

Milken Institute School of Public Health

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

DrPH 2024 Cohort Bios

FALL 2024

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Armin Aflaki



Armin Aflaki is a collaborative, health-conscious, and solution-oriented leader who seeks consensus when resolving public health issues. He aims to cultivate spaces where all working partners feel comfortable expressing curiosity, seeking fulfillment, and extending grace to others. Mr. Aflaki currently serves as a Public Health Analyst at the Office of Population Affairs (OPA) in the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

In this role, he co-led the development of federal communications materials on meaningful youth engagement and co-facilitated two listening sessions with young male leaders to promote positive health outcomes among boys and young men. He has presented OPA activities in multiple national conferences, including the American Public Health Association (APHA) and Adolescent Health Initiative. He represents OPA in the

Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs and has managed OPA's digital correspondence system for congressional communications, funding opportunities, data call requests, FOIA requests, and public letters.

Mr. Aflaki has prioritized professional development through multiple public health experiences: graduating from the Foundations in Public Service Leadership Program by the Partnership for Public Service; serving as CEO of the Maryland-based lean start-up Your Health Concierge, Inc.; completing an ORISE Fellowship with HHS; and growing as a Schroeder Institute Intern at Truth Initiative.

He received his MPH and BS degrees from the George Washington University where he also served as the liaison for the Prevention and Community Health department within the Public Health Student Association. He has volunteered as the Director of Member Engagement in the Delta Omega Honorary Society in Public Health and as a Member of the APHA Sexual and Reproductive Health Section.

In his spare time, Mr. Aflaki enjoys visiting cultural sites, attending concerts, and playing games with family and friends.

Nasreen A. Al-Quaid, M.S QA/RA



Nasreen A. Al-Quaid, M.S QA/RA is a seasoned Senior Regulatory Professional and Global Regulatory Policy Enthusiast. She has over 15 years' of experience in international affairs and in the regulation of medical devices, pharmaceuticals, and biologics products. During that time period, Ms. Al-Quaid has spent over 7 years in Senior Leadership and/or managerial level roles for various medical device companies in the U.S and abroad. She is a Global Regulatory Specialist with many years of experience in International Registrations, Global Strategy, Regulatory Intelligence and Special Project Management.

Her special interests are Global Regulatory Policy, US Regulatory Policy and International Affairs. Ms. Al-Quaid's unique skill set has given her the opportunity to act as a Global Regulatory Policy Lead & Analyst, providing perspective on international affairs, insight into global harmonization activities and analysis of open consultations and policy issues. In this capacity, she regularly engages with industry leaders and regulators on emerging policy issues and is passionate about Global Harmonization and Regulatory Convergence.

Ms. Al-Quaid holds a Bachelor's degree in Pharmaceutical Chemistry from University of the Sciences and a Master's Degree in Quality Assurance and Regulatory Affairs from Temple University, Pennsylvania. She is currently working to attain her Doctor of Public Health from The George Washington University, Milken Institute School of Public Health in Washington D.C.

Rose Khasiala Amolo, MPH



Rose Khasiala Amolo is a seasoned international development professional with extensive expertise in global public health, education, youth, and women's empowerment programs. For over 20 years she has collaborated with communities to find solutions that improve the health status, education and economic wellbeing of women, their families, and communities.

Currently, Rose is the Vice president for Global Programs for the Bizzell Group LLC., where she oversees global health security, monitoring and evaluation, and economic empowerment programs in Africa, Asia, Central America and the Caribbean.

Before joining the Bizzell Rose worked with Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), a women's empowerment organization. At CEDPA, she held various positions including Chief of Party of a USAID (PEPFAR)-funded HIV/AIDS Positive Living Project in Nigeria and Senior Technical Advisor for Integrated Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS, and Child Health Programs.

Rose began her career as an educator in her native Kenya and briefly in the District of Colombia.

She holds Master of Public Health (MPH) in Nutrition, from New York University, a Bachelor of Education from Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya, and a certificate in monitoring and evaluation from American University.

Wintana Bairu, MPH



Wintana Bairu is a public health professional and consultant with over six years of experience in the public health sector. As a consultant, Wintana built extensive experience working in public and private sectors in health education, pharmacovigilance, drug regulation, immunization-centered health IT, gene therapeutics, and global health security.

Wintana started her professional public health career at the Ministry of Health in Eritrea as a National Medicine and Food Administration project manager. She worked with regulators and subject matter experts to ensure the success of the country's first international Pharmacovigilance & Risk Management Conference, which hosted stakeholders from 11 Low- and Middle-Income Countries.

Wintana's passion for working in-country led her to accept an internship invitation at the World Health Organization Eritrea country office. Wintana served as a Disease Prevention & Control intern, co-drafting the country's National Action Plan for Health Security, covering the 19 technical areas identified by the WHO International Health Regulations. In addition, Wintana spent three months in Uganda conducting a program evaluation on behalf of the American Cancer Society, assessing the pilot program's performance through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with program participants.

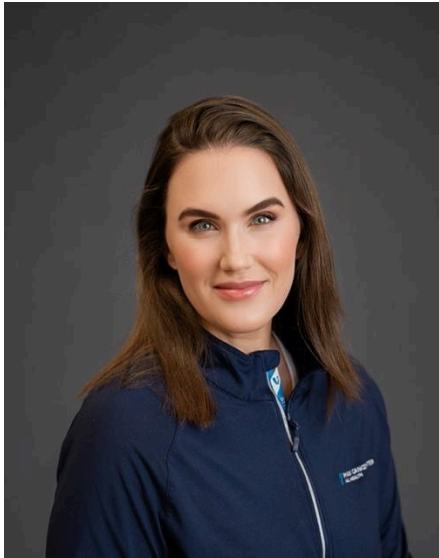
Wintana currently holds the position of Executive Director at Bairex Health, a 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to community health education and patient advocacy for the African diaspora in the United States. Her leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, where she co-led webinars to provide COVID-19-related information to the African Diaspora, and her subsequent expansion of the initiative to cover non-communicable disease management and capacity building for Low- and Middle-Income Countries demonstrate her ability to lead impactful health initiatives.

Wintana is a dedicated fellow of the Young Women Mentorship Initiative, an initiative overseen by the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations in New York. This initiative is focused on the professional development of young African woman leaders, and Wintana's involvement underscores her commitment to empowering the next generation of global leaders.

Wintana holds an M.P.H. in Global Health from Emory University and a B.S. in Sociology from Santa Clara University. After publishing her thesis on "[Caregivers to Adolescents' Motivators & Barriers to Vaccinating Children Against Human Papillomavirus](#)," Wintana became a frequent peer reviewer for articles on HPV vaccination submitted to various academic journals.

In her spare time, Wintana enjoys traveling and learning from other cultures. She has been to 32 countries and counting. Throughout the DrPH program, Wintana aims to advance her skills and knowledge to prepare her to lead high-impact global health programs.

Paige Bordelon, BS, MPH



Raised in San Antonio, Texas, I obtained a Bachelor of Science from Texas A&M University in 1998, and a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from Tulane University in 2000. Over the years I have held various positions in public health practice and academic research settings. In my current role as the supervisor of clinical research for the Vail Health Shaw Cancer Center in Edwards, Colorado, I manage and oversee an oncology clinical research program.

Over the past five years I have grown the program from one part time clinical research coordinator to a supervisor and two full time coordinators. My expertise includes human subjects research regulations as well as an extensive knowledge of oncology clinical research policies and practices. I am passionate about eliminating the barriers to conducting clinical research in rural and community setting.

In my free time I am an avid baker and enjoy spending my free time with my three kids, three dogs and the occasional foster dog. My family splits our time between the mountains of Colorado and New Orleans, Louisiana.

Jennifer Covich Bordenick



Jen is passionate about using artificial intelligence and technology to enhance healthcare, specifically women's health and mental health. With 30 years of experience and an extensive network, Jen has a proven record of leading organizations, convening executives and developing actionable research.

Jen most recently served as CEO of Executives for Health Innovation (EHI), a preeminent organization bringing together health and tech's most influential leaders to address health

challenges through thought leadership, education, and advocacy. She has held leadership roles in strategic marketing, product development, health policy and health administration at both for-profit and nonprofit companies, including: OpenNetworks, Inc.; MicroStrategy, Inc.; National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA); and she began her career at George Washington University Medical Center and Health Plan.

Jen has served on several prominent boards and advisory groups, including: Heluna Health's Board of Directors; co-chair of the Federal HIT Policy Committee's Strategy and Innovation Workgroup; member of the HL7 Board of Directors and Leadership Advisory Council; and National Alliance of Healthcare Purchasers Leadership Council. She has served as the project investigator for grants from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Commonwealth Fund, and California Health Care Foundation. She also serves as an adjunct faculty member at the Milken Institute School of Public Health at GWU. She has a master's in human resource development, a bachelor's degree in psychology and completed her doctoral coursework in healthcare administration at GWU.

Jen enjoys snorkeling in Hawaii, University of Alabama football, and trips to NYC. She resides in Maryland with her husband, two teens and always-barking-on-zoom goldendoodle.

Simone Brown



Simone Brown is currently a Health and Wellness Intern at the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), where she supports the Advancing the Recruitment and Retention of Our Workforce (ARROW) program. In her role, she helps to identify community resources for families to address basic needs and develops resource toolkits that support school behavioral health providers in addressing identified needs. Prior to joining OSSE, she was a school psychologist in the Maryland and DC public and school systems.

As a mental health professional, Simone is dedicated to using her expertise to promote the social and emotional wellbeing of children and families from underserved communities.

Throughout her career, she has implemented, developed and directed various wellness-centered initiatives including school mental health promotion, school connectedness, prevention, early intervention, and summer enrichment programs. Simone is a published children's author and founder of Social-Emotional Learning and Healing for Children of Addiction (SELAH), LLC, an organization that provides psychoeducational resources to children and families impacted by substance abuse and trauma.

Simone is a first-year Doctor of Public Health student at George Washington University. She holds a Master of Education in School Psychology and Counseling Services from Howard University and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Oakwood University.

Celestine Buyu, MPH, MHSA



I am a Technical Advisor/ International Programs Director at the Center for International Health, Education and Biosecurity (Ciheb), at the University of Maryland Baltimore. I have over 15 years of public health experience with a primary focus on public health surveillance.

I graduated with an undergraduate degree in Business Administration and French, from Coe College in Cedar Rapids IA, but after a few years realized that my interest was more geared towards healthcare. I then decided to prepare for a career in healthcare as a Physician Assistant.

During that process, I discovered that I was more enthusiastic about population health and the healthcare system. I then studied and received my master's in public health with a focus on epidemiology and a master's in

health services administration from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Prior to my current role at Ciheb, I directed the HIV case surveillance program at the Virginia department of health, managing a staff of more than 25 and overseeing one core surveillance program and two supplemental programs. At Ciheb, I supported the implementation of HIV case surveillance in Botswana and Nigeria and a pilot to develop solutions for non-electronic medical records facilities in Kenya. I am interested in further developing my skills with the goal of working as a technical advisor/consultant at public health agency with global reach, like the World Health Organization.

I was born in Kenya, and I am also interested in the field of implementation science and its application to programs and interventions targeted for sub-Saharan Africa. I believe that the DrPH degree from a reputable institution of public health like the Milken Institute School of Public Health will position me to effectively move into the next phase of my public health career.

Veronica Charles, MPA



Veronica Charles is passionate about healthcare access for vulnerable Medicaid populations. Currently, Veronica serves as the Senior Director of Federal and State Government Relations for a nationwide healthcare provider, and has the opportunity to advocate for patients and clinicians in Congress and in statehouses across the country. The principal federal lobbyist, she also oversees a team of state government affairs professionals and influences government affairs strategy across the company's 37 states. In her role, Veronica develops policy positions and passes legislation and regulations that promote patient access for our nation's most medically fragile children and veterans.

Veronica has spent her career in both clinical healthcare and health policy settings and continues to use her inside knowledge of the congressional and state policy process to promote better health outcomes for older adults and children with disabilities. Prior to serving in her current role, Veronica served as the director of policy and advocacy for the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (ASCP), the nation's leading association for senior care pharmacists and long-term care pharmacies. While at ASCP she spearheaded numerous regulatory reforms and lobbied on several congressional initiatives to curb drug pricing. She drafted a current Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) proposal to protect access to medications in nursing homes and curb the overuse of antipsychotic medications in long-term care facilities.

She also worked with members of Operation Warp Speed to help distribute the COVID-19 vaccine to our nation's nursing homes. Prior to her role with ASCP, Veronica spent time working on Capitol Hill for Nevada's senior senator and previously lobbied on health and education initiatives in the Nevada state legislature. Veronica holds a Bachelor of Science in Speech Pathology and Audiology from the University of Nevada, Reno and a Master of Public Administration in Health Policy from American University. She is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Public Health at George Washington University.

Mary Ellen DeBardeleben, MBA, MPH



Mary Ellen is passionate about improving the quality and safety of patient care. She drives meaningful and sustainable change through transformational leadership, innovation, and standardization. She also advocates for patients and healthcare quality in a variety of capacities at the hospital, company, and national level.

Mary Ellen is currently the National Director of Quality at Encompass Health in Birmingham, Alabama and has worked at the company in various roles in the Clinical Excellence department since July, 2008. She works to identify, recommend, and implement improvements across the company's 160+ inpatient rehabilitation facilities (IRFs) in the capacity for establishing and using performance metrics to improve patient outcomes, regulatory compliance, and patient experience.

She also works to increase the effectiveness of quality programs while reducing the burden on individuals, regional and corporate staff. In her role, Mary Ellen developed the company's strategic program for reporting IRF Quality Reporting Program measures, building standardized processes, and designing internal and external data analysis programs. Most recently, she managed the development and implementation of a quality application that provides an effective and efficient way to track quality with consideration for regulatory, quality of documentation, processes and outcomes. This application and related analytic tools improve accuracy, reduce burden and allow hospital leaders to focus on affecting change. She hosted Season 3 of the healthcare podcast, Connect, which is intended to inspire and motivate healthcare professionals with insightful information from industry experts. Episodes include: "Why IT and Patient Care Go Hand-in-Hand," "Can AI Play a Role in Improving Patient Outcomes," and "Putting Evidence-Based Research into Everyday Practice."

Mary Ellen has a Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience from Vanderbilt University and a Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Health from University of Alabama at Birmingham. She is a Certified Joint Commission Professional. She also sidelines as a chauffeur, chef, and cheerleader for her three young children. She is an avid Olympics fan and enjoys traveling, good food, and live music and sports.

Malaika Elias



Malaika is a climate and environmental justice advocate working at the intersection of health and the environment. Malaika is currently working on national regulatory and market campaigns pertaining to biotechnology and genetic engineering within the context of food and agriculture. She firmly believes that shifting towards a just and sustainable food system is the answer to improving the climate and our health.

Coming from a diverse academic and professional background, Malaika has worked on campaigns that intersect environmental, gender, and racial justice over the past 10 years. Malaika graduated from the University of Maryland with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Anthropology and holds a Masters degree in Global Affairs and Environmental Policy from NYU. For her graduate thesis at NYU, Malaika worked with a team of fellow graduates to create a solar paneled atmospheric water generator- a machine that pulls water from humidity in the air and turns it into potable drinking water. She is now working to implement these technologies in Eritrea and Ethiopia, where her parents immigrated from, and where climate induced drought is causing water scarcity and severe crop loss. Malaika is looking forward to deepening her understanding of environmental health and growing her leadership skills through the DrPH program.

Stephanie Forbes



Stephanie Forbes (she/her/hers) is a paramedic who works with Caroline County Department of Emergency Services in Caroline County, Maryland. Stephanie has worked in emergency medical services for over 24 years, as an emergency medical technician, paramedic, and adjunct faculty for a local community college, educating the providers of the future. During her career as a paramedic, Stephanie has received multiple awards for successfully resuscitating patients in cardiac arrest, developing a program to

increase cardiac arrest care, and was awarded Paramedic of the Year in 2020 for Sussex County, Delaware.

Stephanie completed her bachelor's degree in Psychology at University of Maryland, Baltimore County, with a minor in Emergency Health Services. During her studies, she developed an interest in research methods and statistics, completing research and independent studies with faculty. Stephanie obtained her Master of Public Health from Southern New Hampshire University, focusing on emergency public health, health inequities, and ways to mitigate social determinants of health.

Stephanie is beginning a project with the Baltimore City Fire Department, assisting with the implementation of their harm reduction strategies and buprenorphine programs for opiate use disorders. In the long term, Stephanie hopes to work with EMS agencies/programs to expand mobile integrated community health to provide care and resources to patients without necessarily transporting them to the hospital.

When she is not working or studying, Stephanie spends time with her family--husband, son, mother, and two dogs. They enjoy everything the Eastern Shore of Maryland has to offer, from fishing and crabbing to relaxing on the beach.

Bejanchong Foretia, MPH (She/Her/Hers)



Bejanchong Foretia is the Deputy Manager for the Humanitarian Information Team (HIT) at USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. She recently worked as a Senior Information Officer on the HIT, in which she served as a lead reporter of global humanitarian crises through diplomatic cables, situation reports, public fact sheets and other official U.S. Government correspondence to key stakeholders such as USAID leadership, UN leadership, Ambassadors, Mission Directors, and the National Security Council, among others.

Moreover, she has deployed to regions in the Middle East and East Africa, and has also served on USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Teams and Response Management Teams, responding to these complex humanitarian emergencies on behalf of the U.S. Government. Prior to this, Bejan served as a Program Analyst at the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP), assisting the Women's and Infant Health team in implementation and promotion of equity-centered programs concerning women's and infant health. While at AMCHP, Bejan led the development and maintenance efforts of an online resource dedicated to assisting Maternal Mortality Review Committees in their work to eliminate maternal mortality.

Additionally, Bejan published issue briefs, organized webinars, and served on various committees at AMCHP, dedicated to the promotion of equity and anti-racism within public health programs and policies. Bejan received a Bachelors of Art in Psychology from Spelman College in 2016, and a Masters of Public Health in Global Maternal and Child Health from Tulane University, School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in 2018; Bejan also received a graduate certificate in Global Gender Policy from The George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs in 2021. She is passionate about working in complex humanitarian settings, including conflicts and health emergencies, while centering the needs of women and girls.

Michelle Glover-Brown, MPH



As a seasoned occupational and health safety professional with a track record of facilitating health and safety programs, operations development, and management, my work and research experience includes working with employers to develop policies and procedures to reduce workplace injuries and improve employee health.

I hope to broaden current research in the areas of improving workplace health and safety by incorporating workplace wellness programs as a part of the overall environmental health and safety (EHS) OSHA compliance program. Pre-existing medical conditions such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes can profoundly impact an employee and their performance in the workplace. Creating a more holistic environmental, health, and safety environment in the workplace will aid in promoting

workplace equity and improvement in individuals' overall well-being.

In addition, I have served as an adjunct instructor for the SUNY University System, Adelphi University, and Prince George Community College. I received my Master of Public Health, Occupational Health, and Safety Management from Tulane University. I am married to CPT (retired) David L. Brown and a proud mother and grandma to Marie Brown and Mya Lawrence.

Anna Gonzalez



Anna I. González -Salinas is a dedicated first-generation Mexican Latina public health leader dedicated to advancing public health initiatives with a diverse educational background and extensive experience in research, program management, and community engagement. Currently pursuing a Doctoral Public Health Degree at George Washington University's Milken Institute School of Public Health, Anna brings a unique blend of academic rigor and practical experience.

She has showcased exceptional proficiency in her thesis utilizing NVivo and STATA, where she conducted a mixed-methods pilot study on Latino parents' engagement with a Facebook-based COVID-19 vaccine promotion intervention. She has strong public speaking abilities and adeptness in research methodologies. Her commitment and passion for addressing the social determinants of health, particularly within underserved communities, is evident through their active participation in conferences and research projects focusing on social and behavioral health.

Her efforts extended beyond academic pursuits. Through her work as a Graduate Research Assistant and Program Manager, she has spearheaded a pivotal training initiative for a team of 10 Community Health Workers (CHWs) and three undergraduate research assistants, displaying exceptional leadership and organizational skills. Through tireless efforts, she established invaluable connections with doctors and individuals with Ph.D. s on Facebook, elevating and promoting social media content that successfully engaged and educated a broad audience on public health issues.

As a Brigada Digital de Salud contributor for a digital health communication campaign funded by the NIH and GWU's Institute for Data, Democracy, and Politics to enhance COVID-19 vaccination rates, Anna has played a crucial role in providing essential science-based content to the Latino community. Her proactive involvement in creating accessible resources in Spanish to bridge the gap in science-based information for underserved communities exemplifies her commitment to public health equity. Her research focuses on the intersection of digital health communication and community engagement, particularly among underserved populations.

Anna's dedication, resilience, and vision to empower underserved communities are commendable. Her ambition to effect lasting change within public health speaks volumes about their character, determination, and passion for the field. Additionally, when asked about any advice in public health, she often uses the mixed method collaboration approach to expand resources for diverse populations. Anna always uses science communication strategies to help reduce the barriers to understanding complex science jargon, reflecting her dedication to fostering positive change in the health outcomes who need it most.

Erik Harden, MA



Erik is currently the Breast Oncology Senior Clinical Research Manager and the Administrator for the National Cancer Institute Community Oncology Research Program (NCORP) at Columbia University Medical Center in New York City and has over 10 years of experience in various health research fields. In his current roles Erik's focuses on ensuring women, veterans, and minority/underserved populations have access to cancer clinical trials.

In his Breast Oncology Senior Clinical Research Manager position Erik works with breast medical, radiation and surgical oncologists to conceptualize and operationalize breast cancer clinical trials while also supervising the research staff's implementation of those trials. One of Erik's biggest accomplishments to date was organizing a standing "research meeting" that included the breast cancer clinics from the 7 major academic hospitals in New York City in order to create a research referral network and increase breast cancer research collaboration.

Erik is also equally passionate in his role as the Columbia NCORP Administrator. Erik assists with the daily implementation of the NCI's clinical trial program at Columbia and 4 other hospitals. Erik has helped with the roll out of the NCORP at two community hospitals ensuring that patients have "cancer clinical trial options in their own neighborhood" while also maintaining the NCORP presence at a VA and hospital in Miami, Florida. Erik works to identify NCI trials that will be good for minority/underserved populations while also educating support staff and patients about the importance of NCI clinical trials.

Erik completed degrees at the University at Buffalo (Bachelors of Arts in Anthropology) and Sarah Lawrence College (Master of Arts in Health Advocacy). Prior to coming to Columbia Erik worked at the American Museum of Natural History cataloging human remains and studying global health topics in West Africa and patient centered research at the Global Healthy Living Foundation. In his free time Erik likes to stay busy. As a former foster kid, Erik volunteers with Court Appointed Special Advocacy (CASA) organization which supports kids in the foster system. Erik is an avid runner and enjoys traveling and experiencing New York City's day and night life with his boyfriend.

Emily Holman, MSc (she/her/hers)



Emily Holman is an epidemiologist with the Division of HIV Prevention in the Detection and Response Branch at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Emily first joined CDC in 2021, serving on the COVID-19 Response as an epidemiologist on the K-12 School Investigations Team. During her time on the response, she led field deployments studying modified quarantine in K-12 schools, which led to significant updates to the national guidance of COVID-19 prevention in U.S. schools.

Emily began her career as a Disease Intervention Specialist conducting syphilis investigations in California and has since gained over 15 years of communicable disease control, outbreak response, and epidemiology experience on the local, state, and

national level as well as in clinical settings. Prior to joining CDC, Emily served as the Communicable Disease Controller at a local health jurisdiction in California, where she worked to expand local outbreak response capacity and led surveillance and outbreak investigation efforts for a wide range of diseases including *Salmonella*, flea-borne typhus, *Candida auris*, hepatitis A, shigellosis, syphilis, Ebola, and measles.

Emily holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Italian from the University of California, Davis, and a Master of Science in Control of Infectious Diseases from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. She is looking forward to joining the GWU family as part of the DrPH program.

Denise Hyater-Lindenmuth, MBA, MA



Denise Hyater-Lindenmuth has worked in the Washington DC area in both nonprofit and for-profit industries for nearly 30 years. Her nonprofit leadership roles included creating ground-breaking community-based programs where her efforts were recognized internationally and led organizations such as Brain Injury Services and the American Cancer Society for the National Capital Region.

She also served in leadership roles for national/international public relations firms representing healthcare clients and health interests. She has extensive experience serving as spokesperson in many of her leadership roles.

Denise's leadership style is based on the philosophy of community service and is firmly driven by data and results.

She has proven successes with leading boards and people through change and overcoming challenges while remaining mission focused. Critical areas of importance include mission and strategy, governance, financial management and development, operations, and marketing.

She earned her MBA at George Washington University in Washington D.C., a master's degree in Community Health Education at Trinity Washington University, in Washington, D.C., and a bachelor's in Public Relations/Marketing at Howard University, in Washington, D.C. Denise also received a certificate in strategic nonprofit management from Harvard University. As a fifth-generation Washingtonian, she lives with her husband, Philip, in the District of Columbia. They have three children who are successfully "adulting".

Dan R Johnson



LCDR Dan Johnson is a US Public Health Service officer stationed at The National Institutes of Health as the Dietitian Informaticist in the Clinical Center. He joined the USPHS Commissioned Corps in June 2016 as a dietitian, and previously was stationed with the Indian Health Service among the Apache Tribe in Arizona where he treated metabolic & cardiovascular diseases and co-founded a team focused on Adverse Childhood Events and health outcomes.

He previously deployed for Hurricane Maria and Irma relief efforts, and as a team lead for Remote Area Medicine missions to Laredo, TX, Baltimore, MD, and Washington, D.C. In early 2020 he was deployed to Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ) for COVID-19 response.

With a BS in Exercise Physiology and Metabolism, he holds a graduate certificate in Dietetics and completed his Master of Public Health from The George Washington University Milken School of Public Health. A Board Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics and Clinical Exercise Physiologist, he is also trained in adult obesity management, epidemiological reporting, and data analytics. In 2022, LCDR Johnson graduated from the U.S. Army Command & General Staff College's Officer Course.

As a deployment manager at CCHQ, LCDR Johnson spearheaded the management of officer deployment and record keeping, and was the nexus for over 13,000 officer deployments worldwide for COVID-19 responses the largest number of deployments in USPHS history. He co-wrote a manuscript on early COVID-19 response and mental health among USPHS officers. At NIH, he manages systems for nutrition data tabulation and patient ordering for the 200 bed clinical center, while participating in the clinical center's animal assisted therapy program.

LCDR Johnson is the handler and co-founder for the first-ever USPHS mascot, LCDR "Abigail" a trained labrador retriever whose mission is to increase the public's health through the human-animal bond. He is an avid runner and routinely completes local road races wherever he can, often seeking races near National Parks where he can hike or trail run with his wife and son.

Carly Jones, M.S.



Carly currently works as a Management & Program Analyst for the U.S. Department of Education in the Office of the General Counsel. She works on the collection, analysis, and interpretation of complex data sets to inform leadership with evidence-based decision making; the utilization of statistical, programming, and business intelligence tools to produce visualizations; and functions as an advisor to senior leadership by providing recommendations to assist with implementation of programmatic goals and priorities.

In addition, she also serves as a Public Health Advisor for Four Seam Sports, Inc., a non-profit organization that promotes the facilitation of social, educational, and mentoring opportunities for youth athletes in Montgomery County, MD. Originally tasked with interpreting and instituting safety guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic for youth participants, her current research interests focus on investigating the patterns and causes of youth sports related injuries, identifying risk factors, and mitigating behaviors that contribute to arm overuse injuries.

Carly is a first-generation graduate and received her Bachelor of Science in Public Health (BSPH) degree with a concentration in Health Promotion and Education from Kent State University, College of Public Health in 2018. She decided to continue her studies at Kent State University and graduated with a Master of Science (MS) degree in Clinical Epidemiology in 2020.

After obtaining her DrPH degree, she hopes to join Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS). EIS is the premiere two year post-doctoral, applied epidemiology training program that places post-doctoral graduates as "disease detectives" on the front lines of public health investigations and emergency preparedness. She was able to observe during the COVID-19 pandemic that there exists an urgent need for public health professionals who can cohesively blend practical implementation and research through EIS training. Carly is very excited to obtain her DrPH degree at GW as it will allow her to translate evidence-based information through leadership and public health practice.

Nicole Jordan-Martin, M. P. A., FACHE



Nicole Jordan-Martin, MPA, FACHE, is Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of NYC Health + Hospitals /Community Care, the public health system's division delivering services to patients in their homes and communities. Ms. Jordan-Martin is responsible for strategic priorities, including patient growth/business development, clinical integration, care management, quality improvement, P&L and financial sustainability.

Community Care services are highly strategic to the health system's value-based payment strategy include home health care, care management, and care coordination for high-risk and high-need patients with medical and behavioral health conditions, and social determinants of health needs. Ms. Jordan-Martin is board certified in health care management (Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives).

Ms. Jordan-Martin is devoted to the health and well-being of New Yorkers.

Ms. Jordan-Martin is devoted to the health and well-being of New Yorkers. One of her passions is convening various actors across the community landscape to develop innovative partnerships for grass roots collective impact. As such she continues to develop and leverage collaboratives of healthcare, health plan and community-based organizations to comprehensively address the needs of Medicaid beneficiaries, uninsured individuals, undocumented immigrants, and other vulnerable groups (including those affected by homelessness, justice-involvement, HIV infection, serious mental illness, and alcohol and substance use). She strongly believes that these collective impact collaboratives are critical to the development of new models of care to address the specific needs of these vulnerable groups; expansion of pathways for service delivery, geographic reach and service offerings; and increased delivery of a myriad of home- and community-based health, wellness, social and family support programs, services and resources.

Ms. Jordan-Martin is a strong proponent of advancing health and wellness in communities through the dissemination of information, provision of education, and regular communication to community members. She is also a strong advocate for continuously highlighting and addressing health disparities through structural/policy changes, funding, innovation, research community engagement. She advocates for and supports the health and wellness of her staff as they embrace the responsibility of caring for and supporting the most vulnerable New Yorkers each and every day by ensuring that they are connection to various programs, services and resources to address their healthcare, wellness, and social and family support needs.

She is the proud mother of two sons and enjoys reading thrillers, cycling and traveling.

Farah Kader, BS, MPH



Farah Kader is an epidemiologist and health program evaluator with experience in the nonprofit and government sectors. Her current work at the Westchester County Department of Health involves health program development and evaluation using participatory action and mixed methods to improve racial and ethnic health disparities.

Her issue areas of focus include communicable disease transmission, child and infant health outcomes, and flavored tobacco uptake among youth in the New York City metropolitan area.

She also works for the World Health Organization as an Evaluation Consultant, currently evaluating the Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources initiative as a pandemic preparedness and response tool.

Farah is a long-time advocate for data equity with a particular interest in representation of people of South Asian and North African (SWANA) descent in health datasets. She is a member of the Innovations in Data Equity for All Laboratory (IDEAL) initiative led by New York University's Center for the Study of Asian American Health, a collaborative of researchers, community-based organizations, and health data managers to develop best practices for collecting, analyzing, and reporting disaggregated patient race/ethnicity to better understand health disparities.

Farah has a Bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley School of Public Health and a Masters of Public Health from the University of Michigan School of Public Health, Department of Environmental Health Sciences.

Elexis Kierstead, MPH (she/her/hers)



Elexis Kierstead is a public health researcher with a focus on health equity. She earned her masters of public health in epidemiology from GW in 2019 and currently manages a portfolio of research at Truth Initiative, where she has worked since 2016. Elexis’s research sits at the intersection of health behavior and health policy, addressing LGBTQ+ health, mental health, and tobacco control policy. Elexis’s research informs behavioral health interventions and supports equity-focused health policy.

At Truth Initiative, Elexis leads a program of work dedicated to researching tobacco use among LGBTQ+ youth and young adults. This work culminates in academic papers and presentations, but also informs Truth Initiative’s public education campaign aimed at reducing tobacco use among young people. Elexis also manages the implementation of a longitudinal cohort study designed to evaluate Truth’s campaign.

In addition to her work in the LGBT+ health space, Elexis has also contributed to research regarding equitable tobacco control policy, nicotine vaping cessation, social media discourse around tobacco regulation, and new and evolving tobacco products. Elexis also managed a pilot randomized controlled trial evaluating a tailored smoking cessation program for people living with HIV.

At GW’s DrPH program, Elexis is excited to not only grow her research skills, but also her ability to turn research into action.

Allan Jake “AJ” Licudan, MPH, CPH



AJ currently holds the rank of Major (O-4) as a Public Health Officer in the United States Air Force. He is completing his duties at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he oversees community and force health programs for the 20,000 base population. Previously, he worked at Yokota Air Base in Tokyo, Japan, serving as the Public Health Director of Operations.

During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, he collaborated with the Tokyo Metropolitan Health Department and the Japan Self-Defense Force. As an international health specialist with the Air Force, he has coordinated health engagement missions in Fiji, Nepal, and Indonesia.

Before his military service, he interned at the World Health Organization—Western Pacific Regional Office, where he developed health messaging campaigns and organized a regional meeting on various non-communicable diseases. Additionally, he created a preliminary epidemiological mental health profile for the countries in the Western Pacific region.

AJ, who considers Manila and Virginia his home, has completed a Graduate Certificate in Global Health from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and a Master in Public Health from Eastern Virginia Medical School. His aspiration to transition his focus to global health reflects his dedication to public health and passion for travel.

Frances Masterson



Frances Masterson is interested in influencing the US's national healthcare policy to improve veteran wellness. She currently is the Clinical Nurse Manager for the Veterans Affairs Community Care program, overseeing the integration of healthcare between the VA, the public, and the Department of Defense (DoD) in Florida's Gulf Coast region.

She is also a Navy nurse reservist and is assigned to Walter Reed National Military Hospital where she works several weeks every year. Her background includes emergency, critical and rehabilitative hospital care. Since 2017, she's been an administrator

for the VA and is convinced that with the smart structures in place, America's two largest public healthcare systems (the VA and DoD), could be the innovative model for healthcare delivery.

In the past two years, for the VA, she has introduced smart scanning systems for record management, increased the use of bidirectional secured portals for greater accountability, quality monitoring and timeliness monitoring for care provided to veterans and billed to the public. She is particularly interested in Artificial Intelligence's (AI) application to healthcare delivery. As a military nurse reservist, and at Walter Reed, she enjoys having the clinical 'front seat' to the DoD's delivery of care for the active duty and seeing the full spectrum of medical thought process and culture.

Her goal at GW is to hone her analytical skills and leadership capabilities to improve the VA and DoD's healthcare delivery model to be a beacon for the rest of the US. Frances first love is foreign languages, and she has a BA in International Affairs from Florida State University. (Many years ago, she worked for a Russian staffing agency.) She started a 2nd career in healthcare and holds a BS in Nursing, and a Master of Science in Nursing Education, both from the University of South Florida. She is credentialed as a Nurse Executive by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC).

In her spare time, she can be found traveling and spending time with her 3 children and husband. She is also an avid native gardener.

Lia Mogus, MD, MPH



Lia Solomon Mogus is a physician and quality manager in healthcare in Ethiopia, driven by a passion for public health that crystallized early in her career. After witnessing the devastating consequences of limited access to care, Lia became determined to strengthen health systems through evidence-based reforms. Following her years as a clinician, Lia pursued a master's in public health, where her thesis explored multilayered factors influencing adverse birth outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the past five years, Lia has demonstrated remarkable leadership in quality improvement.

Through roles implementing strategic initiatives in clinical, community, private, and public healthcare settings, she has streamlined processes and enhanced patient-centered care - even in resource-constrained environments. Lia's dedication to quality is underscored by her prestigious International Society for Quality in Health Care Fellowship and her work on a project centered on achieving excellence in primary care delivery.

Lia aims to advance further her abilities to tackle complex stakeholder relationships and inform policymaking through doctoral studies. She is eager about GW's DrPH program, which uniquely positions her to optimize applied research, advocacy, and science-driven reforms that reduce preventable suffering in communities around the world.

Judith Mueller



Judith Mueller serves as the Executive Director for The Mueller Health Foundation, a family-led private foundation focused on the eradication of infectious diseases, specifically tuberculosis (TB). In this role, she oversees grantee evaluations, ensures compliance with grant and IRS requirements, and develops and analyzes monitoring and evaluation metrics. Judith pioneered the TBConnect Blockchain, a global platform that leverages AI and blockchain technology to enhance data sharing and analysis among scientists, non-profits, and health

institutions focused on tuberculosis.

Her current work and research interest are centered on creating community care models for patients with drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB), emphasizing patient-centered approaches such as mental health support, family counseling, and nutritional and transportation assistance.

Furthermore, she is dedicated to translating research findings into evidence-based policies that promote TB prevention, diagnosis, and treatment worldwide. She has successfully served on the TB task force in drafting and revising the UN High-Level Resolution for TB and has participated in the UN multi-stakeholder hearings as well as in the UN General Assembly. Judith also co-leads the Education Working Group for the Coalition for a TB Free New York, where she heads a team of experts in developing TB awareness materials for New York residents and new arrivals. Before joining The Mueller Health Foundation, Judith worked as a manager at KPMG in the Development and Exempt Organization (DEO) group, where she provided consulting services in process optimization, grant assessments, data analytics, and enterprise risk management. She also co-created KPMG's Value for Money tool.

Previously, Judith was the Director of M&E and Impact at Projects for All, a non-profit focused on providing educational resources and internet access to remote villages around the globe through solar-powered computer hubs. She holds a Dual Master's degree in International Affairs and Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences from Columbia University in the City of New York. In 2009, she graduated from the George Washington University summa cum laude on the Dean's List with Special Honors, with a BA in International Affairs and German Language and Literature. She also spent a year abroad at Oxford University studying Economics and recently completed the Executive Education Program with a focus on Blockchain and AI Technologies at MIT.

Caitlin Murphy, MSPH



Caitlin Murphy, MSPH, is a passionate public health leader with over twelve years of experience working with communities experiencing vulnerabilities and over eight years of experience working in governmental public health at the local level.

Currently, she is the Associate Director of the Health and Wellness Division at the Prince George's County Health Department (PGCHD). In this role, Ms. Murphy leads a division of over one hundred staff and oversees a budget of \$12 million, encompassing programmatic areas of community health, care coordination, health insurance navigation, senior assessment and care, chronic disease prevention and management, and medical assistance transportation.

Ms. Murphy also serves as Principal Investigator for several large Federal grants, with funders including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health. In a recent grant, she spearheaded the development of a successful Community Health Worker (CHW) talent program, recruiting and training 75 new CHWs and partnering to integrate them into health and social service systems. She is a champion for policy change, previously leading legislative efforts for PGCHD and advocating for Medicaid and private insurance coverage of CHW services. Ms. Murphy is pursuing a DrPH at the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health with the goal of creating sustainable solutions for public health challenges in Prince George's County.

Prior to her current role, Ms. Murphy served as Chief of Public Health Innovation and Policy and Special Assistant to the Health Officer at PGCHD, and Infectious Disease Epidemiologist at the Anne Arundel County Health Department. She holds a Master of Science in Public Health from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Maryland, College Park.

John Murtha



John Murtha is responsible for setting the strategic direction of InterSystems's Health Plan business. He collaborates with clients to envision how clinical data can enhance care access and improve health outcomes.

With over 20 years of experience in the health plan industry, John has led several large-scale transformation initiatives, leveraging technology and reengineering processes. Before joining InterSystems, John guided IBM's Health Plan Services group through five years of exponential growth.

He also served as Chief Operating Officer of VNS CHOICE Health Plans, a \$1.7 billion entity offering multiple Medicare and Medicaid lines of business, including the Select Health and HIV Special Needs Plan, which achieved the highest HIV suppression rate in the country. Prior to that, John was Senior Vice President at Apollo Health Street's Health

John holds an MBA in Finance and a Master's in Public Health in Effectiveness and Outcomes Research from Columbia University. He began his career at Deloitte Consulting's Technology Integration Group, where he successfully led several high-risk engagements, including claims systems implementations and turnarounds. Additionally, John was the inaugural leader of Deloitte's firm-wide initiative to establish the Deloitte Center for Health Solutions in collaboration with Tommy G. Thompson, former U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Keihaulani Newkirk, MSPH, BSN RN



I am a Gold Star spouse and mother of one. I received my Masters of Science in Public Health (MSPH) from Meharry Medical College in Nashville, TN and my BSN from Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, TN. Currently, I work for the Department of Veterans Affairs as Nurse Manager for the Home-Based Primary Care Team. I've been with the VA now for 15 years after leaving Fort Campbell, KY.

My background has been in Critical Care, Emergency Rm/Trauma including Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (S.A.N.E.), and Short Procedure Unit before working in Primary Care/Home-Based Care as Management. I have decided it's time to pour into me so I am very excited to be working towards my DrPH from GWU.

Rebecca Perlmutter, MPH, CIC



Rebecca “Becky” Perlmutter has been interested in public health ever since seeing a video about the discovery of Sin Nombre virus in a 7th grade science class. Becky got her BA in biology from Bryn Mawr College, and her MPH with a concentration in infectious disease from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Becky currently works for the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) in the Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Outbreak Response Bureau.

Her first job out of her MPH was in the rabies lab at the Maryland Department of Health, but Becky was happy to move to influenza epidemiology after finding one too many maggots in her hair after work. Becky established a surveillance program for *Clostridioides difficile* in certain counties in Maryland as part of the CDC’s Emerging

Infections Program, and has worked on projects related to antibiotic stewardship, HAI prevention, Ebola preparedness, and general infection control.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Becky’s work focused significantly on the prevention and control of COVID-19 in healthcare settings, including acute, long term, and outpatient as well as other community congregate living settings. In 2017, Becky became board certified in infection control (CIC), and took on the role of the healthcare associated infections program coordinator for MDH, a position that she is still in today. Her research interests include emerging infectious diseases, the impact of health inequities on healthcare associated infections, and provider knowledge, attitudes, and practice around antimicrobial stewardship.

After college, Becky served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in El Salvador. When she is not at work, Becky enjoys reading, hiking, trying new foods, and traveling. She has been practicing Ashtanga yoga since 2009, and also fosters kittens for the local shelter.

Anna Perry, MPH (she/her)



In her most recent role, Anna lead the design and implementation of diverse evaluation studies, using both quantitative and qualitative methods at Wake Forest University SOM Clinical and Translational Science Institute. Her work empowered programs to understand their processes, outcomes, and impacts, resulting in over 50 detailed evaluation reports and actionable recommendations for strategic improvement.

Concurrently, as a Contract Evaluator, Anna spearheaded the analysis of COVID-19 Emergency Response funds for the North Carolina Division of Mental Health, with a focus on enhancing access to MAT services for individuals transitioning from incarceration. Anna's dedication extends globally as well. She served as a Qualitative Research Coordinator at the National Institute for Medical Research, managing on-site qualitative interviews in Tanzania.

Anna holds a Master of Public Health with a concentration in Health Behavior from UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, complemented by a Bachelor of Science iPublic Health with a concentration in Health Policy & Management.

Passionate about translating research into actionable strategies that benefit communities, Anna looks forward to expanding her expertise in implementation evaluation, survey design, and mixed methods analysis through the GWU DrPH program. She is eager to learn from the diverse perspectives and experiences represented in her cohort.

Larragem Raines



Larragem Raines is a seasoned health economist with over nine years of experience. She currently serves as the Director of Research at the Center for Innovation & Value Research, where her expertise in Health Economics and Outcomes Research (HEOR) drives transformative impact.

With a strong consulting background, Larragem is the founder of EviGen Advisors, an evidence generation consulting group. She has also played pivotal roles, including leading HEOR and Value Strategy teams at Insightec, a pioneering neuroscience startup, and making substantial contributions to Parexel in their Real-world Evidence and Data Analytics team.

Before her time at Parexel, Larragem conducted clinical research at Cincinnati's Children's Hospital, focusing on autoimmune genomics and etiology. She currently serves on Xavier University's Chair Advisory Council (CAC) and is a distinguished alumna of Xavier University, holding both a Bachelor's degree in Economics and Political Science and a Master's of Science in Health Economics and Clinical Outcomes Research (MS-HECOR).

Zinash Robi, MPH



Zinash Robi is a public health practitioner with over 15 years of experience across the non-profit, private, and governmental sectors. Her career, which spans both the USA and East Africa, has been defined by a deep commitment to advancing health outcomes in diverse populations. Currently, Zinash oversees the Maternal and Child Health program at the Alexandria Health Department, where she manages a critical home visiting-based case management service aimed at improving health outcomes for high-risk pregnant women and children.

In addition, she oversees the long-term care service screening program and leads the childhood lead poisoning case management efforts. Zinash is also actively involved in communicable disease outbreak prevention and response, having led the case investigations, contact tracing, and containment efforts during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Before joining the Alexandria Health Department, Zinash gained extensive experience in maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS care and treatment, communicable disease control, and health system strengthening. She has successfully led policy development initiatives, capacity-building efforts, and the establishment of public-private partnerships to drive sustainable healthcare solutions that address both immediate health crises and long-term system needs. Her expertise includes designing health interventions, managing comprehensive healthcare programs, fostering partnerships and overseeing community-based treatment initiatives.

Zinash holds a Master of Public Health from the University of South Africa and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Addis Ababa University. She is also an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant. Passionate about global health, Zinash hopes to further develop her leadership skills and deepen her public health expertise through the Doctor of Public Health program.

Tasnim Salam, MBE, MPH



Tasnim Salam received her dual master's degrees in bioethics and public health from the University of Pennsylvania (Penn). She held various research positions at Penn and the Perelman School of Medicine within areas of food policy, social determinants of health, health equity, health economics, and cancer research.

She currently works as an epidemiologist at the New Jersey Department of Health, where she utilizes her 15 years of work experience to support infectious disease management in educational settings. Outside of work, Tasnim enjoys baking, traveling, and spending time with her family. She is thrilled to join the GW DrPH program and embark on this new journey with her colleagues.

Elaine Salamanca



My name is Elaine Salamanca and I am proud to be a second-generation immigrant to Colombian and Salvadoran parents. I grew up in a small town in North Carolina where I was often the only Latina sitting in my classroom. Very often, I felt misunderstood in my experience navigating different systems with parents who were non-English speakers; especially, while I learned how to find resources and even apply for college. As I grew older, I understood the importance of access to resources in the educational and healthcare system for non-English speaking children and families.

My education began at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC where I majored in Foreign Languages and Literature (Hispanic Studies) and saw a deep intersection between political history and community health. I went on to receive my Masters in Biomedical Science from Wake Forest University and that brought me to a moment that changed who I wanted to become. I worked as a graduate student on a research project on Latinx Youth Farmworker health. Here, I learned about the realities of policies used to enable large corporations to use children as farmworkers who were almost always Latinx. During this project, I understood that I wanted to capitalize on my passion for justice and equity which led me to my work at NYU Langone Health where I have remained the past five years.

I have had the honor to work alongside epidemiologists, developmental psychologists, gynecologists, surgeons, and social justice advocates to bring a voice to children, women, and families. My hope is to continue to grow and scale our impact in communities through a Doctorate in Public Health at George Washington University.

Jyoti Schlesinger



Jyoti M. Schlesinger has worked for 24 years in public health, private consulting, and philanthropy. Her areas of knowledge include population health and demographics, project management, and policy design and implementation. She has extensive experience working in the public and private sectors with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), Ernst and Young (EY), and the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy.

She also has deep technical expertise in social services, reproductive health, maternal and child health, evaluations, and strategic planning. Jyoti started her career in global health, spending 13 years working on the HIV/AIDS epidemic. She spent many years in the field working in post-conflict and active conflict countries.

During her tenure at Ernst and Young, she led several international and domestic engagements, including for USAID, the State Department, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) engagement on *Rethinking the American Safety Net*. The HHS initiative aimed at more efficient integration of social service programs to improve the lives of low-income Americans. Most recently, Jyoti was the Vice President for Mission and Programs at the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, where she led the largest division as they realigned their portfolio and assessed their current offerings to better support the current needs of the population today. During her time with the Foundation, they expanded their offering to include digital literacy, health literacy, workforce planning, and evidence-based early childhood education programs.

Jyoti holds a Bachelor's degree in Science from the University of Mary Washington in Political Science and a Master of Science (Msc) in Public Health from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Audrey Seitz, M.P.H., C.P.H.



Audrey Seitz, M.P.H., C.P.H., is an Assistant Teaching Professor at the University of Wisconsin—La Crosse. She teaches a variety of courses to undergraduate and graduate students, including U.S. Healthcare, Youth Health, and Contemporary Public Health Issues. Her personal passions include fostering an inclusive classroom environment where students, as both community members and future professionals, feel valued and respected in their exploration of public health.

At UW-La Crosse, Audrey represents the Public Health and Community Health Education Department in the Health Sciences Interprofessional Research Collaborative (HSIRC), an interdisciplinary research group of health sciences faculty. At the departmental level, Audrey co-led a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Equity (JEDI) curriculum audit. She and her co-investigator researched when and how students were exposed to topics and examples of JEDI. Audrey is currently in the process of implementing a new curriculum with colleagues that further explores JEDI concepts and better prepares students for the field of public health in an ever-evolving world.

Before her teaching career, Audrey was a community health educator at Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin. Her role involved delivering health education on a range of topics, from medical homes to health insurance enrollment, demonstrating her practical experience and commitment to public health.

Audrey's professional journey is marked by extensive research experience, including work with the Iowa Department of Public Health and Safe Routes to School. Her research on Emergency Department Utilization and measuring equity in access to outdoor recreation space via GIS continues to shape her and her goals. Audrey holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Luther College and a Master of Public Health from Loyola University Chicago.

Outside of work and school, Audrey loves to camp, hike, and be outside with family and friends.

Sabrina Smith, MPH, MPA



Sabrina Smith, MPH, MPA, is an experienced systems project director with a nursing background and master's degrees in public health and public administration. Her career focuses on addressing health disparities in Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through program leadership and collaboration with local agencies, government entities, medical professionals, and community members. She has been the Senior Public Health Manager for the Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities at the University of Rochester since 2018.

She has leadership roles in collaborating, assessing, engaging, developing, and implementing multilevel programs supporting health equity. As the Rochester

Regional Support Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs project director, Sabrina is experienced in assessing and supporting Local Health Department CYSHCN programs, overseeing project staff with all activities to fulfill the project aims, and collaborating with all statewide meetings and reporting.

She serves as faculty for the Public Health Discipline for the URM LEND Fellowship Program and is engaged in maternal and child health scholarships with trainees. With her diverse experience, strong leadership skills, and passion for addressing health disparities, Sabrina is well-positioned to make significant contributions to the field of public health through doctoral-level research and practice.

Divya Sridhar



Divya Sridhar is originally from Chantilly, Virginia and now lives in San Francisco. She received her undergraduate degree in Neural Science from New York University and a Masters in Applied Economics from Johns Hopkins University. Divya then went on to pursue her MPH from GWU.

She is a senior manager at Deloitte, a management consulting firm, where she works on public health-related projects with State and local government clients. Divya is excited to be back at GWU, pursue her DrPH, and work collaboratively with her doctoral classmates!

Nicole Stovall, B.S, MPH, CHES



Hello my name is Nicole Stovall and I am a Nutrition Coordinator at the YMCA of the East Bay Early Impact Program in the San Francisco Bay Area. As the Nutrition Coordinator, I am responsible for ensuring the implementation of nutrition grant deliverables, assisting with program staying compliant with the California Adult and Child Food Program (CACFP), and support the needs of the families in the program. In this role I work with various organizations to create partnerships to provide resources for those in need.

I have a bachelor's degree in Nutrition and Food Sciences from California State University, Fresno (CSUF). My degree is centered around community nutrition and health promotion. While at CSUF I was the founding leader of Bulldogs in the Grocery Store which provide grocery store tours. In 2020 I received my Master's in Public

Health, with an emphasis in health promotion, from National University.

Between my education and professional experiences, I want to become an expert and create positive changes through policy and implementation. My goal is to become a leader to improve the well-being of minority communities. I plan to take what I learn and experience in this program and become a leader of creating change.

Ryan Taylor



I was born and raised in the suburbs of Atlanta, GA to an accountant and a nurse – both of whom were the first in their families to attend college. The second of three boys, I was constantly being whisked off to baseball, basketball, and football games year-round. Adding chorus in elementary school, trumpet in middle school, and theater in high-school, I sought out new niches and forged new friends throughout my adolescence.

It wasn't until I transferred to Woodward Academy that discovered my passions. Being exposed to an elective – Human Anatomy – really opened my eyes to my field of interest. In addition to connecting with rock-climbing, white-water rafting, and sailing friends I left high school with a few more friends and interests. That passion led me to Georgia State University to study Biology for my undergraduate and subsequently Northwestern University for my Master in Global Health.

During these pivotal years I gained experience coding and designing software systems for a few small companies. Sharpening my software skills was rewarding, but after being exposed to tangible public health issues in Uganda during my practicum with Northwestern, I knew it was time to shift gears. When the COVID pandemic hit, there was a call for automation in the public health space to deal with the staggering caseloads – one I was ready to answer. I've spent the last three and a half years working alongside some of the best public health minds in the state of California helping implement a state-wide COVID-19 contact tracing system. It was this exposure to the public health infrastructure that opened my eyes.

Although successful in standing up a contact tracing system – and eventually expanding it beyond COVID – the pandemic highlighted the lagging investment in our critical public health data systems. A large-scale overhaul and modernization of public health systems is required. This need ultimately caused me to seek out a way to strengthen my public health knowledge and grow my leadership skills at George Washington University. By highlighting some of the pitfalls of system architecture, my dissertation will hopefully focus on modernizing our public health infrastructure and eventually establishing an integrated public health data repository.

Yin Min Thaung



Dr. Yin Min Thaung is a public health professional with extensive experience in managing and implementing HIV, TB, Malaria, and Hepatitis C programs in Myanmar. In her recent role as Chief of Party/Project Director at Community Partners International (CPI) Myanmar, she managed a USAID grant aimed at accelerating HIV epidemic control and TB elimination by providing free and comprehensive prevention, testing, and treatment services to key and affected populations.

She led a team that facilitated cooperation among a wide range of stakeholders across Myanmar, driving the delivery of innovative, scalable, and sustainable approaches to overcome the multiple and overlapping barriers faced by TB- and HIV-affected populations.

The HIV and HCV projects she managed were considered groundbreaking in Myanmar, with the HCV project successfully demonstrating the feasibility of decentralizing treatment to general physicians and contributing to a 50% reduction in medication costs. The HIV/TB project led to the successful implementation of numerous innovative activities, such as the PrEP program, Buprenorphine demonstration, HIV self-test distribution through social networks and pharmacies, and the introduction of advanced TB diagnostic tools in Myanmar. Through her leadership, these projects overcame significant challenges, achieving breakthrough results in the decentralization and task-shifting of treatment services, benefiting thousands of patients in Myanmar by providing continuous and affordable life-saving treatments despite ongoing armed conflict and political instability.

Before joining CPI, Dr. Yin Min Thaung worked as a Public Health Analyst at the National Healthcare Group (NHG), part of the Central Regional Health System in Singapore. At NHG, she supported the development and maintenance of the NHG Chronic Disease Registries and led clinical analyses of the chronic disease burden to improve planning and resource allocation. Prior to her role at NHG, she spent three years as the National Health Coordinator for the Asian Harm Reduction Network (AHRN) in Myanmar, where she provided technical support and overall management for AHRN's medical interventions. Dr. Yin Min Thaung began her career by working at Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) as a Medical Doctor and as a Health Education & Counselling Coordinator for STI/HIV prevention, treatment, and care programs in Myanmar.

Dr. Yin Min Thaung holds a Master of Public Health degree from the National University of Singapore and Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery degrees from the University of Medicine 2, Yangon, Myanmar.

Desiree Tupas



Desiree Tupas's current interests as a DrPH student are in global health, specifically contributing to research that measure capacities and existing response systems to prepare for emerging issues in public health by analyzing international comparisons of global health indicators. Tupas is a current Public Health Analyst for the Defense Health Agency and has a varied background in infectious disease, biostatistics, health economics and epidemiology.

Prior to GWU, Tupas worked as a health researcher for California State, with the Department of Public Health and the Department of Justice, as a California Epidemiologic Investigation Service Fellow and Health Policy Research Associate. Tupas has also worked with the Hawaii State Department of Health's Foodborne Disease Surveillance and Response Program to detect foodborne clusters and respond to outbreaks, educated Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander communities, and updated procedures and protocols for subsequent epidemiologists.

Michael Varco, MS, BS



Michael Varco is a scientist at the United States Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, DC, where he serves on an interdisciplinary risk management team in the Agency's Antimicrobials Division. In this capacity, he manages the review of antimicrobial pesticides subject to federal registration to ensure product safety and efficacy. He has a particular focus on chemistries involving sodium and calcium hypochlorite, iodine, bromine, and water purification.

In addition, he serves on multiple national workgroups and has extensive experience navigating cross-cultural collaborations among federal, state, and local agencies.

More recently, Michael was appointed to serve as acting team leader in the Agency's Reevaluation Branch which is responsible for the review of existing pesticides to ensure they do not cause unreasonable harm to human health and the environment. Michael was recognized by the Agency for his contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic and was a recipient of EPA's 2022 *Large-Scale Exceptional Service Award: COVID-19 Response*.

Prior to joining EPA, Michael served as a science teacher at a college-preparatory school in New Jersey, as well as adjunct faculty at Monmouth University. In addition to teaching, he founded a Bioethics Society which encouraged and fostered a deeper understanding among the students of the interdisciplinary nature of science-based decisions.

As a first-generation college graduate, Michael is eager to join the Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) program at the George Washington University. Michael holds a Master of Science degree from Georgetown University in Biomedical Science Policy & Advocacy, as well as a Bachelor of Science from Rutgers University. He has a particular interest in environmental health science with a focus on social determinants of disease.

Mercedes Vera, M.S.H.S



Mercedes Vera currently serves as an Environmental Health and Safety Specialist at Naval Surface Warfare Center Carderock and holds a Masters of Science in Clinical Operations and Healthcare Management from the George Washington University. With over 10 years of Public Health experience, her background includes a combination of safety and occupational health, emergency response operations, and patient care in both clinical and industrial environments.

While serving overseas as a Hospital Corpsman and EMT in the United States Navy, Mercedes engaged directly in collaborative medical emergency response operations that combined foreign local policy and procedures with U.S. policy. During this time she received 2 Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals for her education and training of occupational health related topics to DoD employees that resulted in improved outcomes of PPE compliance and a reduction of reported occupational related injuries.

From 2021-2023 Mercedes joined the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Department of Public Health staff and continued to serve as a Federal civilian in Hearing Conservation, health systems training and Industrial Hygiene Services. This unique experience allowed her to gain a comprehensive understanding of the gaps between occupational healthcare treatment, safety practices, and prevention methods.

Currently her work with Naval Surface Warfare Center Carderock encompasses program analysis, safety policy implementation, policy writing, and employee training and education. In addition to medical surveillance of employees, Mercedes is passionate about methods of reducing occupational stressors for first responders including Firefighters, EMTs, Paramedics and other Health Professionals.

In her spare time Mercedes enjoys volunteering/outreach with the Virginia Medical Reserve Corps and spending time with her husband and two dogs.

Alex Yaw Werekuu, MPH, RN, CIC

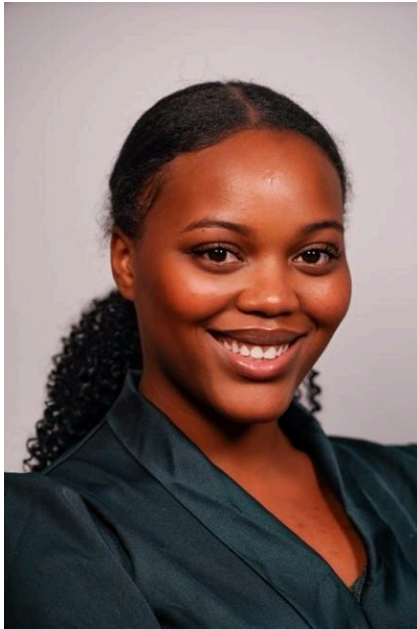


Alex is a dedicated public health professional with a strong passion for infection prevention practice and research. He is an Infection Preventionist at Lawrence General Hospital and a Research Coordinator at Boston Medical Center. He holds an MPH from Boston University, where he specialized in Epidemiology and Biostatistics with a focus on Infectious Diseases. He also holds a BSc in Health Administration and Education, and an Associate Degree in Nursing.

Prior to pursuing his MPH, Alex primarily worked as a nurse in Ghana during which he designed assessment tools to facilitate clinical emergency care as well as infection control during the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak. Additionally, Alex volunteered as a consultant to the Israeli Based NGO Project Ten, where he worked with his Israeli colleagues to develop and deliver culturally sensitive health education to Ghanaian communities. Inspired by the impact he witnessed working with Project Ten, Alex co-founded and co-directs a Ghanaian based NGO, We Rise by Lifting Others, which aims to send hope and smiles to the less privileged through public health programs.

He is thrilled about the opportunity to pursue DrPH at the Milken Institute School of Public Health, George Washington University. He hopes the program will aid his continual growth as a leader who leverages public health leadership skills to garner stakeholder support in translating research into practice, with the goal of achieving affordable and quality health for all.

Rajanique (Rae) White, MPH



Rajanique White, MPH, is an incoming DrPH student. With a robust background in advancing health promotion and disease prevention through public presentations and training workshops, she currently holds the role of General Operations Manager Consultant at the Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate. In this capacity, she is dedicated to the establishment and empowerment of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility department within S&T, ensuring that the initiatives put forth by the Directorate and the broader public are inclusive and equitable.

In her prior positions, she provided consultation services to the Veteran Health Administration, offering key expertise as a Manpower Subject Matter Expert, supporting position and organizational changes and SOM strategy for all program offices within the VHACO. Furthermore, she served as a Senior Program Manager at the International Association of

Providers of AIDS Care, collaborating with healthcare professionals on research ventures addressing health disparities affecting minority communities. During her tenure at IAPAC, she orchestrated a comprehensive four-module webinar series advocating for HIV PrEP Equity among Black and Latino communities in the United States and embarked on a listening cities tour, engaging with communities to address prominent health disparities in major urban centers.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, she assumed the role of an epidemiologist at the DC Department of Health, Center for Policy Planning and Evaluation, overseeing the monitoring of COVID-19 and Monkeypox cases within congregate settings. Her responsibilities included the collection and analysis of data on COVID-19 cases among residents of shelters, correctional facilities, youth rehabilitation systems, and university students.

Her professional journey also encompasses international health initiatives, including the establishment of water treatment centers in the village of Gbunja in Tamale, Ghana. Moreover, she dedicated her efforts in Managua, Nicaragua, toward providing health education to teenage students and delivering free gynecological and pediatric care to local residents. As a native of DC, she is eager to undertake research endeavors aimed at identifying solutions to enhance health outcomes for residents living East of the River, and to emerge as a prominent leader in the field of public health.

Samantha Zahm, M.P.H



Samantha Zahm is the Deputy Director at the City of York Bureau of Health, a local health department in York, Pennsylvania. She is a dedicated public health professional with over a decade of experience in overdose prevention, data analysis, and grant and budget management.

In her current role, Samantha coordinates the administrative operations related to budgeting and procurement, ensuring grant compliance. She has successfully secured and administered numerous grants to fund vital public health programs. These grants have enabled the local health department to expand services, develop innovative health interventions, and ensure that resources are allocated efficiently to meet the needs of our community. Her meticulous management of these funds has significantly contributed to the sustainability and growth of our health initiatives, ultimately improving health outcomes for the City of York. In 2021, Samantha was integral in developing and implementing the Overdose Fatality Review in York County.

Aside from her professional pursuits, Samantha's deep commitment to volunteering and community service is truly inspiring. She serves on several Boards of Directors, including vice-chairperson of the York Opioid Collaborative, president of the YWCA York Junior Board of Directors, and H.E.R. House (Healing Empowerment and Restoration) Board of Directors. Her active membership in professional organizations, including the American Public Health Association (APHA) and the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), further demonstrates her dedication to her field.

Outside of her professional commitments, Samantha enjoys a variety of personal interests. She is an avid traveler, reader, and crocheter, and she also enjoys solving puzzles and spending quality time with her family and friends.

Samantha holds a Bachelor of Science in Sports Medicine with a minor in Biology from the University of Pittsburgh and a Master of Public Health from The George Washington University.