

UConn | UNIVERSITY OF
CONNECTICUT

CENTER FOR MHEALTH AND SOCIAL MEDIA

**P R O G R E S S
R E P O R T**

AUG 2023 - AUG 2024





THE YEAR IN REVIEW

It was a productive year for research and training at CHASM! We had a fantastic conference in May (Advancing Public Health and Science with Artificial Intelligence) that attracted 143 attendees from 4 continents, 6 countries, 27 states and DC, and 74 institutions. Keynotes featured experts both international and domestic experts from Carnegie Mellon University, Emory University, University of Southern California, University of Guelph, Westpoint, Penn State University, and more!

MISSION

The mission of the UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media is to advance the science of digital health by exploring novel applications of digital technologies to health problems, using technology to increase the impact and reach of health interventions, leveraging technology to gain a deeper understanding of health issues, and developing new methodologies with digital health tools to conduct clinical research. The Center's priorities are in the areas of research methodology and training.

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Virtual Weight Loss Program

CHASM launched a virtual weight loss program called 'Health is Social' in May 2024. It is currently available to the public for free for a limited time. See this [link](#) for more details.

Digital Health Research Roundup

We launched a Digital Health Research Roundup which is a weekly e-newsletter that features newly published research in all areas of digital health--from mobile apps to AI. It goes out to 2,316 recipients every week.

Research Productivity

CHASM core faculty received over \$10.5M in grants from NIH, NSF, the UConn CAHNR Strategic Vision Implementation Committee, and InCHIP. Core faculty have also published in a wide variety of journals across numerous fields including International Journal of Drug Policy, Health Psychology, American Journal of Health Promotion, Social Science Computer Review, Health Affairs, Journal of Open Source Software, Contemporary Clinical Trials, JMIR Dermatology, JMIR Cardiology, Digital Health, Translational Behavioral Medicine, International Journal of Obesity, International Journal of Social Psychiatry, BMJ Open, PLOS One, and more.

Training

CHASM has trained 12 graduate students, 2 post-doctoral fellows, 15 undergraduate students, and 1 high school student this year.

Social Media

Follow us on social media! We have a Facebook page with 825 audience members. Access it here to see our feed of the latest news in digital health <https://www.facebook.com/UCONNmhealth> Or check us out on Twitter/X @UCONNmHealth or Instagram @UCONNmHealth.

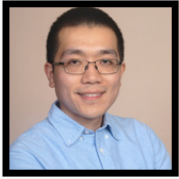
Core Faculty



Sherry Pagoto, PhD
Director
Professor
Allied Health Sciences



Molly Waring, PhD
Director of Methodology Core
Associate Professor
Allied Health Sciences



Ran Xu, PhD
Assistant Professor
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Roman Shrestha, PhD, MPH
Assistant Professor
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Affiliate Faculty



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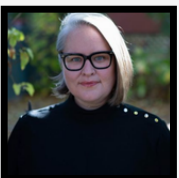
Leila Daneshmandi, PhD
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Associate Professor
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Associate Professor
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Assistant Professor
Public Health Sciences



Marcus Stallworth, LMSW
Academic Specialist
School of Social Work

Affiliate Faculty



Jiyoun Suk, PhD
Assistant Professor
Communication



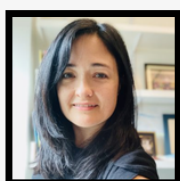
Rebecca Puhl, PhD
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Human Development and
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Kenneth Lachlan, PhD
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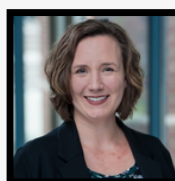
Marie Shanahan
Associate Professor
Journalism



Carolyn Lin, PhD
Professor
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Assistant Professor-in-Residence
Higher Education and Student
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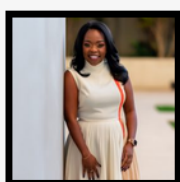
Molly Land, JD
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School of Medicine



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Professor
Psychiatry, UConn Health Center



Shardé Davis, PhD
Assistant Professor
Communication



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Psychiatry, UConn Health Center



Christina Ross, PhD, RN
Assistant Professor
School of Nursing



Steven A. Demurjian, PhD
Professor
Computer Science and Engineering



Valerie Duffy, PhD
Professor
Allied Health Sciences

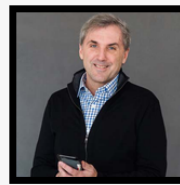


Thomas Agresta, MD, MBI
Professor
Center for Quantitative Medicine

Affiliate Faculty



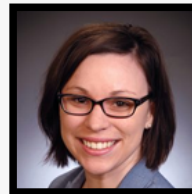
Michael Copenhaver, PhD
Professor
Allied Health Sciences



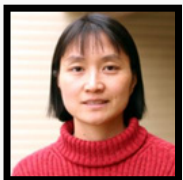
John Murphy, MS, MA
Assistant Professor-in-Residence
Digital Media and Design



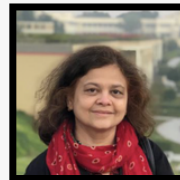
Caitlin Elsaesser, PhD
Associate Professor
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Elizabeth Gromisch, PhD
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Department of Neurology
UConn School of Medicine



Bing Wang, PhD
Professor
Computer Science & Engineering



Swapna Gokhale, PhD
Associate Professor
Computer Science & Engineering



Zexin "Marsha" Ma, PhD
Associate Professor
Department of Communication

Staff



Denise Fernandes
Research Coordinator



Natalie Lueders
Digital Content Specialist

Faculty Spotlight



Roman Shrestha, PhD, MPH

Assistant Professor

Department of Allied Health Sciences

University of Connecticut

Your program of research is not only on development, but the implementation of interventions to prevent HIV and treatment issues to improve health outcomes of minority population (i.e. people who inject drugs, migrant workers, and members of the LGBTQ+ population)--such an important topic! Tell us about how you are using technology in the interventions you are developing for this population.

We are incorporating digital health tools to enhance access to HIV prevention and treatment services among individuals at risk for HIV, including gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM), as well as transgender women (TGW). These tools aim to address multiple barriers that often hinder access to such essential health services, particularly in settings where sexual and gender minority individuals face high levels of stigma and discrimination. For example, one of our NIH-funded studies, Project JomPrEP, utilizes a clinic-integrated smartphone app. This app provides a virtual platform that allows users to obtain HIV testing and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) medication without needing to travel to the clinic or have an in-person consultation with a clinician. By leveraging digital health innovations, we aim to streamline the process, making it more convenient and accessible for individuals facing logistical, geographical, or social obstacles in accessing traditional healthcare services.

What sort of feedback do you get from research participants on these technologies?

Feedback from research participants on these technologies has been generally positive, particularly in terms of convenience and accessibility. Participants appreciate the ability to access HIV prevention and treatment services without needing to travel to a clinic or have in-person consultations, which helps overcome multi-level barriers to HIV prevention and treatment services. However, they often highlight the need to address several important issues, especially regarding the privacy and confidentiality of their personal information, the user-friendliness and accessibility of such technology, and the cultural sensitivity of the intervention.

What advice do you have for junior researchers who want to use technology in their work?

I think it is crucial to understand the needs and preferences of the target population, which will require conducting thorough needs assessments and engaging with the community and relevant stakeholders. Another essential consideration would be focusing on user-centered design to create intuitive, accessible, and user-friendly interfaces. Ensure that cultural sensitivity is considered in both the design and implementation of the technological solution to foster acceptance and engagement. Lastly, plan for the sustainability of the technology. For example, consider long-term maintenance, updates, and funding, which are often overlooked.

What emerging trends in health technology are you most excited about when it comes to HIV prevention and the integration of mHealth?

I'm particularly excited about enhancing our digital health interventions by integrating cutting-edge technologies. This includes real-time monitoring using wearables and mobile sensors to track health metrics and employing machine learning and artificial intelligence to offer personalized health advice, reminders, and educational content. Excitingly, in our recently funded R01 project, we're implementing a just-in-time adaptive intervention to address substance use and HIV prevention-related harm reduction needs among GBMSM in Malaysia.

Do you use technology for health in your own life? What are your favorites and why?

Yes, I do. My favorite is the Apple Watch – it tracks my activity levels, heart rate, and sleep patterns. I appreciate the real-time feedback and reminders, which help me stay active and manage my health more effectively.

Graduate Students



Jared Goetz

Graduate Research Assistant
Doctoral student, Health Promotion Sciences (Pagoto)



Richard Bannor

Graduate Research Assistant
Doctoral student, Health Promotion Sciences (Pagoto)



Christie Idiong

Graduate Research Assistant
Doctoral student, Health Promotion Sciences (Pagoto)



Jessica Foy

Graduate Research Assistant
Doctoral student, Psychological Sciences (Burke)

Undergraduate Students

Nivedhya Cheruvari
Caroline Bortz
Sunaina Advani
Andie Napolitano

Mary Rose Victorino
Victoria Almazan
Cameron Cordaway

Candid Camera



Pictured above: Sherry Pagoto, PhD in class with Summaya Abdul Razak, doctoral student



Pictured above: Sherry Pagoto, PhD, Matt Schroeder, MS, Matt Whited, PhD, and Richard Bannor at the 45th Annual Meeting of the Society of Behavioral Medicine, Philadelphia, PA.



Pictured right: Richard Bannor (doctoral student) taking a break from recruitment at the Worcester African Festival to show off his xylophone skills!

Pictured left: Kelsey Arroyo, MS and Matthew Schroeder, MS (former students)



Our students did a great job presenting as the keynote speakers at the Honor's Research Forum in April 2024!

Pictured right: Nivedhya Cheruvari, Honor's thesis student and Christie Idiong, doctoral student

Research Funding

Funded: \$10,582,811

NIMH R21/R33MH139117 (PI: Shrestha) \$1,210,188	2024-2029
A just-in-time adaptive intervention for suicide prevention among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men	
NIAID R01AI189325 (PI: Shrestha) \$3,983,764	2024-2029
Effectiveness and implementation of a gender-affirming mHealth intervention for HIV prevention in transgender women: A hybrid type 1 implementation science trial	
Fogarty International Center, R21/34 (Co-PI: Shrestha) \$1,309,469	2024-2029
mHealth technology for promoting HIV testing and linkage to PrEP among male sex workers in Vietnam	
UMass Amherst (Consultant: Shrestha) \$1,356,925	2024-2029
Development and testing of an app-based smoking cessation intervention for people living with HIV	
InCHIP Bridge Funding Seed Grant (PI: Waring)	2024-2025
How perinatal persons and mothers interact with peers and influencers on social media to support physical and mental health	
InCHIP Bridge Funding Seed Grant (Co-PI: Waring)	2024-2025
A feasibility pilot of a lifestyle intervention for gestational diabetes (Meals4Moms)	
NIH 1R01DK136795 (PI: Pagoto) \$2,470,441	2023-2028
A Non-Inferiority Trial Comparing Synchronous and Asynchronous Remotely Delivered Lifestyle Interventions	
UConn InCHIP (PI: Pagoto) \$50,000	2023-2025
A Proof-of-Concept Trial of a Social Media Delivered Lifestyle Intervention in Sexual Minority Adults	
NIH 1R34MH130233 (PI: Shrestha) \$100,000	2023-2024
Development of an online HIV self-testing intervention with online-to-offline linkage to care for transgender women	
National Science Foundation (Sub recipient PI: Xu) \$102,024	2023 –2026
RAISE: IHBEM Mathematical Formulations of Human Behavior Change in Epidemic Models	

Completed Projects

CAHNR Pilot Award (PI: Shresha) \$15,000	2022-2023
mHealth Intervention to Reduce Harm of Sexualized Drug Use (Chemsex) among Men Who Have Sex with Men in Malaysia	
NIH R21TW011665 (PI: Shresha) \$1,319,241	2020-2023
Development and testing of a mobile app to enhance HIV prevention cascade in Malaysian MSM	
NIH R21AI152937 (PI: Wickersham, Consultant: Shrestha)	2020-2023
Developing an Artificial Intelligence Chatbot to Promote HIV Testing	

Research Funding

Completed Projects (cont.)

CAHNR Seed Grant (PI: Xu) \$60,000 Developing a food image recognition technique to evaluate the nutrition information of restaurant foods and community food environment.	2020-2023
NIDA R21DA051934 (PI: Shrestha) \$460,625 Integrated rapid access to HIV prevention program for people who inject drugs (iRaPID)	2020-2024
Gilead Investigator Sponsored Research, IN-US-412-5629 (PI: Shrestha) \$522,126 Expanding Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Implementation in Communities of People Who Inject Drugs and Their Risk Network Members	2019-2024
IN US 4125629 (PI: Shrestha) \$522,126 Expanding Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Implementation in Communities of People Who Inject Drugs and Their Risk Network Members	2019-2023
Busch Biomedical Grant (PI: Rawal, Co-PI: Shrestha) \$39,935 Methadone vs. Buprenorphine Therapy for Opioid Dependence: Diet and Metabolic Implications	2018-2023
NIH 1R01DK115545 (PI: Jaser, Sub-PI: Pagoto) \$373, 921 Communication and Coping: Addressing Mothers' Needs to Improve Outcomes in Adolescents with T1D	2018-2023
NIH 1R01CA221854 (PI: Manne, Sub-PI: Pagoto) \$499,364 Facebook Intervention for Young Onset Melanoma Patients and Families	2018-2023
NIH 1R01CA218068-01 (PI: Stapleton, Sub-PI: Pagoto) \$486,807 Randomized Trial of a Social Media-Delivered Intervention Targeting Indoor Tanning Users	2017-2023
NIH 1R01AI158818-01 (PI: Buller, Sub-PI: Pagoto) \$54,569 Preventing COVID-19 with a Social Media Intervention: Vaccine Acceptance and Physical Distancing	2021-2024

Ongoing Projects

USDA/Hatch (Co-PI: Shrestha; Co-PI: Waring) \$60,000 Optimization of a mHealth lifestyle intervention for college students: multiphase optimization strategy (MOST) feasibility study	2023-2026
USDA/NIFA # 7002869 (PI: Waring) \$60,000 Development and feasibility of a digital intervention to increase parents' child nutrition knowledge and digital health literacy	2022-2025

Research Funding

Ongoing Projects (cont.)

NIDA R01DA055534 (Co-PI: Shrestha) \$3,182,951 Optimizing evidence-based HIV prevention targeting people who inject drugs on PrEP	2022-2027
FAI: BRIMI (PI: Dori-Hacohen, Co-PI: Pagoto) \$392,994 Bias Reduction in Medical Information	2022-2025
Fogarty International Center R33TW011665 (PI: Shrestha) \$1,319,241 Development and testing of a mobile app to enhance HIV prevention cascade in Malaysian MSM	2022-2025
NIMH R34MH130233 (MPI: Shrestha) \$717,145 Integrated online-to-offline (O2O) model of care for HIV prevention and treatment among men who have sex with men	2022-2025
R305D220022 (PI: Kenneth Frank, Sub PI: Xu) \$886,592 Quantifying the Robustness of Causal Inferences: Extensions and Application to Existing Databases.	2022-2025
NIH 1F31DK132955-01 (PI: Goetz) \$93,504 The relationship between positive and negative affect of high and low arousal and dietary temptation and lapse in daily life	2022-2024
NIAID R21AI157857 (MPI: Shrestha) \$460,625 Improving HIV testing and PrEP for transgender women through mHealth	2021-2023
Gilead Research Scholar Program in HIV (PI: Shrestha) \$130,000 Integrated rapid access to HIV prevention program for people who inject drugs	2021-2024
Gilead Research Scholar Program in HIV (PI: Shrestha) \$130,000 Quantifying the Robustness of Causal Inferences: Extensions and Application to Existing Databases.	2021-2024
NIDA K01DA051346 (PI: Shrestha) \$765,496 Training in mHealth Prevention with MSM	2020-2025
K24HL124366-0 (PI: Pagoto) \$662,612 Mentoring in mHealth and Social Networking Interventions for CVD Reduction	2020-2025
NHLBI R34HL145439 (PI: Pagoto) \$709,180 Building Habits Together: Feasibility trial of an integrated mobile and social network weight loss intervention	2020-2024
NIAID R21AI157857 (PI: Shrestha) \$460,625 Integrated rapid access to HIV prevention program for people who inject drugs	2020-2024

CORE FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed

Adhikari, P, Paudel, K, Bhusal, S., Gautam, K, Adhikari, T.B., & Shrestha R. Health literacy and its determinants among school-going children: A school-based cross-sectional study in Nepal. *Health Promotion International*. (In press).

Ahmad, A., Bromberg, D.J., Shrestha, R., Salleh, I.M., Bazazi, A.R., Kamarulzaman, A., Shenoi, S., & Altice, F.L. (2024). Impact of Methadone Dose on Linkage to Treatment after Release from Incarceration among People with HIV and Opioid Use Disorder: A Prospective Clinical Trial in Malaysia. *International Journal of Drug Policy*. 126:104369. doi: [10.1016/j.drugpo.2024.104369](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2024.104369)

Antrum, C.J., Waring, M.E., Cohen, J.F.W., Cooksey Stowers, K. Within-store fast food marketing: the association between food swamps and unhealthy advertisement. *Prev Med Rep*. 2023; 2023 Jul 26:35:102349. PMID: 37593352. PMCID: PMC10428106.

Antrum, C.J., Waring, M.E., Cooksey Stowers, K. Personal vehicle use and food security among US adults who are primary shoppers for households with children. *Discov Food*. 2023; 3, 9. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44187-023-00048-6>. PMID: N/A. PMCID: N.A.

Blashill, A. J., Nogg, K., Cobian Aguilar, R. A., Roesch, S., Brady, J., Corliss, H. L., Pagoto, S., & Wells, K. J. Skin cancer risk behaviors in sexual minority men: A mixed methods approach. *Health Psychology*. 2024 Apr 15. doi: [10.1037/hea0001371](https://doi.org/10.1037/hea0001371).

Burkholder, K., Bennett, B. L., McKee, S. L., Cohen, J. F., Xu, R., & Schwartz, M. B. (2024). Participation in the US Department of Agriculture's Summer Meal Programs: 2019-2021. *Journal of School Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.13438>

Buscemi, J, Fitzgibbon, M, Shen, M, Schneider, KL, Dulin, A, Figueiroa, R, Bell, B, Pagoto, S. Advocacy efforts of the Society of Behavioral Medicine: A 6-Year Update. *Transl Behav Med*. 2023 Jul 11:ibad042. doi: [10.1093/tbm/ibad042](https://doi.org/10.1093/tbm/ibad042). Online ahead of print.PMID: 37432369

Cabral, J., Morzillo, A. T., & Xu, R. (2023). A Stakeholder Network for Managing Multiple Forest Stressors and Roadside Forests. *Society & Natural Resources*, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2023.2267500>

Cabral, J., Morzillo, A. T., & Xu, R. (2023). Forest stressors and roadside vegetation management in an exurban landscape. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 127954. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2023.127954>

Publications (cont.)

- Cheah, M.H., Gan, Y.N., Altice, F., Wickersham, J., Shrestha, R., Salleh, N.A.M., Ng, K.S., Azra, I., Balakrishnan, V., Kamarulzaman, A., & Ni, Z. (2023). Testing the feasibility and acceptability of using an artificial intelligence chatbot to promote HIV testing and pre-exposure prophylaxis in Malaysia: a mixed-methods study. *JMIR Human Factors*. 11:e52055. doi: [10.2196/52055](https://doi.org/10.2196/52055)
- de Vere Hunt I, Cai ZR, Nava V, Admassu NE, Bousheri S, Johnson T, Tomz A, Thompson J, Zhang L, Pagoto S, Wehner MR, Mathur MB, Linos E. A social media-based public health campaign to reduce indoor tanning in high-risk populations. *AJPM Focus*. 2023 Sep;2(3):None. doi: [10.1016/j.focus.2023.100123](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.focus.2023.100123). PMID: 37662553; PMCID: PMC10465716.
- Dubov, A., Altice, F., Gutierrez, J., Wickersham, J., Azwa, I., Kamarulzaman, A., Gautam, K., & Shrestha, R. (2023). Service delivery preferences for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) of men who have sex with men in Malaysia: Results of a discrete choice experiment. *Scientific Reports*. 13(1):14200. doi: [10.1038/s41598-023-41264-5](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-41264-5).
- Foley, S., Keene, D., Shrestha, R., Brown, S., Maviglia, F., Saifi, R., Kamarulzaman, A., Gautam, K., & Wickersham, J.A. (2024). Exploring Attitudes Toward Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis for HIV Prevention Prior to Implementation Among Female Sex Workers in Malaysia: Results from a Qualitative Study. *Patient Preference and Adherence*. 18: 797–807. doi: [10.2147/PPA.S413423](https://doi.org/10.2147/PPA.S413423)
- Gautam, K., Aguilar, C., Paudel, K., Dhakal, M., Wickersham, J., Acharya, B., Sapkota, S., Deuba, K., & Shrestha, R. (2024). Preferences for mHealth Intervention to Address Mental Health Challenges Among Men Who Have Sex With Men in Nepal: Qualitative Study. *JMIR Human Factors*. 11:e56002. doi: [10.2196/56002](https://doi.org/10.2196/56002)*undergraduate student.
- Gautam, K., Shrestha, R., Razali, N., Azwa, I., Akbar, M., Kamarulzaman, A., Altice, F., Ni, Z., Maviglia, F., & Wickersham, J. (2024). "Adaptation of a Theory-Based Mobile Application to Improve Access to HIV Prevention Services for Transgender Women in Malaysia: Focus Group Findings. *JMIR Formative Research*. (In Press).
- Gautam, K., Paudel, K., Ahmed, A., Pagoto, S., Dhakal, M., Wickersham, J., Acharya, B., Paudel, K., Ha, T., & Shrestha, R. (2023). High Interest in Use of mHealth Platform for HIV Prevention Among Men Who Have Sex with Men in Nepal: Findings from a Cross-sectional Survey. *Journal of Community Health*. (In press). doi: [10.1007/s10900-024-01324-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10900-024-01324-x)
- Gautam, K., Paudel, K., Jacobs, J., Wickersham, J., Ikhtiaruddin, W., Azwa, I., Saifi, R., Sim, H., & Shrestha, R. (2023). Usability and Acceptability of the Safer Chemsex Package ("PartyPack"): mHealth-Delivered Sexual Harm Reduction Tool for Men Who Have Sex with Men in Malaysia. *JMIR Formative Research*. 7:e48113. doi: [10.2196/48113](https://doi.org/10.2196/48113).

Publications (cont.)

Gombi-Vaca, M. F., Xu, R., Schwartz, M. B., & Caspi, C. E. (2023). Construct validity of the Charitable Food Nutrition Index. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 36, 102515. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2023.102515>

Groshon, L.C., Waring, M.E., Blashill, A.J., Dean, K., Bankwalla, S., Palmer, L. Pagoto, S.L. A Content Analysis of Indoor Tanning Twitter Chatter During COVID-19 Shutdowns: Cross-Sectional Qualitative Study. *JMIR Dermatol*. 2024 Mar 4;7:e54052. doi: 10.2196/54052. PMID: 38437006. PMCID: PMC10949128.

Ha, T., Given, D., Hui, S., Nguyen, T., Nguyen, N., Shrestha, R., Lisa, F., & Schensul, S. (2023). Assessing barriers and utilization of sexual and reproductive health services among female migrant workers in Vietnam. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 21:207640231188033. doi: [10.3390/ijerph20146368](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20146368)

Ha, T., Hui, S., Shrestha, R., Gaikwad, S. S., Joshi, K., Padiyar, R., & Schensul, S. (2023). The mediating effect of changes in depressive symptoms on the relationship between health-related quality of life and alcohol 3 consumption: Findings from a longitudinal study among people living with HIV in India. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 20(8):5567. doi: [10.3390/ijerph20085567](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20085567)

Ha, T., Hui, S., Su, T.W., Shrestha, R., Nguyen, T., Nguyen, N., Baumann, S., & Schensul, S. (2023). The mediation effects of sexual self-efficacy in the relationship between psychosocial wellbeing and depressive symptoms among female migrant workers in Vietnam. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*. 69(8):2068-2078. doi: [10.1177/00207640231188033](https://doi.org/10.1177/00207640231188033)

Ha, T., Shi, H., Dsouza, A., Shrestha, R., Pham, B., Luu, H., Le, N.T., & Schensul, S. (2024). Assessing the effectiveness of multilevel intervention sequences on “tension” among men living with HIV: A randomized-control trial. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*. (In Press).

Heersping, G.E., Waring, M.E. Reasons mothers of young children delayed or skipped preventive health care during the first year of the COVID19 pandemic. *Family Practice*. 2023 Jan 23;cmad001. doi: 10.1093/fampra/cmad001. Online ahead of print. PMID: 36683271. PMCID: N/A.

JadKarim, L., Wickersham, J., Gautam, K., Azwa, I., Saifi, R., Khati, A., Paudel, K., Ha, T., & Shrestha, R. (2023). Correlates of Never Testing for HIV among Men Who Have Sex with Men in Malaysia: A Cross-Sectional Study. *PLoS ONE*. 18(11): e0294937. doi: [10.1371/journal.pone.0294937](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0294937)

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- Kim, R.***, Wickersham, J., Maviglia, F., Azwa, I., Galka, J., Gautam, K., & Shrestha, R. (2023). Willingness to Use HIV Self-Testing (HIVST) for HIV prevention among Female Sex Workers in Malaysia. *Frontiers in Medicine*. 10: 1022746. doi: [10.3389/fmed.2023.1022746](https://doi.org/10.3389/fmed.2023.1022746)
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Pagoto, S., Xu, R., Bullard, T., Foster, G. D., Bannor, R., Arcangel, K., Divito, J., Schroeder, M., Cardel, M. I. (2023). An Evaluation of a Personalized Multi-Component Commercial Digital Weight Management Program. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*. 25, e44955. doi: [10.2196/44955](https://doi.org/10.2196/44955)
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Paudel, K.**, Bhandari, P.*, Gautam, K.**, Wickersham, J., Banik, S., Ha, T., & Shrestha, R. (2023). Mediating role of food insecurity in the relationship between sexual minority stigma and depressive symptoms among men who have sex with men in Nepal. *PLoS ONE*. 19(1):e0296097. doi: [10.1371/journal.pone.0296097](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0296097)*undergraduate student. ** graduate student.

Paudel, K.**, Gautam, K.**, Bhandari, P.*, Wickersham, J., Ha, T., & Shrestha, R. (2023). Suicidal ideation, plan, and attempt among men who have sex with men in Nepal: Findings from a cross-sectional study. *PLOS Global Health*. 3(11):e0002348. doi: [10.1371/journal.pgph.0002348](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0002348)*undergraduate student. ** graduate student.

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Paudel, K.**, Gautam, K.**, Bhandari, P.*, Shah, S, Wickersham, JA, Acharya, B, Sapkota, S, Adhikari, SK, Baral, PP, Shrestha, A, & Shrestha, R. (2024). Digital health interventions for suicide prevention among LGBTQ: A narrative review. *Health Prospect*. 23(1);1-10. doi: [10.3126/hprospect.v23i1.62795](https://doi.org/10.3126/hprospect.v23i1.62795)*undergraduate student. ** graduate student.

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Pierre-Louis, I.C., Saczynski, J.S., Lopez-Pintado, S., Waring, M.E., Abu, H.O., Goldberg, R.J., Kiefe, C.I., Helm, R., McManus, D.D., Bamgbade, B.A. Characteristics associated with poor atrial fibrillation-related quality of life in adults with atrial fibrillation. *J Cardiovasc Med*. Epub ahead of print: 2023 May 3. PMID: 3712991. PMCID: PMC10699883.

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Randell RL, Hornik CP, Curtis L, Hernandez AF, Denwood T, Nebeker C, Sugarman J, Tyl B, Murakami M, Wilberforce LO, Pagoto S, Vedin O, Andersson, T, Carrasquillo O, Dolor R, Kollins SH, Pellegrino J, Ranney ML. "Click and Mortar" opportunities for digitization and consumerism in trials. *Contemp Clin Trials*. 2023 Jul 20;132:107304. doi: [10.1016/j.cct.2023.107304](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cct.2023.107304). Online ahead of print. PMID: 37481202.

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Reilly, E.***, Kathawalla, U., Robins, H.E., Heapy, A.A., Hogan, T.P., Waring, M.E., Quigley, K.S., Drebing, C.E., Bickmore, T., Volonte, M., Kelly, M.M. An Online Acceptance and Mindfulness Intervention for Chronic Pain in Veterans: Development and Protocol for a Pilot Feasibility Randomized Controlled Trial. *JMIR Res Protoc* 2023;12:e45887. PMID: 36881446. PMCID: PMC10031449. ***junior faculty.

Rosen, A.** , Wickersham, J., Khati, A.** , Altice, F., Jeri-Wahrhaftig, A.* , Tee, V.** , Luces, J.** , Azwa, I., Ab Halim, M.A.* , Ni, Z.** , Kamarulzaman, A., & Shrestha, R. (2023). Barriers and Facilitators to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Use Among Men Who Have Sex with Men in Malaysia: A Qualitative Assessment Using Nominal Group Technique. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 20(9):5669. doi: [10.3390/ijerph20095669](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20095669)*undergraduate student. ** graduate student.

Rudin, L.R.* , Tetreault, L.* , Xu, R., Bauer, K.W., Pagoto, S.L., Duffy, V.D., Libby, B.A.** , Pham, J.* , Waring, M.E. Sources and Perceived Credibility of Child Nutrition Information in Relation to Maternal Health Literacy. *Patient Educ Couns*. 2024 Jun;123:108199. doi: [10.1016/j.pec.2024.108199](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pec.2024.108199). Epub 2024 Feb 8. PMID: 38359589. *undergraduate author. **graduate author.

Publications (cont.)

Schroeder, M.W.**, Waring, M.E., Fowler, N.R., Mace, R.A., Pagoto, S.L. Association between Subjective Cognitive Decline and Twice-Weekly Strength Training in Middle-Aged and Older US Adults: An Analysis of the 2019 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. *Am J Health Promot.* 2024 Jun;38(5):615-624. doi: 10.1177/08901171231224517. Epub 2024 Jan 16. PMID: 38226478. **graduate author.

Shrestha, R., Altice, F., Khati, A.**, Azwa, I., Gautam, K.**, Gupta, S.*, Sullivan, P., Ni, Z.**, Kamarulzaman, A., Phiphatkhunarnon, P., & Wickersham, J. (2023). Clinic-Integrated Smartphone App (JomPrEP) to Improve Uptake of HIV Testing and Pre-exposure Prophylaxis Among Men Who Have Sex with Men in Malaysia: Mixed Methods Evaluation of Usability and Acceptability. *JMIR mHealth & uHealth.* 11:e44468. doi: [10.2196/44468](https://doi.org/10.2196/44468)*undergraduate student. ** graduate student.

Song, Y., Xu, R., Huang, Y. H. C., Ni, S., & Fan, Y. (2024). Assessing the Interplay Between Public Attention and Government Responsiveness With Digital Trace Data: Navigating Leadership and Followership in China's COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign. *Social Science Computer Review,* 08944393241258217.

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Stapleton, J. L., Manne, S. L., Pagoto, S.L., Leip, A., Greene, K., Hillhouse, J. J., Merritt, A. S., & Shelton, B. J. A social media-delivered melanoma prevention program for young women engaged in frequent ultraviolet tanning: protocol for a randomized controlled trial. *JMIR Research Protocols.* 2024 Mar 19;13:e56562. doi: 10.2196/56562.PMID: 38502173

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Waring, M.E., Arigo, D., Rudin, L.R.*, Pagoto, S.L., Moore Simas, T.A., Horkachuck, A.B.* Interest in an Instagram-Delivered Gestational Weight Gain Intervention Among Pregnant Women with Pre-Pregnancy Overweight or Obesity. *Mhealth*. 2024 Mar 28;10:12. doi: 10.21037/mhealth-23-43. PMID: 38689614. PMCID: PMC11058595. *undergraduate author.

Waring, M.E., Blackman Carr, L.T., Heersping, G.E.** Social media use among parents and women of childbearing age in the US. *Prev Chronic Dis*. 2023; 20: E07. PMID: 36796010. PMCID: PMC9983604. **graduate author.

Waring, M.E., Caspi, C.E., Jeri-Wahrhaftig, A.*, Horkachuck, A.*, Kapoor, I.* Perceived Advantages of and Concerns About Mobile Food Pantries Among Mothers Who Utilized Food Pantries Before or During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*. 2023; 18:6, 912-920. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19320248.2022.2117005>. PMID: N/A. PMCID: N/A. *undergraduate author.

Waring, M.E., Moore Simas, T.A., Heersping, G.E.*, Rudin, L.R.*, Balakrishnan, K., Burdick, A.R.**, Pagoto, S.L. Development and Feasibility of a Web-Based Gestational Weight Gain Intervention for Women with Pre-Pregnancy Overweight or Obesity. *mHealth*. 2023; 9:13. PMID: 37089268. PMCID: PMC10119439. *undergraduate author. **graduate author.

Waring, M.E., Pagoto, S.L., Moore Simas, T.A., Blackman Carr, L.T., Eamiello, M.A., Libby, B.A.**, Rudin, L.R.*, Heersping, G.E.** Delivering a Post-Partum Weight Loss Intervention via Facebook or In-Person Groups: Results From a Randomized Pilot Feasibility Trial. *JMIR mHealth & uHealth*; 2023; 11: e41545. PMID: 37103991. PMCID: PMC10176149. *undergraduate author. **graduate author.

Xu, R., Bannor, R., Cardel, M. I., Foster, G. D., & Pagoto, S. (2023) How much food tracking during a digital weight-management program is enough to produce clinically significant weight loss?. *Obesity*. 31(7), 1779-1786. ^Student author. <https://doi.org/10.1002/oby.23795>

Xu, R., Huang, X., Zhang, K., Lyu, W., Ghosh, D., Li, Z., & Chen, X. (2023). Integrating human activity into food environments can better predict cardiometabolic diseases in the United States. *Nature Communications*, 14(1), 7326. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-023-42667-8>

Appearances

Center faculty and staff were invited to speak in meetings, talks, and presentations over the year on the topics of health communication, public health, and digital health.

Local/Regional/National/International Meetings

Avelino, D., Lin, C.A., Waring, M.E., Barbosa, A.J., & Duffy, V.B. (2024). Facebook and Instagram as potential health communication channels to reach low-income individuals with evidence-based nutrition education. Presented at the 8th Annual UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media Conference, Storrs, Connecticut.

Bhusal, S., & Waring, M.E. (2024). Predictors of Personal Health Information Sharing on Social Media among US Adults: Results from 2022 Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS). Presented at the 8th Annual UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media Conference, Storrs, Connecticut.

Chen, X., Jin, A., Xu, R. (2023). Examining human mobility patterns in restaurant patronization: A social vulnerability perspective of demand and supply 3rd Annual NorthEast Chapter of the Travel and Tourism Research Association (NETTRA) Conference. Philadelphia, PA.

Gautam, K., Shrestha, R., Copenhever, N., Dlamini, S., Razali, N., Wickersham, J.A. (2023). Adaptation of a Theory-Based Clinic-Affiliated Mobile App to Deliver HIV Testing, Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis, and Gender-Affirming Care Services for Transgender Women in Malaysia: Insights from Online Focus Group Discussion. Oral presentation at the University of Connecticut Graduate Student Research Forum. Storrs, Connecticut.

Gautam, K., Paudel, K., Sujana, M.S.H., Dlamini, S., Le, K., Humagain, U., Dhakal, M., Dean, L., Theobald, S., & Shrestha, R. (2024). Healthcare Access and Use Among LGBTI Persons Living in Kathmandu Valley of Nepal: Met or Unmet? Oral presentation at the University of Connecticut Graduate Student Research Forum. Storrs, Connecticut.

Gaylord, A., Phillips, H, Duffy, V., Shrestha, R., & Hubert, P. (2023). Feasibility and acceptability of a self-monitoring, online behavior change intervention to promote healthy diets and physical activity of young adults. Oral presentation at the Nutrition 2023 - American Society for Nutrition. Boston, Massachusetts.

Kalinowski, J., Bhusal, S., Pagoto, S.L., Newton Jr., R.L., & Waring, M.E. (2024). Smart device ownership and use of social media, wearable trackers, and health apps among Black women with hypertension in the United States. Presented at the 8th Annual UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media Conference, Storrs, Connecticut.

Appearances (cont.)

McManus-Shipp, K., Field, C. Bhusal, S., & Waring, M.E. (2024). Perinatal depression stigma and likelihood of seeking help for depression among perinatal persons and mothers who seek mom-centered mental health content on digital platforms. Presented at the 8th Annual UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media Conference, Storrs, Connecticut.

Mistler, C., Copenhaver, M., Shrestha, R., & Gunstad, J. (2023). Impact of Impaired Cognitive Functioning Among Persons on Medication for Opioid Use Disorder. Oral presentation at the 85th Annual Conference of the College on Problems of Drug Dependence (CPDD). Denver, Colorado.

Paudel, K., Gautam, K., Bhandari, P., Shah, S., Wickersham, J. A., Acharya, B., Sapkota, S., Shrestha, A., & Shrestha, R. (2024). Digital health interventions for suicide prevention among LGBTQ: A narrative review. Presented at the 8th Annual UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media Conference, Storrs, Connecticut.

Paudel, K, Gautam, K, Bhandari, P, Wickersham, J. A., Dhakal, M., Sharma, S., Paudel, K., Ha, T., & Shrestha, R. (2024). Suicidal ideation, plan, and attempt among men who have sex with men in Nepal: Findings from a cross-sectional study. Oral Presentation at the Health Foundation Nepal - Annual Conference. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Paudel, K, Gautam, K, Bhandari, P, Wickersham, J. A., Lena, F, & Shrestha, R. (2024). Population-based HIV and syphilis prevalence, stigma, and depressive symptoms among MSM in Nepal: Findings from an integrated biological and behavioral surveillance survey. Oral presentation at the National LGBTQ Health Conference. Atlanta, Georgia.

Xu, R. (2024). Integrating human activity into food environments can better predict cardiometabolic diseases in the United States. Invited talk at Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity, University of Connecticut. Hartford, Connecticut.

Xu, R. (2023). Activity-based food environment and cardiometabolic health: A national observational study. Presented at American Public Health Association Annual Conference. Atlanta, Georgia.

Advancing Public Health and Science with ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



MAY
16-17
2024



The theme of the 2024 annual virtual CHASM conference was “Advancing Public Health and Science with Artificial Intelligence.” A theme throughout the conference was the rapid application of generative artificial intelligence (genAI) tools, natural language processing, rule-based expert systems, robots, chatbots, and robotic process automation in healthcare settings and academia. This conference featured keynote speakers and panelists who are leaders in the use of AI to solve health problems and/or advance scientific scholarship. Novel applications, ethical issues, and best practices will be discussed, as well as implications for training the next generation of healthcare professionals and scientists.

Keynote Speakers



Open notes meets open AI: the role of chatbots in documentation

Charlotte Blease, PhD

Associate Professor, Uppsala University, Sweden & Digital Psychiatry, BIDMC/Harvard Medical School



Transforming Big Data into AI Ready Data: From Accelerometers to Nutrition & Obesity Questionnaires

Diana Thomas, PhD

Professor, United States Military Academy at Westpoint, Department of Mathematical Sciences



Innovative Digital Technologies to Improve Adolescent and Young Adult Health

Elizabeth Ozer, PhD

Professor of Pediatrics & Associate Vice Provost, Faculty Equity, Office of Diversity and Outreach at the University of California San Francisco



Jonathan P. Rowe, PhD

Senior Research Scientist and Managing Director of NSF AI Institute for Engaged Learning



Write On: Opportunities and Challenges in using Generative AI for Health Intervention Messaging

Saeed Abdullah, PhD

Assistant Professor in the College of Information Sciences and Technology at the Pennsylvania State University

Advancing Public Health and Science with **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**



MAY
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2024



Panel Discussions AI in Research, Scholarship, and Teaching



Judy Wawira Gichoya, MD, MS
Associate Professor,
Department of Radiology,
Emory University School of
Medicine



Stephen Aguilar, PhD,
Assistant Professor,
Rossier School of Education,
University of Southern
California



Joshua August (Gus) Skorberg,
PhD,
Associate Professor,
Department of Philosophy,
University of Guelph

AI & Bias in Healthcare



Christina Harrington, PhD
Assistant Professor,
Human-Computer Interaction
Institute, Carnegie Mellon
University



Matthew DeCamp, MD, PhD
Associate Professor,
University of Colorado
Anschutz Medical Campus



Shiri Dori-Hacohen, PhD
Assistant Professor,
Department of Computer
Science & Engineering,
University of Connecticut

Advancing Public Health and Science with ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



MAY
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2024



The Conference also featured 8 oral paper presentations and 25 video posters. Attendees viewed the two-minute video posters in informal breakout discussions with the poster authors in breakout sessions.

Paper Discussions

Chatbot Literacy among U.S. Adolescents: Are They Aware of Potential Health-related Uses?

Prathyusha Galinkala, PhD, Michigan State University

Investigating the Impact of an Online Chronic Pain Intervention on Substance Use: Secondary Analysis of a Feasibility Randomized Controlled Trial

Erin Reilly, PhD, VA Bedford Healthcare System

Digital cloning of online social networks for language-sensitive agent-based modeling of misinformation spread

Prateek Puri, PhD RAND Corporation

Evaluating ChatGPT's Accuracy and Safety in Providing Image-Based Medication Instructions

Yusef Yassin, PharmD student, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences

Development of an Artificial Intelligence Digital Behavior Change Intervention (AI-DBCI) to Promote RSV Vaccination in Adults 60+

Ashley West, PhD Lirio

A Machine Learning Study to Predict Early Substance Use Among Using a Nationally Representative Sample of U.S. Adolescents

Gaoqianxue Liu, PhD Yale Child Study Center

Two-Year Follow-Up of Dementia Caregivers after a Digital Health Intervention

Alicia Hong, PhD George Mason University

The Sugar-Coated Truth: The Quality of Diabetes Health Information on TikTok

Spruhaa Vasistha, PhD Denison University



HEALTH IS SOCIAL

IT TAKES A VILLAGE, SO WE BUILT ONE

2024 marked the launch of our virtual weight loss program!



Over the last decade our behavioral science research laboratory has been developing a healthy lifestyle program that is based on the idea that long-term behavior change requires a community of like-minded souls.

Health is Social brings people together to work towards individual and collective goals for healthy lifestyle including nutrition, physical activity, sleep, and stress. Health is Social is a professional counselor-led virtual community where we set weekly diet and exercise goals, learn the latest science about healthy lifestyle, identify and problem solve obstacles, track and reward progress, share resources, provide each other accountability and support, engage in collaborative competitions, and most of all, have a lot of fun.



Our founding principles are community, health, acceptance, resilience, and teamwork. Members will get access to weight management experts and a community of peers to support them in their journey to a healthier weight or simply a healthier diet and physically active lifestyle.