



**PROVIDENCE  
COLLEGE**

9<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL UNDERGRADUATE  
CONFERENCE ON  
HEALTH & SOCIETY

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PROGRAM

APRIL 14, 2018

## THE DAY AT A GLANCE:

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Welcome/Breakfast   Ruane 205	8:30am – 9:15am
Panel 1 Presentations   Ruane 206	9:15am – 10:30am
Panel 2 Presentations   Ruane 206	10:45am – 12:00pm
Lunch   Ruane 205	12:00pm – 1:00pm
Panel 3 Presentations   Ruane 206	1:00pm – 2:30pm

### PANEL 1 | UNETHICAL INEQUALITIES: CLOSING THE GAP ON HEALTH DISPARITIES 9:15am – 10:30am | Ruane 206

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STUDENT DISCUSSANT | SARAH KELLEY '18, PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

#### *“Mental Health Among African American Men: The Stigma Surrounding Anxiety, Stress and Depression”*

FARTUN ABDULLE, PROVIDENCE COLLEGE | 2019

Mental health in the United States is influenced by life experiences which are in turn socially constructed by American culture, historically and in the current day. In the case of African American men, institutional policies and negative daily interpersonal relationships has proved to create some strain on their lives. It is no secret that American slavery has had and continues to have a huge impact on the lives of black people in this country whether that is on social, economic or personal platform. Criminalizing black men has permeated American culture to the extent that these men are treated differently by various individuals in public sectors such as education and the workforce. With the use of personal interviews with black men on the campus of a small liberal arts college in Rhode Island, I hope to showcase some stigmas surrounding mental health in the African American community in the United States along with external circumstances that have shaped those stigmas in the past and present. I aim to categorize sentiments from the interviews into two main sectors of the paper; experiences of racism as a critical catalyst for depression and the stigma of mental health in African American communities.

#### *“Maternal and Newborn Health--Not So Maternal”*

OLIVIA LO, PROVIDENCE COLLEGE | 2018

Although the United States is one of the world’s most developed countries, infant and maternal mortality rates are among the worst when compared to other equally and economically successful countries. Overutilization and lack of care coordination has led to unnecessary procedures. More care allows for healthier living, however, encourages those who have access to continue pursuing needless care. This overuse has led to overdiagnosis, and thus can be harmful to one’s overall health. Overutilization of screenings and overdiagnoses in maternal care has led to ongoing risks contributing to neonatal and maternal mortality. America is known for its outstanding medical technology, first-rate

doctors, and renowned research institutes. However, as a developed country, the healthcare system still fails to deliver and define the “quality of care.” This dissertation will use the standards of care provided in the World Health Organization’s Standards for Maternal and Neonatal Care and Standards for Improving Quality of Maternal and Newborn Care in Health Facilities to discuss the different ways policy makers can assess, evaluate, implement, and improve quality care in maternal and newborn health.

*“Accessing Care as an LEP: Spanish-speaking Immigrant Experiences with Cultural and Linguistic Competency in the Health Care System”*

KATHRYN LAYNE SMITH, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON | 2018

Although the population of individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) has increased dramatically over the past few decades due to immigration, the U.S. health care system is still primarily geared towards serving English speakers. LEP status among patients is associated with greater disparities in health care. Because Hispanics make up a significant proportion of LEPs, they also face many of the same challenges experienced by the LEP population regarding health disparities. The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of LEP Spanish-speaking Hispanic immigrants during cross-cultural encounters in the health care setting. Five LEP Spanish-speaking Hispanic immigrants were interviewed in Spanish about their experiences accessing health care with limited proficiency in English. A thematic narrative analysis of the interviews found that there is a need for a greater level of cultural and linguistic competency within the health care setting and during encounters between patients and health care providers. The study also found participants often expressed difficulty receiving access to competent interpreting services or translated written materials, such as intake forms and health brochures. These findings align with previous studies that demonstrate the impact language and cultural differences have on patient satisfaction and health outcomes.

## PANEL 2 | BARRIERS TO ACCESSING COVERAGE AND CARE: THE IMPORTANCE OF PATIENT EXPERIENCE

10:45am - 12:00pm | Ruane 206

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STUDENT DISCUSSANT | ANNA MALONEY '19, MCPHS UNIVERSITY

### *"Understanding the Social, Medical, and Mental Health Implications of Type I Diabetes"*

AVA MASTROSTEFANO, ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY | 2018

Juvenile diabetes is an autoimmune disorder resulting in the production of little to no insulin, thus requiring affected individuals to rely on artificial insulin for survival. This life saving hormone must be delivered by injection with precise dosing to avoid hyper- and hypoglycemia—a next to impossible task. With many diagnoses happening during early childhood, many affected individuals are incapable of calculating doses manually, consequently requiring advanced medical technology such as insulin pumps and continuous glucose monitoring systems. Poorly controlled diabetes not only leads to medical complications such as organ failure, blindness, coma and death, but it also puts immense pressures on the lives of young people affected by type 1 diabetes. For example, stress, worry, disrupted learning and bullying are only a few of the social implications of type 1 diabetes, causing a ripple effect throughout a child's life into adulthood. Yet, existing health insurance coverage does very little to make the necessary technological devices available to diabetics, thus severely compromising their health and wellbeing. The goal of this research is to combine scholarly research with firsthand experience to raise awareness of the complications of type I diabetes and how the unnecessary barriers to care techniques intensifies these effects.

### *"Living with Lyme"*

CAROLINE MCCOWEN, PROVIDENCE COLLEGE | 2018

Lyme disease is a tick-borne illness caused by the bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*. The impact of symptoms is wide-ranging on different individuals. In my research, I use the tools of medical anthropology to examine Lyme disease as a social and cultural phenomena. I am particularly concerned with how patients struggle with the side effects it imposes on every part of their life. This review was conducted through an interviewing process of 5 participants using a standardized set of questions to extract information on symptoms, diagnoses, and treatment in order to identify a linkage of social deterioration as a symptom of Lyme. Critical analysis was performed to connect Lyme symptoms to patient emotions. The results show, that in all 5 participants, there is a direct correlation between contracting Lyme disease and the dependent factor of social suffering. An absence of detection of Lyme stems from lack of physician knowledge of the disease and the clinical belief that patients over-dramatize symptoms. This study describes how delegitimization and doctor denial is embedded in patients' illness experience progression, as cultural practices and norms are not taken into consideration by the treating medical staff.

*"Churn in Rhode Island: The Health, Financial, and Emotional Impact, 2014-2017"*

INGRID BRUGNOLI-ENSIN, PROVIDENCE COLLEGE | 2018

Churn, instability in insurance coverage, is a problem in the United States, particularly affecting underserved populations. Churn usually occurs as the result of changing life circumstances—job loss, changes in income or family status, or difficulty navigating public programs—because employment, income, age, immigration status, and household composition often determine health insurance eligibility. Recent health reform efforts in the U.S. perpetuate churn, rather than alleviating frequent changes in coverage. Our research asked: what are the health, financial, and emotional impacts of churn in the lives of Rhode Island residents? This article draws examples from 31 life history interviews, recruited from a larger ethnographic project observing 188 households attempt to enroll in coverage through Rhode Island's health insurance exchange. Interviews were transcribed, coded by patterns and themes, and analyzed using the mixed-methods software, Dedoose. This research was conducted in collaboration with a professor's extensive research from 2014-2016. The findings demonstrate that churn persists, despite state efforts to maximize enrollment, and causes poor health outcomes, financial insecurity, and increased stress. We argue that efforts to reform health insurance enrollment policies should consider why people lose coverage, barriers to maintaining continuous coverage, and the negative impacts of churn.

LUNCH | 12:00PM - 1:00PM | RUANE 205

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PANEL 3 | ADDRESSING VITAL PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES THROUGH RESEARCH AND INTERVENTION

1:00PM - 2:30PM | RUANE 206

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STUDENT DISCUSSANT | GABRIELLA DESS '18, PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

*"Ending the Opioid Epidemic: A Solution through Education"*

KAILEIGH J GANNON, MCPHS UNIVERSITY | 2019

Public Health officials declared the Opioid Epidemic a Public Health National Emergency, but to date little has been done to combat it. Further action needs to be taken to reduce both the medical and non-medical use of opioids and to prevent the crisis from spreading further. This paper will address the enormity that is the Opioid Public Health Crisis. The focus of this paper is to address the particular psychosocial factors that contribute to addiction. In addition, to show how health care providers currently assess pain levels, which lead to the over prescribing of opioids that, and lack proper patient-provider communication which can lead to subsequent addiction and treatment. The lack of education and stigma surrounding addiction contributes to a high relapse rate. Identifying challenges in the psychological and social spheres for patients and flaws in the health management system provide data that will contribute to changes in how addiction is currently managed. This paper will develop a

new form of managing the opioid crisis that begins with the proper education of healthcare providers when dealing with pain assessment and noticing indicators of addiction prior to prescription to prevent the Opioid Epidemic from spreading.

*"The App a Day Keeps the Doctor Away"*

KATE DE LUCA, PROVIDENCE COLLEGE | 2018

The United States has an increasingly aging population that is living longer than before. However, with age comes illness, which means high utilization of the healthcare system. Wearable technology and health apps allow people to take healthcare into their own hands. While many apps exist, the elderly population is often neglected in these advancements and their needs are left unaddressed. Baby boomers who have learned to adopt technology into their everyday lives are now entering into retirement and could benefit from having an app that improves their everyday lives, cuts healthcare costs, and allows them to live independently for longer. My goal is to create the blueprints of an app that will help the elderly keep track of medications and their overall health, while allowing their family to have peace of mind while they're at home. I will conduct research to determine what impacts the health of older populations and how an app can address those issues. In addition, I will do research on the previously recorded (and limited) data on the impact apps and wearable technology has had on older generations. After I create the blueprints, I will visit nursing homes to receive feedback and address concerns or suggestions that the target population has. As a result, I will create the guidelines for an app that will improve quality of life.

*"Periodontal Disease: Sugar is not Always the Enemy"*

CAITLIN STEINBECK, PROVIDENCE COLLEGE | 2018

Periodontal disease is neither a new nor a minor oral health concern. It is caused by the buildup of plaque and infection in the mouth, eventually leading to receding gums and tooth loss. Many scientists have attributed modern society's agricultural processing techniques and sugar cane dependence for wide prevalence of periodontal disease in human mouths. However, blaming periodontal disease on modern food culture grossly oversimplifies the true causes and risk factors for the disease. Many extinct hominin species have shown evidence of periodontal disease. Recently, scientists have begun to investigate and better understand both skeletal and microbial evidence of periodontal disease in extinct hominin species. If periodontal disease is found in early hominin species, then its human prevalence cannot be fully attributed to modern human diet trends. In order to better understand periodontal disease and the reasons for its high prevalence in today's society, scientists need to look to periodontal trends in non-human hominin teeth, as well as early human teeth from hunter-gatherer lifestyles. This dissertation will use scientific papers to discuss the effects that the mouth microbiome, human genetics, diet, tooth structure, and oral healthcare can have on the epidemiology of periodontal disease in order to better understand how to prevent and minimize the disease's effects.

*"An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Health Coaching for University Students"*

GABRIELLE GRANITTO, ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY | 2018

As of recently, the need for mental health care is becoming more widely recognized in the United States. There is a prevalence of mental health issues on college campuses especially. Universities have now begun, in earnest, to recognize the widespread nature of the mental health challenges faced by students. Roger Williams University has recently addressed the need for more mental health support with a peer-to-peer Health Coaching program. The Health Coaches, including myself, are aiming to fill the gap that is left when a student doesn't feel that they need an appointment with a professional counselor, but they still want help with their mental health and wellbeing. We are trained to give coaching sessions on a wide variety of issues faced by students using a counseling style called Motivational Interviewing. Some of the most common issues that students present with are stress, homesickness, personal relationship issues, nutrition, and time management. The research findings that I plan to present at the PC conference are based on an analysis of preliminary feedback data collected from the students who have been receiving counseling. This analysis is ultimately directed to an evaluation of the level of effectiveness of this new program to date.

## 2018 UNDERGRADUATE CONFERENCE ON HEALTH & SOCIETY PARTICIPANTS

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THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING THE 9TH ANNUAL UNDERGRADUATE  
CONFERENCE ON HEALTH & SOCIETY AT PROVIDENCE COLLEGE!

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