The Doctoral Program in Gerontology (DPG) is in its 20th year of “Preparing the Next Generation of Gerontology Scholars.” We are very proud of our 46 graduates working across the country in government, academic, industry and non-profit settings on behalf of older adults and their families. We are thankful for our affiliate faculty who make this joint program a successful model of inter-campus collaboration.

**Faculty COVID-19 Research**

During these unprecedented times, many of our faculty are contributing research to address various aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic. These important COVID-related projects, local and international, are featured below.

**Co-Pls:** Denise Orwig PhD and Nancy Latham, PhD (Brigham and Women’s Hospital)

**Title:** Feasibility of Remote Home Support Coaches to Decrease the Physical and Psychological Impact of Social Distancing on Older Adults

**Funding agency:** NIA OAIC COVID Supplement (Boston Pepper Center)

Dr. Orwig is Co-PI with Dr. Nancy Latham on a one-year COVID grant titled “Feasibility of Remote Home Support Coaches to Decrease the Physical and Psychological Impact of Social Distancing on Older Adults.” It is a supplement to the Brigham and Women's Hospital Pepper Center. This is a unique study with partnerships with Brightview Senior Living in Baltimore area and Best Buy.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, most older people cannot take part in their regular physical and social activities which can result in physical deconditioning with muscle weakness and an increased incidence of loneliness (i.e. the feeling of being isolated), social isolation (i.e. the lack of social connection and support) and depression. Many organizations have implemented telephone calls by volunteers or paid employees to reduce loneliness and social isolation through friendly companionship conversations. However, there is evidence that tele-interventions by lay people that use brief behavioral activation coaching are significantly more effective in changing important health outcomes than conversational calls. Therefore, we will conduct a feasibility study that will test a 4-month telephone-based behavioral activation intervention in 50 older adults 75 and older (25 from Boston and 25 from Baltimore) to address key problems arising as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic: physical inactivity, social isolation and inadequate nutrition. If successful, this model could be more widely expanded to organizations and health systems to support people while social isolating due to COVID-19 as well as used long-term to help the approximately 2 million older people who were homebound before the extra restrictions due to COVID-19.

**Co-Pls:** John Schumacher, PhD, Marina Adler, Ph.D., Ligia Peralta, M.D.

**Title:** A Primary Care Innovation Model of COVID-19 Access to Care & Testing (PrIMA) and Examining COVID-19 Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviors Among Patients Receiving Telehealth in Underserved Communities in Maryland

**Funding Agencies:** COVID-19 Virus Emergency Relief Grant by Maryland Community Health Resources Commission; UMBC Breaking Ground Grant 2020.

The PrIMA is a project of Casa Ruben Inc. to expand access to care to communities of color in Baltimore, Baltimore County, and Prince Georges County using telemedicine and referrals to COVID 19 screening, testing, identification and contact tracing. The main goal is to create a bidirectional referral pattern to increase access to COVID-19 testing and linkage to telemedicine visits. It includes 3 activities to 1) Provide access to telemedicine where a licensed clinician will order and facilitate COVID-19 testing and engage them in follow-up primary care. 2) Expand access to COVID-19 testing sites through partnerships with health departments and subsequent linkage back to primary care via telemedicine. 3) Improve access to telemedicine by removing technological barriers such as bringing tablets with broadband access to the community. Additionally this study will survey residents in communities of color about their knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and experiences related to telehealth, testing, and COVID-19.
Faculty COVID-19 Research continued...

Co-PIs: Diane Martin, PhD and Tasha Cornish, MSPH (St. Mary's Outreach Center in Baltimore, MD)
Title: Emergency Preparedness: Working Together to Meet the Needs of Older Adults in Baltimore City
Funding Agency: The Johns Hopkins Institute for Clinical and Translational Research

The American Red Cross released a white paper in January 2020 outlining 25 expert-informed recommendations to address outstanding problems in advanced disaster planning for older adults. Two months later, COVID-19 highlighted these problems. Existing public health and emergency preparedness protocols lacked a strategic plan that met the complex health and social needs of older adults living in Baltimore City. As we strive to meet the complex needs of older persons it is important to have a research-informed emergency management plan in place designed for adults aged 65 and older who live in our community. St. Mary's Outreach Center (SMOC), the University of Maryland, Baltimore’s Geriatrics and Gerontology Education and Research (GGEAR) program (Graduate School) and the Peter Lamy Center on Drug Therapy and Aging (School of Pharmacy) will engage diverse partners to create the foundation necessary to develop an emergency protocol designed with the health, safety, and well-being of older adults in mind.

Co-PIs: Kristen Stafford, PhD, Laura Steinhardt, PhD (CDC) and Mrs. Elise Ilori (Nigeria Center for Disease Control)
Title: COVID-19 Household Seroprevalence Survey in Selected States of Nigeria
Funding agency: CDC

Primary data collection will take place through a cross-sectional household survey. Randomly selected households within designated enumeration areas (obtained from the National Population Commission) will be asked to participate in the survey. The head of household will list all the members of the household. Each member of the household, or their caregiver, will be asked questions about their symptom history, testing, and care-seeking for COVID-19 since March 2020. A venous blood sample will be taken for serological testing to measure antibodies to COVID-19. A nasal swab and an oropharyngeal swab will also be collected for molecular testing for SARS-CoV-2 infection. The results will be used to estimate the fraction of asymptomatic, pre-symptomatic, or subclinical infections in the population. Longitudinal follow-up will also be performed in order to assess how intra-household virus transmission occurs. All households that have at least one member who tests positive and at least one who tests negative during the household survey will be eligible for longitudinal follow-up at seven-day intervals for up to 28 days or until all negative members have a positive test, whichever comes sooner.

Co-PIs: Jay Magaziner, PhD, MS.Hyg, Irina Timofte, MD and Bing Ma, PhD (Supplement PIs)
Title: Prognostic biomarkers of disease severity for patients infected with coronavirus COVID 19
Funding agency: NIA P30 AG028747-15S, UM-OAIC COVID Supplement

The objective of this study is to define the association between the proinflammatory microbiome and the risk of developing Acute respiratory distress syndrome in elderly patients with coronavirus infection admitted at University of Maryland School of Medicine. Our hypothesis is that pro-inflammatory microbiota is associated with airway epithelial destruction leading to severe coronavirus infection. The proposed work has the potential to identify pathways involved in the development of more severe complications of viral infection which can guide new treatments. This supplemental grant expands the current scope of University of Maryland Claude D. Pepper Center (UMOAIC) research to identify new and critical microbiota-based targets for diagnostic and therapeutic applications, in order to improve outcomes and decrease disabilities in elderly patients diagnosed with Coronavirus infection. Our long-term goal is to develop novel microbiota-based targets for diagnostic applications and new treatments to reduce time on the ventilator, ICU and hospital stay with additional goals of rapid discharge home and return to a meaningful quality of life.
Faculty Awards

UMB Researcher of the Year

Congratulations to Dr. Jay Magaziner, Professor and Chair, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, School of Medicine, for being selected as Researcher of the Year at UMB for his 35+ years of research in the epidemiology of aging. In particular, Dr. Magaziner’s research on hip fracture recovery has earned him two consecutive Method To Extend Research in Time (MERIT) awards from the National Institute on Aging, which is an award only given to the highest quality research grants (highest 5% of funded grants). He has had continuous NIA funding since 1983. Dr. Magaziner directs the T32 training program in the epidemiology of aging, the University of Maryland Claude D. Pepper Independence Center as well as the Center for Research on Aging. Dr. Magaziner has a national and international reputation for his work and is respected by scientists and clinicians all over the world.

Freeman A. Hrabowski III, PhD, President of UMBC, was awarded the 2020 Administrative Leadership Honor by the Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) of the Gerontological Society of America.

This prestigious award honors administrators on AGHE member campuses who have made exceptional efforts in support of gerontology and/or geriatrics education. Under Dr. Hrabowski’s leadership at UMBC, work in gerontology has grown across the continuum to span undergraduate to doctoral level opportunities over the past 20 years. Consistent with Dr. Hrabowski’s visionary leadership the DPG is a national leader in graduating diverse students with over 20% of our DPG graduates from underrepresented groups. Building upon the early success of the doctoral program, Dr. Hrabowski also teamed with industry leader John Erickson to found the Erickson School of Aging Studies. Since then, the MA and BA programs have granted over 400 degrees with additional offerings in dementia leadership, senior housing and care and aging studies recently added. Dr. Hrabowski remains a champion for older adults, their families and those of us who lead in gerontological and geriatric education.

Dr. Nancy Kusmaul, an Associate Professor in the Social Work Program at UMBC, was a 2019-2020 Health and Aging Policy Fellow. The Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program aims to “develop a cadre of leaders focused on changing policy to improve the lives of older Americans.” Fellows engage in policy work part time or full time for a year. As a part time, or “non-residential” fellow, over the past year Dr. Kusmaul worked with Senator Ron Wyden and with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services on end of life and nursing home policy. Through this experience she has learned more how policies are developed and the levers one can use to influence policy. She plans to infuse what she has learned into the courses she teaches at UMBC and to help improve conditions for residents and workers in long-term care facilities.
Faculty News continued…

A selection of grant funding, awards, and publications are reported for our faculty affiliates.

Grant Funding:

Co-PIs: Drs. Taka Yamashita and Rita Karam
Title: Literacy, Numeracy, and Problem-Solving Skills in Technology-Rich Environment in the STEM-Related Sub-baccalaureate Programs in the United States
Funding Source: The U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences
Dates: 7/1/2020– 6/30/2020

Co-PIs: Drs. Ann Gruber-Baldini and Lisa Shulman
Title: Administrative Supplement to R01 AG059651 “PROMIS® Profile Measures in Older Adults – Identifying Cognitive Thresholds for Reliable and Valid Responses” to add more sensitive measures of cognition to help us understand patient self-response.
Funding Source: NIH/NIA R01AG059651-03S1;
Dates: 8/1/20-5/31/21

Awards and Kudos:

Jack Guralnik has received The Daniel Perry Founder’s Award from the Alliance for Aging Research.
Nancy Kusmaul was selected as a Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA).
Norbert Myslinski received the USM Board of Regents Faculty Award for Excellence in Public Service. It is the highest award given by the Board.
Brandy Wallace was selected as a Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA).

Promotions:

Dr. Nancy Kusmaul was promoted to Associate Professor, Social Work Program, University of Maryland, Baltimore County.
Dr. Denise Orwig was promoted to Professor, Epidemiology & Public Health, University of Maryland School of Medicine Baltimore.

Publications (Selected):


Cornman, Reba—Reader Commentary - Baltimore Sun, March 30, 2020 —Outbreak Causes Real Challenges for Older Adults—Food Insecurity
Cornman, Reba & Kim Burton—Reader Commentary—Baltimore Sun, May 28, 2020—Older Americans remain an asset, not a burden, despite pandemic


Hochheimer M, Sacco P, Ware OD. Latent classes of lifetime drug use disorder in national epidemiological survey on alcohol and related conditions - III. Addict Behav. 2020 Jul;106:106379. https://doi.org/10.1016/
Faculty News continued...


Staff News

Food on the 15th, organized by Julie Rosenthal, won the William Donald Schaefer Helping People Award for Howard County. This award is given to one group or organization in each county in the state of Maryland. Food on the 15th involves children in philanthropy by having them collect, sort and deliver free non-perishable food to low-income older adults in Howard County. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=767347130788527&t=0

We also congratulate Julie Rosenthal on announcing her retirement from UMBC. Julie has been a valued member of our program for over five years. Julie will retire on January 31, 2021. We will miss her!

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Giving Back to the Program
Consider being part of the Program's success by supporting the program through our GeroGiving Website, www.medschool.umaryland.edu/GeroGiving
Jocelyn Brown, throughout her schooling, has worked hands-on with older adults in different long-term care communities throughout the state of Maryland. In her professional and academic career, she has focused on recreational activities and how leisure and recreation can improve well-being and quality of life in older adulthood. Through her doctoral studies, her research interests have solidified and are focused on the quality of life and well-being of older people of color. More specifically, the focus is on how leisure and recreation can be used to improve these outcomes.

Sarah Cassatt is a Baltimore native and while pursuing her PhD will continue to work as a clinical dietician at the Baltimore VA Medical Center. Her background is in nutrition and exercise receiving her undergraduate degree from the University of Pittsburgh. It was, however, her graduate thesis work at Case Western Reserve University in malnutrition and falls in older adults that developed her passion for gerontology. Areas of research include enteral nutrition in the older adult population and nutritional management of diabetes in institutionalized older adults.

Rhea Mehta’s interest in aging stems from living with her grandparents from a young age. While pursuing her bachelor’s degree in Psychology, she worked in a neuroscience lab and presented at various conferences where she was exposed to memory and Alzheimer’s Disease research. After a family friend was diagnosed with AD and her great-grandmother was diagnosed with dementia, she pursued and earned a Master of Health Science in Mental Health from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Her current research interests surround modifiable risk factors for cognitive decline later in life, and intervention development for dementia and AD patients residing in communities and in long-term care settings.

Donnette Narine’s practicum experience for her master’s degree sparked an interest in the older adult population, specifically innovative ways for providing quality care in low-resource settings. She hopes to explore how creativity can be optimized for therapeutic benefits toward the biopsychosocial well-being of older adults.
**Student Awards**

Heather Mutchie and Roberto Millar were awarded the Dorothy and Morris Magaziner Endowment Award 2020.

Shalini Sahoo and Roberto Millar were awarded the Gerontology Early Career Development Award 2020.

Jennifer Kirk was awarded the GGEAR award for best aging-related oral presentation at the UMB Graduate Research Conference.

**Student Kudos**

Lori Anderson was accepted as the ISTAART Student Volunteer for the Alzheimer’s Association International Conference® 2020 (AAIC®).

**Student Publications**


Student Conference Papers and Posters


Kirk, JM, Orwig D, Rathbun AM. Sex-Differences in Bone-Active Medication Utilization Before and After Hip Fracture. (Oral presentation at University of Maryland, Baltimore’s Graduate Research Conference, March 2020).

McPherson RE, Resnick BM, Galik E. (2020, March). Differences in Staff-Resident Interactions Between Male and Female Residents in Nursing Homes. Oral presentation at the Graduate Research Conference at the University of Maryland, Baltimore


Sahoo S, Sacco P. (2019). Adverse Childhood Experiences and Alcohol-Impaired Driving in Middle-aged and Older Adults in the U.S. Gerontological Society of America annual conference, Austin, TX. *Gerontological Society of America* (GSA), Nov 14-18, 2019


(Remember When GSA was in-person?)

9
Alumni News

**Grants:**

Sarah Canham (University of Utah) has received funding for "Understanding the Mobility Impacts of Decentralizing Homeless Services in Salt Lake County, Utah" [https://nitc.trec.pdx.edu/research/project/1386](https://nitc.trec.pdx.edu/research/project/1386)

**Awards:**

Sarah Holmes, Aida Kuzucan, Nicole Brandt, Danya Qato, Barbara Zarowitz, Linda Wastila received the award for Top Poster at the Annual Meeting for the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (ASCP). Poster Title: The Association of Antipsychotic Use with Care Transitions among Long-Term Care Residents

**Kudos:**

Sarah Canham and Leanne Clark-Shirley were both selected as Fellows in the Gerontological Society of America.

Kelly Niles-Yokum, wrote and published 52 Poems of Love & Other Misadventures (Poetry) Paperback – April 23, 2020

**Job updates:**

Dan Andersen is now a Program Director at the RELI Group where he provides consulting services to CMS. Dan also became the Program Director for the Gerontology Program at McDaniel College that includes a master’s degree in gerontology and a specialist in aging post-baccalaureate certificate.

Leanne Clark-Shirley joined the American Society on Aging as Vice President of Programs & Thought Leadership.

Sarah Holmes was a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy’s Department of Pharmaceutical Health Services Research. She is currently an Assistant Professor in the University of Maryland School of Nursing.

Sunny Kang was promoted to Associate Professor in the School of Health and Human Services at the University of Baltimore.

Flavius R. W. Lilly was promoted to Vice Provost of Academic Affairs and Vice Dean of the Graduate School at UMB.

Tara McMullen, while continuing her work at CMS and as a Presidential Fellow, is now an adjunct faculty member for the Master of Science in Aging and Health Program at Georgetown University.
Alumni News continued...

Daniel Van Dussen, Professor of Gerontology at Youngstown State University, has been named the first YSU DePizzo Endowed Chair in Gerontology.

Jing Xu is now a Health Insurance Specialist at the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

Kelly Niles-Yokum was promoted to Professor in the Department of Gerontology at the University of La Verne.

Online Presentations:
Kate de Medeiros presented online, Laptop Lecture Series, Episode 3: "Narratives of Aging in the COVID-19 Pandemic". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDe2J3C1iw8&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR2SgK5gR824bmeOR_LbQoiqTSEA T9KzxbD2Fw31JBrqJabC7OPPB8vXH8

Publications (Selected):


Karen Johnson, PhD
Director, Quality and Measurement, American Urological Association
Dissertation Title: Quality and quality improvement in end-of-life care: Perceptions of hospice providers

Hospice is both a philosophy of care and a system for delivering physical, social, psychological, spiritual, cultural, and ethical/legal care to patients near the end of life. Yet despite interest by clinicians, researchers, and others to improve hospice care quality, little research has focused on the perceptions of quality improvement (QI) among hospice staff. Accordingly, this study elicited narratives and meanings of end-of-life (EOL) care quality and its improvement from 19 directors, nurses, chaplains, and social workers from five hospice agencies in Maryland.

Overall, study participants agreed that the quality of EOL care can be improved. They voiced five distinct, yet interrelated, meanings of QI. Most conveyed a positive, yet realistic view, of efforts to improve EOL care, and most reported engaging in improvement activities. Front-line hospice workers exhibited generalized knowledge of their agencies’ QI efforts, but limited familiarity with how those efforts were chosen. Participants identified education as a key mechanism to help them more effectively improve the quality of care they provide. Finally, participants’ perceptions of quality EOL care and QI were linked to their occupational roles, but not to the characteristics of their agencies. These findings suggest policy and practice implications vis-à-vis communication with, and education for, hospice workers; eligibility requirements for hospice care; and efforts to address barriers to QI implementation.

Roberto Millar, PhD
Policy Analyst, The Hilltop Institute at UMBC
Dissertation Title: Neighborhood Social Environment and Lower Extremity Function in Older Adults

This research (1) examined the associations between the neighborhood social environment (i.e., social cohesion, disorder) and lower extremity function; (2) whether physical activity and depressive symptoms were potential pathways linking the social environment to physical function; and (3) if race/ethnicity and economic vulnerability moderated these pathways. Data came from wave seven (2017) of the National Health and Aging Trends Study (NHATS). The sample included 3,934 Medicare beneficiaries (Non-Hispanic White (n =2,906), African American (n =781), and Hispanic n=247).

The analysis for objective one was conducted using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. Analyses for objectives two and three were conducted using PROCESS macro, an OLS path analysis modeling tool for estimating mediation and moderated mediation. Neighborhood cohesion was positively associated with function, while disorder was not associated. Social cohesion was directly and indirectly related to function through physical activity and depression; greater cohesion was associated with higher levels of physical activity and with less depression symptoms, and both were linked to better function. Neighborhood disorder was associated with function indirectly through physical activity; high disorder was associated with lower levels of physical activity. There was no evidence of differences by race/ethnicity, but there were differences by economic vulnerability; among older adults with high vulnerability, disorder was associated with poorer function via depression, while for those with low vulnerability, disorder was associated with poorer function via physical activity. Policies and programs could strive towards optimizing neighborhood social environments in order to promote functional health in older adulthood.