

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.

A Message from CHET Director, Nancy Schoenberg

Hoping for brighter days ahead

There's a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in. (Leonard Cohen, *Anthem*, 1992).



Welcome back or just welcome, all! While I had hoped to send this message with an unrelentingly positive title (“A New Day is Dawning” or “Happy Days are Here Again”), I am afraid that recent epidemiological trends have set us on an unsettling and concerning path, escalating the tremendous suffering that so many have faced over the past 18 months. Emblematic of this suffering, from 2019-2020, life expectancy in the US declined by 1.5 years. This decline constitutes our nation’s largest decrease in life expectancy since the second World War (1942-1943), when the US experienced a 2.9 year decline in life expectancy. While primarily attributed to the pandemic (COVID-19 accounted for nearly three-quarters of this decline), it is important to keep in mind that increases in drug overdose deaths, homicide, diabetes, and chronic liver disease/cirrhosis also contribute to this decline in life expectancy. It is likely that these conditions were made worse by COVID-19¹.

As the CHET community and so many others have been discussing over the past 18 months, a critical message from this pandemic is the inequitable distribution of the virus, its root causes, and the associated suffering that COVID has laid bare. These inequities are highlighted in the life expectancy data; Hispanics experienced the largest decreases in life expectancy during 2020, a full three-year decline, with 90% of this decline attributable to COVID-19. The non-Hispanic Black population also suffered a 2.9 year drop in life expectancy. These trends are particularly tragic given the encouraging decrease in life expectancy gaps over the past 30 years; differences in life expectancy between non-Hispanic whites and non-Hispanic Blacks had declined from 7.1 years in 1993 to 4.1 years in 2019. Progress, while slow, was being made—and now we are witnessing significant setbacks to that progress.

Yet, despite these challenges, we also see new possibilities. The light that has been cast on such inequities fosters new imperatives and opportunities to systematically address well-documented injustices. We are seeing significant investments in our nation’s health equity research agendas and more equitable workforce development. There are movements toward acknowledging the corrosive nature of exclusivity. With your commitment to study and address the tremendous health inequities before us and within us and to train others to do the same, brighter days are ahead. Join us at the Center for Health Equity Transformation as we continue to develop a community of scholars with a passion for ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to be as healthy as possible. We’ll let Dr. King have the last word:

We must accept finite disappointment but never lose infinite hope. (Martin Luther King, February , 1968)

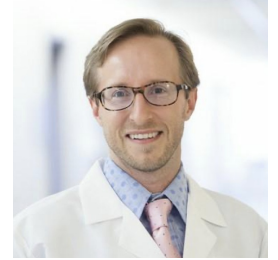
¹CDC, “Life Expectancy in the US Declined a Year and a Half in 2020,” https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2021/202107.htm, released 7-21-21).

CHET Welcomes New Core Faculty Members

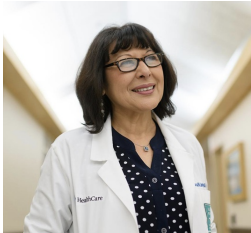
CHET is pleased to welcome four new Core Faculty members, who represent a diverse array of disciplinary backgrounds, research expertise, and career levels. All of these stellar faculty members are committed to advancing our mission to achieve health equity for all. You can read about each faculty member below.



Pamela Hull, PhD, Associate Professor of Behavioral Science in the UK College of Medicine, is a medical sociologist with over 15 years of experience in conducting community-engaged research with a focus on reducing health disparities among African American, Hispanic, and low-income populations, in collaboration with community partners. [Read more about Dr. Hull here.](#)



James W Keck, MD, MPH, is an Assistant Professor of Family and Community Medicine and active primary care physician. His expertise includes infectious disease epidemiology and chronic disease prevention, with a focus on remote and rural populations. [Read more about Dr. Keck here.](#)



Ana Maria Linares, DNS, RN, IBCLC, is an Associate Professor of Nursing in the College of Nursing. Dr. Linares has a program of research on health disparities with an emphasis on the promotion of breastfeeding that has been funded by intramural and extramural grant awards. [Read more about Dr. Linares here.](#)



Lauren Whitehurst, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Whitehurst's research seeks to address, "What makes a night of sleep "good"? She also examines how stress-sleep interactions impact cognitive function and the importance of sleep to the development of accelerated or pathological cognitive decline (e.g. dementia/ Alzheimer's disease). [Read more about Dr. Whitehurst here.](#)

Introducing CHET'S Graduate Research Assistants



[Will Bowling, BS](#)
Third-year Ph.D. student in
Psychology



[Madeline Dunfee, MPH, M.ED](#)
Fifth-year student in MD/Ph.D.
program



[Burton Burrows, MPH](#)
First-year Ph.D. student in
Epidemiology



[Carina M. Zelaya, MA](#)
Fourth-year Ph.D. candidate
in Communication



[Jimmy Robinson](#)
First-year Ph.D. student
in Sociology



[Maria Rockett, MA](#)
First-year Ph.D. student
in Sociology

Faculty Updates



Nancy Schoenberg, Ph.D.

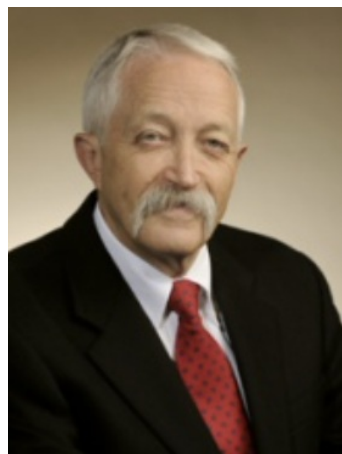
Dr. Nancy Schoenberg and Dr. Mark Dignan have been awarded a T32 grant titled “*Addressing Rural cancer Inequities through Scientific Excellence (ARISE)*”. The primary goal of this new training program is to provide transdisciplinary and translational postdoctoral research training in rural cancer prevention, control, and survivorship.

The ARISE program will emphasize translating knowledge of risk factors into evidence-based behavioral interventions across the cancer spectrum (prevention to survivorship) for vulnerable rural residents. The program will accept two postdoctoral scholars each year for a two-year fellowship focused on applied behavioral science, including intervention development and evaluation and dissemination and implementation science. Training will emphasize translating knowledge of risk factors into evidence-based behavioral interventions across the cancer spectrum (prevention to survivorship) for vulnerable rural residents. ARISE postdoctoral trainees will select one of three thematic behavioral cancer tracks: environment, risk behavior, and health care delivery. Special programming designed to improve expertise in rural cancer disparities include research shadowing; a personalized rural cancer patient experience; and attendance at a rural health and cancer disparities conferences.

The training program, based in the Center for Health Equity Transformation, will operate in close collaboration with the University of Kentucky’s (UK) National Cancer Institute-designated Markey Cancer Center; Center for Clinical and Translational Science; Center for Appalachian Research in Environmental Sciences; Office of Postdoctoral Affairs; Office of the Vice President for Research and departments across UK’s 17 colleges. The 25 preceptors, co-mentors and methodology mentors include well-funded investigators in transdisciplinary research programs with established collaborative relationships, representing diverse yet complementary areas of expertise at UK, including behavioral science; environmental carcinogenesis; clinical and translational research; and intervention and implementation science. For more information, please contact Mark Dignan (mark.dignan@uky.edu) or Nancy Schoenberg (nesch@uky.edu).

Patrick Kitzman, Ph.D. PT

Dr. Kitzman received funding from the Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disability to develop an intergenerational training program in south eastern Kentucky pairing community members and high school students to work on projects focused on disability, community accessibility, and access to essential medical equipment.




Mark Dignan, Ph.D. MPH

Dr. Dignan is a mentor to Dr. Juan Canedo, who recently received funding from the National Cancer Institute for a diversity supplement to provide the foundation needed to develop a culturally-targeted intervention to increase adherence to follow-up after positive results from HPV testing among Hispanic women. Dr. Canedo will be working with Drs. Mark Dignan and Bin Huang, Mindy Rogers and Mark Cromo among others in the UK Markey Cancer Center.

Upcoming Events

SUPRA's Substance Use and Race/Ethnicity Speaker Series Presents:



SUPRA LECTURE SERIES
HOSTS:
Albert Avila, PhD
Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), Office of Diversity and Health Disparities (ODHD) and Deputy Director of the NIDA Office of Research Training (ORT)
LECTURE TITLED:
"An Introduction to NIH/NIDA Funding Opportunities and Diversity Initiatives"
SEPTEMBER 23RD
AT 1:00PM
This lecture will be hosted virtually via Zoom.
Zoom Link: <https://uky.zoom.us/j/81653728840>
Questions, contact Brooke Poe at brooke.poe@uky.edu

An Introduction to NIH/NIDA Funding Opportunities and Diversity Initiatives

September 23, 2021 at 1:00pm

Dr. Avila is currently the Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), Office of Diversity and Health Disparities (ODHD), and Deputy Director of the NIDA Office of Research Training (ORT). As the ODHD Director, he oversees the health disparities and diversity outreach efforts for NIDA and provides guidance to NIDA leadership on matters pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusivity as they relate to the substance use and addiction workforce.

This event will be held virtually via Zoom. If you have any questions, please contact Brooke Poe at brooke.poe@uky.edu.

Zoom: <https://uky.zoom.us/j/81653728840>


Culturally-Informed Approaches to Taking Care of Racial and Ethnic Minoritized People with Substance Use Disorders.

November 5, 2021 at 1:00pm

Dr. Jordan focuses on bettering communities for people of color, namely Black people with drug and alcohol problems, both locally and abroad. She is committed to increasing access to addiction services within minority communities, both nationally and abroad. Dr. Jordan has done research in Sierra Leone, West Africa examining the link between, mental illness, substance use and stigma, and has served as an expert witness discussing these issues.

This event will be held virtually via Zoom. If you have any questions, please contact Brooke Poe at Brooke.poe@uky.edu.

Zoom: <https://uky.zoom.us/j/81471045389>



SUPRA LECTURE SERIES
HOSTS:
Ayana Jordan, MD/PhD
Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine
LECTURE TITLED:
"Culturally-Informed Approaches to Taking Care of Racial and Ethnic Minoritized People with Substance Use Disorders"
NOVEMBER 5TH
AT 1:00PM
This lecture will be hosted virtually via Zoom.
Zoom Link: <https://uky.zoom.us/j/81471045389>
Questions, contact Brooke Poe at brooke.poe@uky.edu

Announcements

Biostatistical Services Available

We would like to remind you that CHET offers biostatistical support to all CHET core faculty and affiliates. Dr. Meredith Duncan (Assistant Professor, Biostatistics) is the CHET Biostatistics Core Coordinator. In this capacity she oversees a Biomedical Data Science Assistant, Kory Heier, and a Graduate Research Assistant, Burton Burrows.

Dr. Duncan, Kory, and Burton can help draft analytic sections for grants and aid in manuscript revision, and they would love to help you with your research from start to finish: conceiving an analysis plan, carrying out the statistical analyses, and participating in the manuscript writing. These services are offered at no cost to CHET affiliates, but Dr. Duncan and her team can be written into grants as well to facilitate long-standing partnerships.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Dr. Duncan at meredith.duncan@uky.edu
Requests for biostatistical support can be submitted at https://uky.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9GlFBA9n9aPOFlb

Research Participants Needed

Staff with the CARE-R study (Cancer-specific Assessment, Referral and Evaluation for Relatives of Cancer Patients) are recruiting current smokers who are relatives of patients that are being seen at the Markey Cancer Center. We are seeking to get their inputs (either by interview or a survey) for this smoking cessation feasibility study. They will not be asked to quit smoking. If you know of someone who may fit this description, please send this [screener link](#) to them and we will contact them by email if they meet all of our eligibility criteria for the study. Study participants are sent a \$25 Amazon gift card for their participation.

Kentucky Health Disparity Infographics Available

Kentuckians suffer tremendous health inequities--among the highest national rates of the leading causes of death, cardiovascular disease, cancer, substance abuse, diabetes, and obesity. [Key health disparity data and infographics are available on our website.](#)

Accepting Applications for the Students Participating as Ambassadors for Research in Kentucky (SPARK) Program

We seek talented students interested in developing research expertise and projects in health equity. For more information about SPARK and eligibility, please visit <https://chet.med.uky.edu/chet-spark-program>



Students Participating as Ambassadors for Research in Kentucky (SPARK) Program

For more information visit:
<https://bit.ly/3zLLjpX>
and contact Ariel Arthur
ariel.arthur@uky.edu

Application window:
September 1 – October 1, 2021

Informational Webinar
9/16/21
6-7pm
Registration:
<https://conta.cc/3maUhZZ>



CHET Student and Trainee Listserv

Please encourage your students and trainees to join our listserv!

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Upcoming Events

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