

CHET is supported by the Colleges of Medicine, Arts and Sciences, and Public Health; the Center for Clinical and Translational Science; the Markey Cancer Center; and the Office of the Vice President for Research.

Upcoming Events

[See what's happening this winter.](#)

Research Assistants Spotlight

[Meet our Graduate Research Assistants](#)

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[CHET Acknowledges Native Peoples and Place](#)

"The Center for Health Equity Transformation (CHET), Lexington Kentucky, is located on the original homeland of diverse Native peoples who arrived over 10,000 years ago. The most recent among them were the Shawnee. Today, Kentucky is still home to over 25,000 Native people representing scores of tribal groups. CHET recognizes the injustices Native peoples have endured. Through this statement, we hope to begin the long process of healing."

Message from Associate Director

CHET Associate Director for Dissemination and Outreach: **Carrie Oser, Ph. D.**



Every year around December, I try to think of a word that summarizes the past year. It's my annual word-of-the-year exercise. In the past, I've had years characterized as "growth," "family," "success," and "change." Settling on a word of the year for 2020 was simple. Without a doubt, the word of the year for 2020 is "challenge." We're experiencing the greatest public health challenge in our nation's history as COVID-19 has rapidly risen to be the third leading cause of death in the U.S. in less than a year. And on top of COVID-19, our nation is facing another pandemic of systemic racism which has deleterious health effects. The intersection of COVID-19 and the long history of racism--the 400+ years in which this racism has battered our society, forfeited opportunities and life itself - is featured in the Lexington Herald Leader Op-Ed piece within this newsletter. Fatigue may be setting in with the Presidential election, political divide, and media consumption. Overall, it is a challenging year with Americans facing health problems, job loss, evictions, educational difficulties, and violence at heightened rates. I believe most people would also term 2020 as the "Year of Challenge."

However, the "Year of Challenge" has inspired me to start looking to look forward to 2021 and I welcome the glimmer of promise. I'm hopeful that even more people will join in using best public health practices to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. It's promising that several vaccines are on the cusp of FDA approval and distribution plans are being released. It's promising that President-elect Joe Biden's administration is featuring more diverse representation, especially in the Cabinet. It's promising to learn and participate in activities that raise awareness and address racial injustice. It's promising to read about our CHET graduate students' health equity research endeavors in this newsletter and to celebrate upcoming Dec. 2020/May 2021 UK graduates who have overcome so many challenges to earn their degrees. As a community, we can shape our future. I hope you will join me in making 2021 be the "Year of Promise!"

UK Center for Health Equity Transformation Awards 3 Pilot Research Grants

CHET has awarded three grants for faculty research pilot projects addressing health disparities in vulnerable populations.

The three projects awarded include:

1. "RED ALERT! COVID-19's Impact on Delivering Care for Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence and Child Abuse. Learning Lessons Now and Preparing for the Future" - Led by Camille Burnett and Ann Coker.
2. "SPEAK (Support Peers for Breastfeeding Expansion among African American Kentuckian)" - Led by Danelle Stevens-Watkins.
3. "Get Fit and Quit: Tobacco Treatment for Women Living in Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment" - Led by Amanda Fallin-Bennett.

[Read More Here](#)

CHET's Second Op-ed Article on Racism and COVID-19

Racism, injustice are 'pre-existing conditions' that lead to racial disparity in COVID-19 cases

This op-ed was written by Anita Fernander, Lovoria Williams, Nancy Schoenberg, and Ariel Arthur.



[Read Full Article](#)

Introducing our Graduate Research Assistants



Tofial Azam

Tofial is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Epidemiology and Biostatistics doctoral program at the University of Kentucky. His current research focuses on both the design of cluster randomized control trials (cRCTs) and analysis of data arising from cross-sectional and longitudinal cluster randomized control trials.

Madeline Dunfee

Maddie is an MD-Ph.D. student at the University of Kentucky. Prior to matriculating to UK, Maddie taught middle school science in Dayton, OH and earned an MPH from University of Cincinnati. During these experiences, she developed a strong interest in community-based approaches to preventing chronic disease in health disparate populations. Currently, Maddie is pursuing a PhD through the Epidemiology and Biostatistics doctoral program. Her current research explores the influence of environmental context and social network structure on health behaviors and chronic disease.



Christopher Penn

Christopher served in the U.S. Navy for seven years prior to obtaining his B.A. in psychology from Seattle University in 2019. After graduating, Christopher worked as a research assistant at the Center for Suicide Prevention and Recovery at the University of Washington prior to joining the doctoral program at the University of Kentucky. Christopher's research interests include clinical outcomes related to PTSD and the long-term health consequences of traumatic experiences, evidence-based interventions aimed at the treatment and recovery of suicidal patients, and addressing disparities in health outcomes for vulnerable populations.

Ashley Vowels

Ashley Vowels is a PhD student in the in the Department of Sociology at the University of Kentucky. Ashley received both her BA and MA in Sociology from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis where she developed a passion for impactful, health-related research. Her interests are at the intersections of health, families, and gender with an emphasis on health disparities across the life course. Ashley's previous research experience includes a longitudinal analysis of psychological distress among mothers, a community-engaged study to improve health outcomes among first-time parents who participate in a nurse home visitor program, and studies about preventative healthcare utilization. Her current research focuses on mental health outcomes among working parents. She is also a research assistant for the Study of Personal Experiences Accessing Care in the South (SPECS), which seeks to understand the healthcare needs of people experiencing recent incarceration. Ashley is excited for the many collaborative research opportunities she will have as a Graduate Research Assistant for CHET.



Carina M. Zelaya

Carina M. Zelaya is a third-year doctoral student in the College of Communication and Information. She also received her BA and MA in Communication from the University of Kentucky. Her primary research interest is in health communication, specifically the intersection of interpersonal communication and mass media in health contexts. Her current and past research projects focus on health campaigns, message design, persuasion, and interpersonal communication. In the past, Carina has worked on projects focused on reducing the intake of smokeless tobacco products in rural areas, promoting the proper disposal of unused prescription medications in Appalachia, increasing colorectal cancer screening among Black females, and improving minority women's sexual health. Currently, Carina has eight publications, one book chapter, and several projects in progress.

Faculty Spotlight Videos



Carolyn Lauckner, Ph. D.

Dr. Lauckner is a faculty member of the Center for Health Equity Transformation (CHET), and an Assistant Professor in the Department of Behavioral Science in the College of Medicine. Her research is focused on behavioral interventions that utilize modern communication technologies to encourage the adoption of healthy behaviors. Her research interests include addressing substance use among vulnerable populations and as a means of facilitating cancer prevention and control. She is currently the Principal Investigator of an NIH grant testing a mobile health intervention for reducing alcohol use among people living with HIV/AIDS, and is a co-Investigator on two large grants using mobile phones to collect GPS-based electronic momentary assessment data on place-based predictors of risky behaviors. Her future research will continue to explore technological methods of

expanding access to healthcare and reducing health disparities in underserved populations.

Please watch this [video](#) to learn more about Dr. Lauckner!

Patrick Kitzman, Ph. D.

Dr. Kitzman's research focus is on care transitions and community resource development for individuals with neurological conditions such as stroke, brain injury, and spinal cord injury living in under-resourced rural communities. He is also involved with examining health disparities related to these at-risk populations.

Watch this [video](#) to learn more about Dr. Kitzman!



Faculty Updates

Candice Hargons, Ph.D. was recently elected to the American Psychological Association Board of Directors.

Lovoria Williams, Ph. D. was inducted as a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing as well being appointed to Mayor Linda Gorton's Commission on Racial Equality as Co-Chair of the Health Disparities Subcommittee. Dr. Williams also received an R01 from NIDDK to conduct a community-based Diabetes Prevention Program among Black Americans. She also recently received intramural funding from VPR Diabetes Obesity Priority Area to conduct COVID-19 survey research among rural and central Kentuckians. Dr. Williams was also named the Assistant Director for Cancer Health Equity at Markey.

Mark Dignan, Ph. D. and his moonshot-funded NCI project, ACCSIS – ‘Accelerating Colorectal Cancer Screening through Implementation Science’, have added two additional projects with Oregon Health & Science University and Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research and the University of California, San Diego and San Diego State University. All projects are making good progress toward implementing and evaluating interventions to increase colorectal cancer screening and follow-up.

Anita Fernander, Ph. D. will be leading a project on Black Boys and Men in Medicine (6th grade pilot project). The overall goal of the initiative is to expose Black youth to the field of medicine and lead to the development of a professional medical identity.

Danelle Stevens-Watkins, Ph. D. was recently awarded a \$3.2 million grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) for her project titled “Research Examining Factors Associated with the Opioid Crisis among Underserved African Americans” (REFOCUS). This is the first known study to exclusively examine structural, social, and cultural factors unique to the Black experience to better understand the increasing overdose rates and barriers to treatment. The data from the REFOCUS study will be used to create and test culturally tailored interventions.

Corinne Williams, Sc. D. assigned her students to read *Whistling Vivaldi* by Claude M. Steele as part of the course CPH746 - Research Methods and Program Evaluation for Health Behavior. She found that this reading opened up a conversation about how succeeding in educational pursuits is not only related to individual aptitude, and how that related to health equity in a variety of ways.

Laurie McLouth, Ph. D. was selected for the ECOG-ACRIN 20202 Young Investigator Symposium which took place virtually on October 21st. In this event, Dr. McLouth presented her research and was able to learn about potential research opportunities across a variety of disciplines in the ECOG-ACRIN community.

Shyanika Rose, Ph. D., M.A. recently published three new articles about flavor tobacco use and perceptions, menthol cigarette sales, and e-cigarette use. Dr. Rose will also be presenting a webinar about menthol tobacco restrictions in December hosted by the Society for Research on Nicotine & Tobacco entitled, "Restricting the Sale of Menthol Tobacco Products: A Policy Evaluation Webinar"

Upcoming Event: The Power and Paradox of Health Equity as an Approach

CHET is pleased to announce the next guest for this year's virtual speaker series, Dr. Brandy N. Kelly Pryor. Dr. Kelly Pryor will give a talk entitled, "The Power and Paradox of Health Equity as an Approach" on December 8th from 11:00am - 12:00pm. Dr. Kelly Pryor operates at the intersection of equity research and practice. She will discuss her efforts to operationalize equity within the public and philanthropic sectors and how research can amplify community-developed equity solutions. Dr. Kelly Pryor is the Senior Director of Programs at the Humana Foundation.



[Register Here](#)

Upcoming CHET Awards

We are pleased to announce that beginning in early 2021, CHET will release details regarding 3 inaugural awards. One award is for undergraduate students, one is for graduate and professional students, and postdoctoral trainees, and one is for faculty members. A brief description for each award is below and additional detailed will be shared through our listservs, website, and social media. We look forward to recognizing efforts to achieve health equity among members of the UK community.

CHET Equity Changemaker Award

The purpose of the Center for Health Equity Transformation (CHET) Equity Changemaker Award is to recognize the efforts of University of Kentucky faculty, graduate and professional students, and postdoctoral trainees in advancing health equity through research and training. Annual awards will be made to one faculty member and one graduate or professional student, or postdoctoral trainee whose research seeks to understand health disparities and inequities, and whose mentorship has contributed to the next generation of health equity scholars.

There are two separate awards - one for faculty members and one for graduate and professional students and postdoctoral trainees.

CHET Undergraduate Essay Competition

In an effort to implement programming focused on health equity and anti-racism, CHET invites students to reflect on a selected quote and submit a thoughtful essay. Responses should focus on the intersection of health and justice and illustrate the importance of health equity – the fair and just opportunity for everyone to live their healthiest life possible.

Call for Proposals

The General Social Survey invites proposals to add questions to its 2022 survey. Proposals will be accepted on the basis of scientific quality and scholarly interest; outside funding is not necessary.

The deadline for submissions is March 5th, 2021.

[More Info Here](#)

Postdoctoral Fellowships to Enhance Academic Diversity

The Lyman T. Johnson and University Research Postdoctoral Fellowship offer postdoctoral positions that support the University of Kentucky's compelling interest in diversity. To ensure a supportive experience, the University of Kentucky's Office of Research has developed the Inclusive Postdoctoral Enrichment Program (IPEP).

[More Info Here](#)

CHET Student and Trainee Listserv

Please encourage your students and trainees to join our listserv!

[Join Listserv Here](#)