



The 13th Annual Undergraduate Research Conference on Health and Society

Program

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

APRIL 8, 2022

13TH ANNUAL UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE ON HEALTH & SOCIETY

THE DAY AT A GLANCE:

Welcome	8:30am
Panel 1 Presentations	8:30am – 10:00am
Panel 2 Presentations	10:15am - 11:45am
Break	11:45am - 12:30pm
Panel 3 Presentations	12:30pm - 2:00pm
Panel 4 Presentations	2:15pm - 3:45pm
Closing	4:00pm

PANEL 1 | Disparities and Access to Care

8:30am – 10:00am

Faculty Discussant: Dr. Aishah Scott

“The Medicaid Blockade: Analyzing the Impact of Gubernatorial and State Legislature Partisanship in the Ballot Initiative Process for PPACA Medicaid Expansion”

SAMUEL DORMAN, UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT | 2022

The Supreme Court decision of *NFIB v. Sebelius* gave states the ability to reject the eligibility expansion of Medicaid under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act that would expand coverage to individuals at or below 138% of the Federal Poverty Line (FPL). States were diverse in their response as some chose to expand and others did not. The literature has argued various factors to explain this. In this paper, I look at partisanship and state legislative rules in combination to analyze the partisan decisions made by both political elites and voters in the Medicaid expansion process. I point out that while the partisan makeup of the state legislature and the governor are indeed major factors in the decision, the contextual factors of a state’s legislative rules are often missed. This study examines whether the political affiliation of elites affects the outcome of the Medicaid expansion decisions. Using a state panel dataset from 2005 to 2019 and a two-way fixed effects model, I test whether the Medicaid expansion is less likely in states with a divided or unified government, specifically in the application of the ballot box initiative process. I employ a mixed-methods approach using a qualitative case study of Missouri to explore its unique political situation that occurred after its ballot initiative process expanded Medicaid eligibility in 2020.

“Humanizing Our Data: Proposal on Integrating Social and Behavioral Determinants of Health into Population Health Analytics”

JAXON WU, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY | 2023

Differences in the socioeconomic and contextual factors that impact health, also called social determinants of health (SDoH), have increasingly become recognized as a significant contributor to health disparities in the United States. To improve health equity at individual and population level, the healthcare sector must play a pivotal role in identifying and addressing SDoH risk factors and needs of individuals. Focusing on America’s poorest and most vulnerable, I developed a social needs measure capturing the most prevalent SDoH risks from a patient population insured through Medicaid using their electronic health records and administrative claims. Utilizing International Classification of Disease, Tenth Revision, Clinical Modification Z-Codes, I assessed the impact of these SDoH risks and need factors on the population’s healthcare utilization and expenditures. In turn, the developed social needs measure will enhance risk stratification of a population to further advance state-of-the-art predictive modeling tools for high-risk case detection that are beneficial for various clinical, community, and policy interventions to improve health outcomes, well-being, and equity. My project ultimately seeks to have direct benefits for the inclusion of SDoH data in the Johns Hopkins ACG software, which is one of the most widely used population health analytics platforms within the U.S. and abroad.

“Exploring the Relationship Between Healthcare Access and Cancer Diagnosis”

KARA MCCURDY, PROVIDENCE COLLEGE | 2022

Cancer affects millions of Americans each year and is one of the leading causes of death; social determinants of health play an important role in not only the prevention of cancer, but the prevalence of cancer among certain groups in our population. As one of the most prominent public health concerns, examining why cancer affects some more than others is an important part of prevention. Many people in the US lack access to healthcare due to costs and other social issues. If this puts them at an increased risk of having cancer in their lifetime, there must be ways to combat this in order to reduce the risk. The costs associated with cancer treatment and diagnosis pose a challenge for lower-income Americans who may not have healthcare access, which leads to more diagnoses and worse outcomes when they cannot afford lifesaving care and treatment. Using the 2019 National Health Interview Survey data (NHIS data), the association between ability to pay for healthcare services and cancer diagnosis, and between healthcare utilization and cancer diagnosis was analyzed, along with additional factors that may put an individual at risk in their lifetime.

PANEL 2 | Stigma and Stereotypes

10:15am – 11:45am

Faculty Discussant: Dr. Candidus Nwakasi

“The Male Treatment of the Female Migraine: Diagnosis, Treatment, and Sexism in American Medicine”

SOPHIE EDELSTEIN, YALE UNIVERSITY | 2023

On an April 2012 morning, NPR listeners across the country heard Patti Neighmond discuss “Why Women Suffer More Migraines Than Men.” Well, why do they? For centuries, the female migraine has been treated as a “female problem,” providing evidence of socially constructed gender roles and gender inequity within medicine. Since the early 19th century, the gendering of the migraine and its diagnosis has captured the attention of many in the media, in education, and on the radio. With an eye to the politics of gender and sexism, this paper will historically examine the ways physicians treated women with migraines and how the technologies they used enhanced the hypersexualization of the female body and her reproductive abilities. It will contextualize these interactions within 19th- and 20th-century cultural changes regarding the proper female role in society. These changes in gender roles further altered physicians’ methods and opinions towards women’s health concerns, especially the migraine. Drawing on prescriptive writings about gender roles, artistic representations, medical publications of early neurologists, and pharmaceutical advertisements throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, I will argue that the labeling of the migraine as a “female problem” enhances gender inequity and sexism in our society.

““Eugenically Yours”: A History of the American Eugenics Society”

EMME MAGLIATO, YALE UNIVERSITY | 2023

In 1926, the American Eugenics Society (AES) was founded in New Haven, Connecticut just two blocks from Yale University, the home institution to the AES’ first president, Economics Professor Irving Fisher. The term eugenics refers to the science of better breeding that could improve the human race by eliminating “undesirable” traits from the gene pool. Inherently, the work of eugenicists was enabled by pre-existing hierarchies based on race, class, gender, ability, and citizenship status and the simultaneous social construction of new categories of desirability and defectiveness. The American Eugenics Society emerged from the 1921 Second International Congress of Eugenics after leading eugenicists felt there was a lack of eugenic organization, advocacy, and education in the United States. From its founding, the AES has sought to conduct research, educate the public, and advocate for conservative eugenic legislation on immigration and sterilization. The activism and advocacy of the New Haven-based and Yale professor-led American Eugenics Society reflects the creative ways that university professors and powerful institutions were able to leverage their credibility to mobilize a popular movement for eugenic research, education, and legislation.

“Fear and Stigmatization During the 2104-16 Ebola Epidemic and Covid-19 Pandemic”

EMILY KALINOGLU, PROVIDENCE COLLEGE | 2022

When an infectious disease outbreak emerges, stigma and discrimination impact diverse groups of actors in the health care system, such as patients, families, and health care workers, in quite different ways. During the 2014-16 Ebola epidemic in West Africa, many were subject to both enacted and internalized stigma that not only impaired their physical and mental health but also hindered disease control responses. However, stigma and mistrust are not limited to the Ebola outbreaks. Similar trends have developed with past infectious disease outbreaks, such as cholera and HIV/AIDS. With the emergence of Covid-19, stigma, discrimination, and mistrust have also become prevalent worldwide. This study aims to identify the reasons for stigmatization during disease outbreaks by focusing on the 2014-16 Ebola outbreak and the current Covid-19 pandemic in the US. This comparative analysis will allow us to analyze patterns of stigmatization due to the fear of contagion, even after the end of an outbreak. This paper argues that we can learn key lessons from responses to Ebola which can then be tailored to assist in the Covid-19 response in the US. These lessons include involving mental health professionals in emergency responses and policy actors taking extra measures to reduce fear.

PANEL 3 | Advocacy and Care

12:30pm – 2:00pm

Faculty Discussant: Dr. Tuba Agartan

“The more people stories that we learn, the more we can wrap around our support”: How Post-Operative Bariatric Surgery Patients Use Online Communities”

BREISHA GEORGE, RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE | 2022

Bariatric surgery (also called weight loss surgery) is often thought of as a one-day medical procedure. However, after surgery, there are long-term physical and psychological changes that each patient manages. The goal of this study was to gain deeper insights into how a patient navigates their post-operative experience after bariatric surgery, specifically examining their use of online bariatric communities. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted, transcribed, and thematically analyzed. Three major themes were identified: (1) Mental Health; (2) Belonging to Community; (3) Support. Each theme includes several sub themes, showcasing a range of helpful and harmful experiences from engaging with these online communities. For example, post-operative patients often felt a sense of isolation or frustration, but by engaging with online communities, they were able to find commonalities and emotional support that even led to in-person meetings. Some also detailed the lack of mental health care and support from their surgical team, leading them to seek professional counseling or to lean more on fellow community members. Overall, this work highlights that a more comprehensive treatment plan for post-operative bariatric patients that addresses both longer-term physical and mental health would be beneficial. But for now, the community is working to support each other.

“E-cigarette epidemic and teenagers: how effective are interventions to address pressure on teenagers’ use of e-cigarettes?”

MAX BARESICH, PROVIDENCE COLLEGE | 2023

This paper investigated e-cigarette and its popularity and delved deeper to explore some of the reasons that may explain why adolescents engage in vaping (i.e., e-cigarette smoking). It is without a doubt that an epidemic exists, but why does it exist? My study explored the influence of exposures from the media including targeted marketing such as advertisements, and how they influence e-cigarette uptake among the average teenager in the U.S. The study argued that these exposures increase the likelihood of adolescents taking up vaping, continuing to vape. This may be a gateway to other poor health behaviors such as cigarette smoking and substance abuse. Additionally, the study critically reviewed potential pieces of legislation surrounding vaping such as the ENDS Act of 2021, “Real Cost Campaign”, and vaping cessation text message programs — all geared toward support for e-cigarette smoking cessation. Findings from the critique offer recommendations for policy makers and other smoking cessation stakeholders. Some recommendations include re-working how we view smoking cessation programs, tailoring programs to specified target communities, and need for proactive steps to reduce nicotine exposures and consumption.

“Systemic Neglect: Disparities in Black Maternal and Infant Mortality in the U.S.”

NATHALIE GONZALEZ LORENZO, PROVIDENCE COLLEGE | 2022

Structural racism shaped the perceptions of Black women in medicine over time by dehumanizing, hypersexualizing, and dismissing their bodies and voices. Black women’s maternal mortality rates have increased overtime because of the limited access to quality care due to both implicit and explicit biases of medical doctors. Historically, Black women’s bodies were experimented on and neglected for the advancement of reproductive medicine as evidenced by Dr. Marion Sims. My work examines the systemic structures that continuously uphold the exploitation and neglect of Black women’s reproductive health. Furthermore, it explores how the medicalization of Blackness and practices of racialized medicine during slavery created the framework of biases that persist today. I will examine the chasms of distrust in the relationships that Black women share with their doctors over time and evidence how despite advancements in civil rights and technology Black women’s medical care continues to be riddled with neglect. My work will explore what leaves the infant mortality rate of Black babies today at twice what it was during the period of enslavement. Additionally, I will conduct an analysis of the efforts of non-profits and other organizations creating policies and solutions to combat maternal mortality to protect Black mothers. All these examinations are significant when understanding the depth of maternal mortality that disproportionately affects Black women.

PANEL 4 | Spaces and Places

2:15pm – 3:45pm

Faculty Discussant: Dr. Todd Olszewski

“Evaluation of Lactation Accommodation Policies in the California State University System”

KALILA HOUSTON, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE | 2023

“Though breastfeeding is a biological norm and has many health benefits for lactating persons and babies, lactating students face challenges related to continuous breastfeeding throughout their education. The purpose was to determine the quality (comprehensiveness; strength) of lactation accommodation policies in campuses within the California State University system. Trained research assistance utilized a lactation accommodation coding tool (n=73-item) while evaluating lactation accommodation policies across 23 institutions. Due to the small sample size, medians, IQRs, and frequencies were calculated using a number of ratings between 1 and 3 within university lactation policies. Nineteen campuses had employee lactation accommodation policies and a few had a policy for lactating students of 1.94%. The median comprehensiveness score was 26 (IQR 20, 28), and the medium strength score was 23 (IQR 17, 26). Lactation accommodation policies for students need to be more visible and accessible. Further research is needed so decision-makers can support and protect lactating students with adequate resources (e.g. lactation-support services, breast pumps, child childcare), and to provide education about students' rights to breastfeed and store express milk safely on campus. This will also inform decision-makers on how to build an infrastructure within these institutions to accommodate all lactating students.”

“Healthcare Facility Sustainability Case Study”

ALEX DEMARS, PROVIDENCE COLLEGE | 2022

Have you ever considered how sustainable your healthcare facility is? One of the most overlooked aspects of a successful hospital system is minimizing the amount of energy, water, and electricity that your buildings consume. In my case study, I compare two different medical office buildings located in Scarborough, Maine. One building was erected in 2000, and the other in 2020. The newer building was designed with efficient LED lighting along with motion sensors, more technical equipment, and a fully automated controls system which helps equipment run on energy-efficient schedules. The older building recently fell under my leadership, and I explain in my study how we have slowly made energy-efficient decisions for the facility, with the goal of implementing technology from the neighboring building. The age of a facility is key to understanding sustainability initiatives; buildings which heat spaces with steam will require different measures than closed-loop heating boiler systems. Similarly, older equipment may not be supported with items such as variable-frequency-drives, that help machinery run for maximum efficiency. I hope that my case study can inspire other individuals working in the healthcare facilities management field to create their own sustainability initiatives, and prompt them to begin analyzing their daily consumption of energy.

“A Review of Challenges of Utilizing Formal Long-Term Care for People with Dementia”

Theresa Staab, Providence College | 2023

Dementia can result in physical, emotional, psychological, and financial stress for individuals living with dementia and their families especially as the condition progresses from mild to severe. To reduce dementia stress, families may opt for formal long-term care — this transition requires careful consideration because it has implications on the person with dementia. This study, a literature review, was conducted to identify some challenges of utilizing formal long-term care as they may affect care quality. The study found that although care workers are key determinants of care quality, there was evidence of inadequate relevant dementia knowledge and training, and high resident to staff ratio meant more caregiving stress on direct care workers. This review also found that people living with dementia may not do well in long-term care facilities that are not dementia friendly, and facilities that limit family participation in care. Furthermore, the impact of relocating an individual and the variables involved in the choice are explored. The review's overall conclusion is the need for states to adopt long-term care policies and interventions to ensure improved quality of life for people with dementia. Following this evaluation, further research regarding the effects of community/home-care for people with dementia will be conducted.

2022 UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE ON HEALTH & SOCIETY PARTICIPANTS

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**Thank you for attending the 13th Annual Undergraduate Research
Conference on Health & Society hosted by Providence College!**

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