

2021-2022 Health Disparities Research Education Program (HDREP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



Shauntice Allen, PhD, MA
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**HDREP 2021
OHDR**

Dr. Shauntice Allen is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Environmental Health Sciences at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) School of Public Health. Her research program has a strong prevention focus at both the individual and community levels where she explores the inextricable link between environmental exposures and structural determinants of health. Dr. Allen is also an Associate Scientist with UAB's Center for Clinical and Translational Science where she collaborates with investigators in the disciplines of medicine, nursing, public health, and business, along with the greater Birmingham community. Dr. Allen previously led the community engagement effort for UAB's Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS). In that role, she was responsible for the development, implementation, and evaluation of the Birmingham Neighborhood Leaders Survey (BNLS), a community-designed survey tool used to explore issues affecting health in an urban metropolitan area. A two-time graduate of the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa with a BS in Biology, MA in Human and Environmental Sciences, and PhD in Health Education and Promotion from UAB, Dr. Allen has been involved in engaging both urban and rural communities in research, program evaluation, coalition building, and deployment of community-informed data collection methods.



Michael Behring, PhD, MSPH
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Dr. Michael Behring is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Pathology at UAB. He is a molecular epidemiologist with research experience in breast, colorectal, and other GI malignancies. His work seeks to integrate the pathologic and molecular characteristics of patient tumors with lifestyle factors, comorbidities, and health disparities. His current research focus is on how systemic and tumor-local markers of obesity impact patient survival in colorectal cancer.

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Amber Clark, MD
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Dr. Amber Clark is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) at UAB. She earned her undergraduate degree in Biology from Tougaloo College and her medical degree from the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University. Dr. Clark completed her residency in PM&R at UAB and served as Administrative Chief Resident her senior year. She thereafter joined faculty. Dr. Clark's research interests include the intersection of disability with minority status and how this interplay contributes to health disparities. Dr. Clark hopes to use the information obtained from her scholarly work to inform equitable policy change and to dismantle systemic injustices within our society.



Olamide Crown, PhD
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Dr. Olamide Crown is currently a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Department of Chemistry, Physics and Atmospheric Science, Jackson State University, Jackson Mississippi. She attended Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria (B.Tech., M. Tech., and PhD, Biochemistry). Her previous research focused on developing plant-based therapeutics (pharmacological potentials of medicinal plants against liver disease and metabolic diseases such as hypertension, cardiotoxicity, diabetes, and hyperlipidemia) in Africa to fight health disparity. Due to her desire in health equity, her research now focus on developing synthetic and natural product-based inhibitors of cathepsin L as therapeutic candidates for hepatocarcinoma. Her current project is supported by the NIH Research Centers in Minority Institutions-RCHDR pilot program at Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi.

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Annabelle L. Fonseca, MD, MHS
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USA**

Dr. Annabelle Fonseca is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Surgery at the University of South Alabama in Mobile, AL. After completing medical school in India, she completed her general surgery residency training at Yale New Haven Hospital and fellowship training in Complex General Surgical Oncology at MD Anderson Cancer Center. Her clinical practice focuses on hepatopancreatobiliary and foregut malignancies, and her research interest focuses on understanding, identifying and and reducing disparities in access to oncologic care.

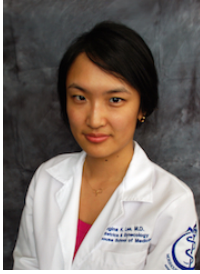


Hyejin Lee, PhD
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Dr. Hyejin Lee is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Accounting, Economics, and Finance at Tuskegee University Brimmer College of Business and Information Science. Dr. Lee received her Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Alabama in 2012. Her research primarily focuses on developing cointegration tests using properties of data such as non-normality and nonlinearity. Another stream of her current research is investigating potential applications of the methodologies introduced in her papers and conducting collaborative research on empirical issues by applying existing time series techniques.

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Regina Lee, MD
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Dr. Regina Lee is an Assistant Professor of Gynecologic Oncology in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Morehouse School of Medicine. She completed her medical degree at the Medical College of Georgia, residency at the Morehouse School of Medicine and her fellowship at the SUNY Downstate. Her research interests include in racial disparities in care of gynecologic cancer patients, molecular biology of aggressive gynecologic cancers and developing precision targets. She is also interested in patient education and outreach in low health literacy communities.



Jia Li, PhD, MS
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Dr. Jia Li a post-doctoral fellow in the UAB Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. I obtained my Ph.D. degree in Nutrition Sciences at Purdue University and continued my training in the area of nutrition and cardiometabolic health at UAB. Currently, my research focuses on improving dietary quality among individuals with spinal cord injury to improve their cardiometabolic health. I am interested in understanding and targeting diet disparity for individuals with spinal cord injury to improve their health and function.

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Maya D. Martin, DSW, LMSW
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Dr. Maya Martin is an Assistant Professor of Social Work at Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Alabama. Dr. Martin's research mainly focuses on the impact community senior centers have on the mental health of older adults. In addition to researching food security within the geriatric population, her work has also explored the reciprocal relationship between social support and mental wellness of rural older adults who are active participants at their local senior centers.



Ariane T. Mbemi, PhD
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**HDREP 2021
OHDRC**

Ariane T. Mbemi is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biology at Jackson State University (JSU). My research interests are gene-environment interaction in cancer development, health disparities factors associated with prostate and ovarian cancer in minority, and preclinical assessment of selected medicinal plants as a therapeutics drug against cancer. I obtained the Ph.D. in Environmental Science from JSU in 2018 and Master of Public Health with concentration in Epidemiology and Biostatistics. I also completed a postdoctoral research on the medical properties of *Vernonia calvonea* as a potential chemotherapeutics agent against ovarian cancer with RCMI- Center for Minority Health at JSU.

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Chitra Nayak, PhD
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Dr. Chitra Nayak is an associate professor in the department of Physics at Tuskegee University. She completed her Ph.D. in the area of theoretical physics (nonlinear dynamics and chaos) from Cochin University of Science and Technology, India. She conducted her postdoctoral research in the interdisciplinary field of bacterial biophysics at Dalhousie University. She did her second postdoctoral research at the department of physics, University of Toronto, Canada in collaboration with the University Health Network. The research focused in the area of computational immunology. Dr. Nayak did computational and theoretical modelling to explain the differential response of type I interferons which share the common Jak-STAT signaling pathway. Her current area of research work includes nonlinear analysis of bio-signals, the role of varying gene expression levels in health disparity, and education research. She has published her works in well reputed international journals and is cited more than 150 times by independent authors.



Avani Shah, PhD
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Dr. Avani Shah is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Alabama. She completed her training at the University of Alabama, earning a Master's degree in Social Work and a PhD in Clinical Psychology with a specialization in Gerontology. As a Hartford Faculty Scholar, she evaluated a health behavior change and depression intervention in the cardiac rehabilitation setting. Dr. Shah plans to focus on health disparities research among African Americans living in rural and urban settings. Her research interests include overcoming barriers to health and mental health care, health behavior change, technology based interventions, and psychological interventions for Cardiovascular Disease, Diabetes, and Depression.

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Geoffrey A. Silvera, PhD
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Dr. Geoffrey Silvera is a management scholar that is primarily focused on the influence of executive decision-makers on end-user outcomes. In the field of health care management, his work centers on the ability of hospital executive decision-makers (especially CEOs) to positively influence care quality, patient experience, and patient safety. In the field of diversity management, his work has centered on the institutionalization of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in local government administrations. He presently serves as an Assistant Professor of Health Services Administration at The University of Alabama-Birmingham in the School of Health Professions' Department of Health Services Administration. He previously served on the faculty at Auburn University. His doctorate in Health Policy and Administration was completed at the Pennsylvania State University, and both his masters and bachelors degrees were earned at the University of Florida. His research has been awarded by AcademyHealth and Southern Management Association conferences. In addition to his academic position, he presently serves on the editorial boards of *HCMR (Health Care Management Review)* and *QMHC (Quality Management in Health Care)*, and as the Associate Editor of *PXJ (Patient Experience Journal)*. He also serves on the executive board for the health care management division of the Academy of Management and is the incoming track-chair (Health Administration/Public Administration) for the Southern Management Association's annual conference.



Tamika Smith, PhD, MS
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Dr. Tamika Smith is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Health Behavior at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She earned her BS in Human Development and Family Services from the University of Alabama, MS in Counseling Psychology from the University of West Alabama, and her PhD in Health Education and Promotion from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Dr. Smith's former work as a Social Worker for the State of Alabama inspired her to focus her research on first-time parenting and adolescent parents. Her research advanced to developing interventions that identify protective factor to decrease sexual risk behaviors that lead to HIV and STI acquisition among African American adolescents and emerging adults.

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Tammi Taylor, PhD
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Dr. Tammi Taylor joined the faculty as an Assistant Professor of Genetics in the Department of Biology in the College of Science, Engineering, and Technology at Jackson State University. While at JSU, Dr. Taylor is a Research Center for Minority Investigators (RCMI) faculty member, a graduate and undergraduate student advisor, mentor, and professor. She obtained her PhD in Microbiology from Indiana University, a Masters of Science degree in Biology, from Jackson State University, and her Bachelors of Science degree in Biology from Tougaloo College. She was a postdoctoral fellow in the Fellowship in Research and Science Teaching (FIRST) at Emory University in the Departments of Anesthesiology and Neurology. Her current research focuses on comparing the risk factors of stroke in African American men and women Jackson Heart Study data from the years "2000-2013."



Rachel Wells, PhD, MSN
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Dr. Rachel Wells is a NIH/NINR-funded (1K99NR019854) postdoctoral fellow at the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Nursing. She received a BS in Microbiology, English, and Latin/Greek (2006) from the University of Alabama and MSN (2010) and PhD (2019) in Nursing from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She has an extensive clinical background in critical care and adult cardiovascular health. Dr. Wells' cardiovascular nursing practice, experiences in seeking specialty care as a rural dweller, and research experiences as a palliative nurse coordinator inspire her research interest in optimizing early palliative care models for under-resourced advanced heart failure patients and their family caregivers in the rural Deep South. As a scholar, she is interested in improving cardiovascular outcomes and pain management disparities and access to care for those living with advanced heart failure and other chronic, non-malignant illness.

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Ceren Yazar-Fisher, PhD
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Dr. Yazar-Fisher is an Associate Professor at the UAB Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Her translational research program focuses on understanding the pathophysiology of traumatic spinal cord injury (SCI) in the acute and chronic stages with the purpose of developing novel dietary and rehabilitation strategies to improve neuro-recovery, metabolism, and bowel function. Thus, her laboratory is currently developing and testing therapeutic diets and electrical stimulation programs to evaluate new ways to prevent neuronal death and promote recovery and function in the acute stages and improve body composition, gut microbiome composition, and skeletal muscle and metabolic health in the chronic stages of SCI. She has received several NIH and NIDILRR funding to support her investigations in SCI. She was recently selected as one of the 10 Outstanding Young Persons of Turkey by Junior Chamber International for her work in Academic leadership and/or accomplishment.



Mehran Yusuf, MD
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Dr. Mehran Yusuf is an assistant professor in the Department of Radiation Oncology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He received his Bachelor of Arts from Vanderbilt University in 2012, and his medical degree from the University of Louisville in 2016. He went on to complete an internship in internal medicine and residency in radiation oncology at the University of Louisville. His research interests include outcomes research for cancer patients with a focus in financial distress in patients with cancer receiving radiotherapy and relationships between financial strain and other health-related domains.