Congratulations Class of 2015!

A heartfelt thank you to each member of the Department of Epidemiology on another successful academic year. In 2014-2015 Our department graduated 23 doctor of science students and 46 master of science students. With the promotion of 2 tenured faculty members and a new Professor of Psychiatric Epidemiology starting in the fall, we will continue to provide academic excellence and innovative research as a leader in Epidemiology and Public Health. The department wishes all students, faculty, and staff a wonderful and safe summer and look forward to welcoming a new cohort of students in the coming months.

New Faces in Epi

Karestan Koenen
Professor of Psychiatric Epidemiology

Karestan Chase Koenen, PhD performs research on, and teaches about, trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The broad goal of her work is three-fold. First, she studies why, when exposed to a similar traumatic event, some develop PTSD while others are resilient. She is particularly interested in how genes shape risk for PTSD. Second, she investigates how trauma and PTSD influence weight gain and alter long-term physical health. Third, she documents global burden of trauma and PTSD through her work with the World Mental Health Surveys.

Dr. Koenen is also a strong advocate for victims of sexual violence.

Zennon Black
Sr. Administrative Coordinator

Zennon Black started at Harvard University in June of 2013 as a Human Resources and Finance Assistant after completing an internship with Harvard from 2011-2012. He oversaw all of the recruiting and new hire employment processes for Harvard Athletics’ Department, coordinated department-wide trainings and drafted HR communications. Additionally, he was responsible for tracking the Athletics’ Department revenue and program budgets.

A native of Kansas City, KS., Zennon earned his Bachelor’s Degree from the University of Kansas.

Ellen Furxhi
Assistant Director of Graduate Studies

Ellen Y. Furxhi, the new Assistant Director of Graduate Studies, has served higher education, specifically graduate studies, for her entire professional career. She is coming to the department from Drexel University where she served as the Associate Director of Graduate Admissions for seven years. At Drexel, she managed the applications for five colleges and schools within the University and was the primary contact for students, faculty, and staff. During her tenure, she played an integral role in improving internal processes and led many interdepartmental initiatives. In addition, Ellen’s strong work ethic, dedication to helping students, and team-oriented nature made her the “go to” person within the department.

A native to the suburbs right outside of Philadelphia, PA, Ellen graduated from Villanova University in 2005 and earned a master’s degree in higher education from Drexel University in 2010. Ellen and her husband Ernald, have two children: Fiona Jiyeon and Harrison JunSoo. They are excited to explore Boston and experience all the culture the city has to offer.
Congratulations to Dr. Murray A. Mittleman, Appointed as Professor of Epidemiology

The Department of Epidemiology would like to recognize Dr. Murray A Mittleman on his appointment as tenured Professor of Epidemiology. Dr. Mittleman has held a secondary appointment since 1998, while also maintaining a primary appointment as Associate Professor of Medicine at HMS. For the past 13 years Dr. Mittleman has directed Epi 202, the department’s Introduction to Epidemiologic Methods course.

His expertise in the development and application of novel study design method and analytic approaches along with his advanced work in preventive cardiology awarded him the 2014 Public Health Innovator Award, conferred by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Alumni Association. The association recognized that “his innovations have opened new vistas in epidemiology, making seminal contributions across the full spectrum of public health”.

The department wishes Murray nothing but the best as he continues in his professional career!

Dr. Mittleman is an excellent teacher and advisor. He is dedicated to helping students better understand and apply the principles of epidemiology. He also makes sure they have fun while doing so; as he says, if it’s not fun, it’s not epi! – Kirsten Dorans, Department of Epidemiology

Dr. Mittleman is one of the best teachers that I have ever had. He teaches with enthusiasm and explains the concepts clearly. His teachings led me to view Epidemiology from a new perspective. Dr. Mittleman is also a wonderful advisor. Working with him has been an inspiring and exciting experience. I am very thankful for his timely and insightful feedback on my research. – Wenyuan Li, Department of Epidemiology

I’ve had the pleasure of being a student of Dr. Mittleman as well as a TA for his EPI 202 course. His enthusiasm about epidemiology is infectious - as he always says, "If it's not fun, its not epidemiology!” I feel incredibly fortunate to have had so many opportunities to learn from him. – Kathryn Rough, Department of Epidemiology

Department Recognition

- **David Christiani** and **Jonine Figueroa** of NCI organized and led a special session sponsored by the Molecular Epidemiology Group (MEG) of AACR at the Annual meeting on the “The future of molecular epidemiology in the omics era”...the networking event was well attended, well received and included a distinguished panel of speakers including Chris Amos (Dartmouth), Celine Vachon (Mayo) and **David Hunter** (Harvard Chan).

- **Shuji Ogino** Chaired the Second International Molecular Pathological Epidemiology (MPE) Meeting in Boston on Dec 4 and 5, 2014, which was a resounding success. The meeting proceeding will appear in Cancer Causes and Control (in press). They are planning the Third International MPE Meeting in Boston on May 12 and 13, 2016


- **Professor of Epidemiology Peter Kraft** and Research Scientist **Sara Lindström** were both recently awarded new grants. Dr. Kraft’s R21 will explore leveraging GxE interaction to understand pancreatic cancer and altered metabolism. Dr. Lindström’s U01 will study quantifying and characterizing the shared genetic contribution to common cancers.

- **Dr. Shuji Ogino & attendees at 2nd MPE**
Department Recognition Cont’d

- Assistant Professor Liming Liang attended the 2015 Symposium on Nutrition, Metabolism and Cardio metabolic Prevention: OMICS, Epigenetics and System Epidemiology. The symposium featured a very beautiful memorial for the Late Dimitrios Trichopoulos, pioneer in the field of Cancer Epidemiology.

- Nancy E. Mueller, Professor of Epidemiology was awarded the 2015 Professor Emeriti Award. For three and a half decades Professor Mueller has devoted her career to the field of cancer epidemiology. Full write up here.

- Department Chair Michelle A. Williams received the 2015 Mentoring Award. Mentoring Awardees are nominated and chosen by a student committee. They are presented to an individual faculty member who has enriched student’s academic, professional or personal development at the Harvard Chan School through the faculty members guidance, support, collegiality and overall mentorship.

- Fran Cook was selected to receive the 2015 Roger L. Nichols Excellence in Teaching Award. The award is presented to a faculty member who has enhanced the quality of Education in Public Health and recognizes excellence in classroom instruction, capacity to inspire students and dedication to teaching.

Promotions and Appointments

- Stephanie Elizabeth Chiuve—Secondary Appointment as Assistant Professor, Department of Epidemiology, Harvard Chan School
- Heather Eliassen—Promoted to Associate Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School
- Kayla Laserson—Appointed Adjunct lecturer of Epidemiology, Department of Epidemiology, Harvard Chan School
- Murray A. Mittleman—Promoted to Professor of Epidemiology, Department of Epidemiology, Harvard Chan School
- Lu Qi—Secondary Appointment as Associate Professor, Department of Epidemiology, Harvard Chan School
- Eric T. Tchetgen—Promoted to Professor of Biostatistics and Epidemiologic Methods, Departments of Biostatistics & Epidemiology, Harvard Chan School

161st Cutter Lecture on Preventive Medicine

On Wednesday, May 6th, 2015 the Department of Epidemiology hosted the 161st Cutter Lecture on Preventive Medicine. The distinguished speaker for this event was Dame Valerie Beral, DBE, AC, FRS, Director of the Cancer Epidemiology Unit, University of Oxford.

Check out our Special Edition Epicenter out soon for a full write up on Dame Valerie Beral’s presentation.

Publications


3rd Annual Youth and Public Health Conference

On Friday, April 10th, the Harvard Chan School hosted its third annual Let's Talk Public Health! Youth and Public Health Conference (formally titled "Why Public Health? Youth and Public Health Conference"). The Youth and Public Health Conference continues to be an annual event planned and executed by Office of Diversity and Inclusion Student Ambassadors with the long-term goal of forming a lasting connection between high school students in the Boston area and public health professionals and graduate students. This year's Co-Directors were Erin Comerford and Virgie Fields, both Master of Science students in the Department of Epidemiology. They, along with an executive planning committee comprised of several students from different departments and degree programs as well as numerous volunteers, worked tirelessly to put on a magnificent conference.

Approximately 100 high school students and chaperones from the Greater Boston area visited the Harvard Chan School for the day to learn about the field of public health. Associate Dean for Diversity Meredith Rosenthal opened up the conference by welcoming the participants to the Harvard Chan School. For the rest of the morning, three esteemed faculty spoke to the students about their fields of expertise - Professors JP Onnela from the Department of Biostatistics, John McDonough from the Department of Health Policy and Management, and Marcia Castro from the Department of Global Health and Population.

Conference participants had lunch and conversed with current Harvard Chan School students and staff. In the afternoon, current Harvard Chan School students spoke about their respective departments and fields within public health, while giving out tips and wisdom to those who wish to pursue these careers. Then the high school students and chaperones were broken into smaller groups, went on tours of the School and the Longwood Medical Area, and participated in an interactive public health equity activity led by engaging Chan School student volunteers. The groups reconvened in Kresge G-1 where Student Government President Alvin Tran helped end the conference with some inspirational remarks.

Spring Seminar Series

David Wilson
Monique M.B. Breteler
Carol J. Rowland Hogue
Joel Kaufman
Anna Wald
Vikrant V. Sahasrabuddhe
Mei Sheng Duh
Derek Fetzer
Epi Student and Postdoc Accomplishments

- **Leslie Farland** was one of eighty doctoral students nationwide to receive the P.E.O Scholar award for 2015-2016. The award was created to support women who are pursuing a doctoral level degree at an accredited college or university.
- Research Scientist **Sara Lindstrom** has accepted a new position as an Assistant Professor at the University of Washington Seattle, beginning in early 2016. She first came to HSPH in 2008 for her postdoc and has been an invaluable member of the PGSG group ever since. Congratulations Sara!
- Doctoral student Tris Hayeck is first author on a new paper out in the American Journal of Human genetics in May 2015, titled “Mixed Model with Correction for Case-control Ascertainment Increases Association Power.”
- **Sarah MacDonald**, a recently admitted SD candidate in the Epi Department attended the American Academy of Neurology Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. The purpose of her trip was to give a platform presentation for her thesis work with Dr. Sonia Hernandez-Diaz. Check out the full story [here](#).
- Teaching Assistant Awards for the Department of Epidemiology were presented to **Catherine Oldenburg, Ellen Caniglia, Kevin Kensler, Rose Chang** at the reception for The 161st Cutter Lecture on Preventive Medicine.
- **Virgie Fields** and **Sandhya Kajeepeta** were recipients of the 2015 Student Recognition Awards, **Sean Kim** received the Loan Relief Award, and **Mingyang Song** received a Teaching Assistant Award congratulations on your achievements and your graduating with a Masters in Epidemiology.

Recently Defended Dissertations

Congratulations candidates!

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**Zhonghua Liu**– Plasma metabolites and body mass Index in U.S. men and women of European ancestry: Novel statistical methods for analyzing multiple phenotypes in genetic association studies

**Mingyang Song**– Adiposity and cancer risk: a life course approach

**Alain Koyama**- Risk factors and mechanisms of cognitive aging

**Tianyi Huang**- Psychosocial factors, lifestyle and risk of ovarian cancer

**Ellen O’Neal Boundy**- Determinants of maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality

**Shasha Meng**- Mitochondrial DNA copy number, lifestyle, and cancer risk

**Akweley Ablorh**- Fine mapping of GWAS-identified breast cancer loci in a multi-ethnic case-control study: Implications for the design and analysis of next generation sequencing studies

**Elizabeth Cespedes**- Sleep duration, diet quality & diabetes

**Julia S. Sisti**- Dietary and reproductive risk factors for breast cancer in the *Nurses’ Health Study*

**Changzheng Yuan**- Nutrient validation in *Women's Lifestyle Validation Study*

**Deanna Alexis Carere**- The impact of direct-to-consumer genetic testing on perceived cancer risk and medication behaviors; Alzheimer’s disease risk alleles and subjective memory complaints in older adults

**Gautam Sajeev**- Mediation analysis in understanding mechanism of Alzheimer’s disease risk

**NaNa Keum**- Energy balance and cancer risk

Upcoming Dissertation Defenses

Join us in supporting our graduating SD Candidates as they defend their dissertation!

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**Ryan Seals**- Thursday June 25th at 2:00 pm, FXB G11, “Risk factors for ALS”

**Kathryn Fitzgerald**– Tuesday, July 7th at 10:30 am, SPH 2 Rm 317, “Vitamin D and neurodegenerative diseases”

**Anders Huitfeldt**– Monday, August 31st at 3:30 pm, Kresge 501, “Emulation of target trials to study the effectiveness and safety of medical intervention”

Rose Traveling Fellows

*Congratulations Spring 2015 Rose Traveling Fellows!*

Sarah Lucht
Adviser: Lesia Mucci - Epidemiology

Arielle Anglin
Adviser: David Wyss - Biosistics

Yen-Feng Lin
Adviser: Deborah Stocker - Epidemiology

Ander Wilson
Adviser: Francesca Dominici - Biosistics
After completing a two-year master’s in epidemiology at HSPH in 1997, I studied clinical psychology and received a PhD from Northwestern University Medical School. I completed my internship at Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School, and then did a post-doctoral fellowship at the MGH Institute for Health Policy. During my postdoc, I became increasingly interested in research ethics – about maximizing the quality of research design in observational and experimental clinical research when asking people to participate in research, and the relationship between researcher and participants. I joined the Partners Human Research Committee (the Institutional Review Board for Partners HealthCare) as a panel member. It became clear to me right away that my background in epidemiology and my clinical and research training helped me tremendously in ethical considerations. In 2004, I completed the HMS Fellowship in Medical Ethics, and became a Chairperson for the IRB, a half time position, with a primary role of reviewing minimal risk research, including the areas of epidemiology and public health, international research, behavioral sciences, and health services research.

Looking back, I can see that some crucial experiences at HSPH gave me a solid foundation that I now use on a daily basis in my work. For example, in Clinimetrics with Fran Cook, I learned about the importance of a well-designed and tested survey tool. Jane Murphy’s course in Psychiatric Epidemiology required interviewing strangers using standardized tools, and gave me direct experience in the nature of soliciting participation in sensitive research. Nancy Krieger’s course provided a wonderful perspective-shifting foundation in justice in scientific methods, in scientific integrity, and in never presuming to “know” what causes health and disease. I couldn’t have known at the time how these courses and my HSPH training would be such a solid foundation for a career in research ethics. Epidemiology provides a framework for questions of justice and validity in lines of questioning – which are crucial to determinations of risks and benefits of human subjects research: evaluating a protocol’s feasibility and understanding the strengths and natural limitations of both experimental and descriptive research. I have found so much of my education at HSPH directly relevant in my career as an IRB Chair.

Social/behavioral and clinical research are no longer divided by a bright line. Research methods are also becoming vastly more complex with technological innovation. My own interest in the increasing challenges of rendering appropriate review of social/behavioral research in biomedical settings led to my experience serving on the National Academies in 2014, where experts gathered to deliberate on proposed changes to the Common Rule (ANPRM)*. Throughout my experiences, I have discovered that there is an important role for epidemiologists on IRBs and that the field is an important foundation for those who conduct ethical review of research with human subjects. IRBs benefit from members with expertise in epidemiology and study design benefit by aiding the review process, helping researchers and institutions to conduct meaningful ethical research, and to avoid both over- and under-protection of human subjects.

Now, there are many opportunities for interested HSPH students to explore bioethics and research ethics at the Harvard Center for Bioethics, right next door. (http://bioethics.hms.harvard.edu/).

* Committee on the Revisions to the Common Rule, Board on Behavioral, Cognitive and Sensory Sciences, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, National Research Council, The National Academies, 2014.
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(Ideas for submission or comments are always welcomed)

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