finance and Health (EFH), seeks to address the critical question of how improvements in the environment and health are financed in 21st-century African landscapes. “Managing disease risk preemptively in light of the changing climate, environment, and social systems in Africa is complex,” said Dr. Serap Aksoy, PhD, professor of epidemiology (Microbial Diseases) and a principal investigator for the grant.

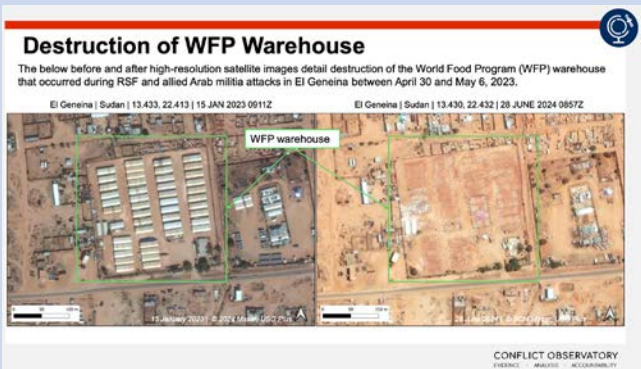
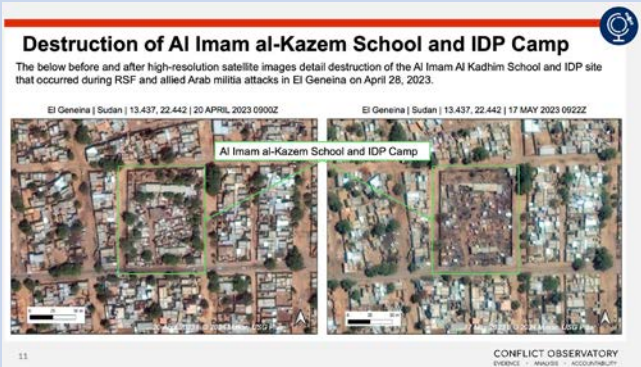
SUDAN & UKRAINE
The Yale School of Public Health’s Humanitarian Research Lab has been monitoring the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and is responding to escalating violence in Sudan, one of the largest countries in Africa. And in 2023, the lab documented the systemic, unlawful deportation of more than 6,000 children from Ukraine to Russia or Russia-held territories for “re-education” and potential adoption. *See article on following page.*

“I hope that this exciting initiative will help improve health outcomes for millions of people living on the African continent while providing ample training and research opportunities for our students here.”

DR. SERAP ASKOY, PHD

HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH LAB

Responding to crises in Sudan and Ukraine



The Sudan Conflict Observatory

Satellite images detail the destruction of a school and a World Food Program warehouse during militia attacks in El Geneina in 2023. Satellite images detail damage at a dialysis center in El-Fasher in 2024 that is consistent with intentional targeting.

IN THE HEART of North Darfur, Sudan, the capital city of El Fasher is once again a battleground, its streets echoing with the sounds of conflict and despair. As fighting escalates between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), hundreds of thousands of civilians find themselves trapped in a cycle of violence that shows no signs of abating.

In mid-September 2024, as a new wave of intense shelling and air strikes decimated much of what is left of the city’s infrastructure, global leaders renewed their calls for an immediate ceasefire, fearing a possible massacre if El Fasher, the SAF’s last foothold in the region, were to fall.

Half a world away, Nathaniel Raymond, executive director of the Yale School of Public Health’s Humanitarian Research Lab, and a team of more than two dozen researchers and specialists monitor the situation in El Fasher closely. Each day, they pour over satellite images, news reports, social media channels, and other open-source data to gather and corroborate as much information as they can on what has become the globe’s largest displacement crisis and one of the most perilous humanitarian catastrophes in the world today.

The lab’s detailed real-time reports on Sudan as well as the ongoing war in Ukraine have been an essential resource for world leaders, policymakers, humanitarian organizations, and global justice advocates. A report warning of a potentially devastating RSF attack on El Fasher in June 2024 contributed to the United Nations Security Council passing Resolution 2736 calling for an immediate halt to the fighting to allow badly needed food, medicine, and other humanitarian aid to reach the 1.8 million people sheltering there. In March 2023, the lab’s documentation of the systemic, unlawful deportation of more than 6,000 children from Ukraine to Russia or Russian-held territories for “re-education” and potential adoption resulted in the International Criminal Court (ICC) issuing an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin for war crimes.

Documenting these conflict-driven atrocities—the desperate humanitarian crises, the potential war crimes, the crimes against humanity—is exhausting and emotionally draining work. Raymond, a respected international expert on the prevention and documentation of mass atrocities, said that at one point during the Darfur fighting his team

“One of the things we can do is provide warning. We can warn governments and the public and the international community before an attack occurs.”

NATHANIEL RAYMOND, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH LAB

documented more than 50 mass casualty events and arson attacks in 91 days, which amounts to one attack about every 36 hours. The RSF, Raymond explained, has taken a literal scorched-earth approach as it pushes toward El Fasher, capturing smaller cities surrounding the provincial capital and burning entire urban neighborhoods and villages to the ground so their inhabitants cannot return.

As difficult as it can be bearing witness to such human pain and suffering, Raymond and the lab’s faculty director, Associate Professor Kaveh Khoshnood, MPH ’89, PhD ’95—an epidemiologist who investigates humanitarian crises and the impact of conflict and displacement on the health of vulnerable populations—share an unwavering commitment to the lab’s work.

“I feel as though it is an honor and privilege to have the ability to help at a time when people often feel powerless,” Raymond said. “One of the things we can do is provide warning. We can warn governments and the public and the international community before an attack occurs. We also can provide situational awareness that can move policy-makers. The information and documentation we shared catalyzed U.N. Security Council Resolution 2736, which demanded the RSF halt the siege of El Fasher. That’s a real thing. And lastly, we are gathering information that will be shared with the International Criminal Court, which has called for evidence of possible war crimes and crimes against humanity in El Fasher. We have that evidence. So, one of the things we can do is support accountability and international law enforcement.”

Fear of Genocide

The siege of El Fasher is the latest chapter in a long history of political instability, violence, and racial and ethnic tensions in Sudan, one of the largest countries in Africa. In the current conflict, two rival military groups are vying for control—the SAF, whose soldiers are loyal to current government leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the RSF, whose fighters support paramilitary General Mohamed Hamden Dagalo, known popularly as Hemedti. Each is trying to fill the power vacuum created when former dictatorial Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir was ousted in 2019.

In Darfur, a western region the size of Spain, the fighting has been particularly brutal, with distinct racial and



Nathaniel Raymond gives a presentation about the ongoing war in Ukraine.

ethnic undertones. The RSF includes many former members of the Janjaweed, an Arab nomad militia group. The Janjaweed have been accused by the ICC of crimes against humanity for perpetrating one of the worst mass killings in the region’s history—the Darfur genocide—where an estimated 200,000 members of the non-Arab Masalit, Fur, and Zaghawa ethnic groups were systematically killed between 2003 and 2005. Allegations of rape, torture, extrajudicial killings of boys and men, killing of women and children, mass graves, and torture have been levied against the RSF, which has denied the accusations. The SAF, in return, has been criticized for its indiscriminate shelling of war zones, putting civilians at great risk.

It is estimated that more than 13 million people have been displaced since the current fighting began on Ramadan in April 2023. It is the largest human displacement in the world. More than 2 million people are believed to have escaped across the border to Chad, Libya, or Egypt. Hundreds of thousands of others have settled in massive refugee camps, where conditions are dire. In the war-ravaged east, near the capital of Khartoum where the fighting initially began, cholera has set in following months of heavy rainfall and severe flooding. Health officials reported over 350 deaths and thousands of people sickened by the disease as

1.7MILLION

THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ARE STARVING ACROSS DARFUR

of late September. In the west and just north of El Fasher, widespread famine has been reported and confirmed in the Zamzam refugee camp, temporary home to more than 500,000 internally displaced people. The humanitarian organization Médecins Sans Frontières has reported that a child dies there of starvation or disease every two hours. Across Darfur, the U.N. estimates as many as 1.7 million people are starving.

According to the World Health Organization, at least 20,000 people have been killed in the 17 months since the latest fighting began, but U.S. special envoy for Sudan, Tom Perriello, has said the number of deaths could be closer to 150,000. Many fear a repeat of the ethnic-driven killings of the Darfur genocide should the RSF capture El Fasher, which has long been a hub for refugees and relief efforts. The RSF has already seized other key population centers around El Fasher including Nyala, Zalingei, Kas, and El Daein. In a portent of what may be to come, as many as 15,000 people, most of them members of the Masalit tribe, are believed to have been killed in a torrent of violence in El Geneina from April to November of 2023.

Early Warnings

The Humanitarian Research Lab warned U.S. and international authorities that El Fasher was in trouble as early as October 2023, when, Raymond said, the team noticed foxholes and large earthen berms suddenly appearing south of the city in satellite images. When images started showing SAF tanks lining up behind the berms and artillery units turning to the south, Raymond and his team felt they had enough evidence to report an imminent invasion and briefed U.S. officials and members of the U.N. Security Council member states. The lab recommended that international peacekeeping organizations set up a protective zone around El Fasher while officials continued to negotiate a ceasefire.

Now, a year later, diplomatic efforts have stalled and the fighting around El Fasher has only gotten worse. In a major report issued in mid-September, the Humanitarian Research Lab said it had confirmed “unprecedented large-scale combat operations” in El Fasher with the SAF intensifying its bombardment of the region and the RSF launching a new multidirectional offensive from the north, east, and south of the city. “This high-tempo, intense combat

activity represents a new stage of the conflict in El Fasher,” the report warned. If the current “free-fire” zone continues, the report said, the result will likely turn “what is left of El Fasher to rubble.”

The report sparked an immediate reaction from the international community. The U.N.’s special adviser on the prevention of genocide, Alice Wairimu Nderitu, said the RSF’s multi-pronged assault had “unleashed a maelstrom of violence that threatens to consume everything in its path.” In an address to the U.N. Security Council, Martha Ama Akyaa Pobe, the U.N.’s assistant secretary-general for Africa, said, “hundreds of thousands of people are now at risk of the consequences of mass violence” and that the months-long siege of El Fasher by the Rapid Support Forces has caused “appalling” levels of suffering for the civilian population. She urged the RSF and SAF “to respect and uphold their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law.”

As world leaders decry the death and suffering in Sudan, the Humanitarian Research Lab carries on, generating dozens of rigorously analyzed reports that are archived with the U.S. Department of State’s Conflict Observatory. Launched in May 2022, the observatory’s initial charge was “to capture, analyze, and make widely available evidence of Russia-perpetrated war crimes and other atrocities in Ukraine.” One of the inaugural members of the observatory, the lab pivoted to monitoring conditions in Sudan when the civil war there reignited in April 2023 and the observatory expanded its mission.

Khoshnood, who has more than a decade of experience in humanitarian health, said public health has a critical role in bringing attention to humanitarian crises around the world, supporting international responses to complex global emergencies, and contributing solutions to protect and improve the health of people in distress.

“As a school of public health, we are not in a position to end the conflict; we don’t have the power or the politics,” said Khoshnood, “But that doesn’t mean that there’s nothing we can do. There’s plenty we can do. We’re seeing the absolute start of a genocide, and we don’t want this to happen over and over again. This violence needs to stop.”

Colin Poitras

ELM CITY HEALTH

\$3.4 million grant funds five more years of health equity efforts

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities in New Haven in which the Yale School of Public Health is a leading partner has received a \$3.4 million grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that will allow it to continue for another five years.

The funding comes from the CDC’s Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) program, which seeks to reduce chronic disease inequities among Black and Latino residents.

The grant is the second consecutive five-year REACH award received by the Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (CARE), co-housed at YSPH and Southern Connecticut State University. CARE works closely with its New Haven community partners to implement community-driven interventions to improve health through research, assessment, and systems-level changes.

“Our accomplishments are really due to the partnerships we have throughout New Haven,” said Dr. Kathleen O’Connor Duffany, PhD ’15, MEd, director of research and evaluation at CARE and an assistant professor of public health.

Some of the impactful initiatives that were made possible with REACH funding over the past five years include the Greater New Haven Coordinated Food Assistance Network’s launch of more than 50 community-driven actions that helped improve access to healthy foods.

The Supporting Wellness at Pantries program, which aims to increase access

to healthier food in pantries, expanded to 10 pantries benefitting over 25,000 clients each year.

CARE and New Haven Healthy Start established the New Haven Breastfeeding Task Force. A citywide awareness campaign engaged 79 local businesses. The task force helped train more than 260 doctors, nurses, and other health workers to address racial inequities in breastfeeding.

CARE supported the development of a “Safe Routes for All” plan to improve New Haven’s walking, riding, biking, and transit infrastructure. CARE worked with city leaders and residents from low-income and Black and Brown communities so that they had a say in the local policy development.

New Haven Mayor Justin Elicker, MBA, MEM ’10, praised CARE for its investment in and support of New Haven residents.

CARE Director Alycia Santilli, MSW, of Southern Connecticut State University’s College of Health and Human Services, noted that more than 30% of New Haven households are food insecure and that Black and Latino residents are much more likely to suffer from chronic diseases than their white counterparts.

She said CARE’s focus on supporting and sustaining these community-driven initiatives played a vital role in obtaining renewed CDC funding.

Dionne Lowndes, a registered nurse, is the maternal and child health manager at ACES Early Head Start in Middletown, Connecticut. A certified breastfeeding educator, she is also a member of New Haven’s Breastfeeding



Dr. Kathleen O’Connor Duffany speaks at a press conference announcing the grant.

Task Force working to raise awareness of the health benefits of breastfeeding. Breastfeeding, she said, can also reduce a mother’s risk for high blood pressure and cancer.

Susan Harris, a member of Witnesses to Hunger, the New Haven Coordinated Food Assistance Network (CFAN), and CARE’s REACH Grant Steering Committee, recently organized a “school break grocery distribution” to assist families during school vacations when their children don’t have access to in-school meals.

“With this next five years of funding, CFAN is committed to continuing to identify solutions to food insecurity. This includes identifying policies and systems that can help pantries get more healthy food to families in New Haven because food is a right, not a privilege,” Harris said.

Colin Poitras

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