

2019-2020 Health Disparities Research Education Program (HDREP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



Keri Barron, PhD, RN
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**HDREP 2019
RCMAR**

Dr. Barron is an Assistant Professor in the Capstone College of Nursing at the University of Alabama. She earned her BSN from the Mississippi University for Women in 2012, MSN from William Carey University in 2013, and PhD in Nursing with an emphasis in leadership in 2017 from the University of Southern Mississippi. Dr. Barron's dissertation inspired her to transition her research from that of preventing heart failure readmissions to managing and preventing cardiovascular disease. Dr. Barron's research interest is the management and prevention of cardiovascular disease through physical activity in the underserved population.



Sarbinaz Bekmuratova, PhD
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**HDREP 2019
Creighton University**

Dr. Bekmuratova is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at Creighton University. She received her doctoral degree in Health Services Research, Administration and Policy from the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Her primary area of research has been violence against women including intimate partner violence, sex trafficking, sexual violence, reproductive health and justice, and structural violence against women. During her fellowship, she plans to focus on sex trafficking among minors in the United States, specifically exploring the factors associated with heightened risk for sex trafficking victimization of racial and ethnic minority girls, and girls with disabilities.

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**HDREP 2019
OHDR**

Dr. Bhuiyan received his Medical Degree in 1996, also completing his medical residency in Bangladesh. During this time he worked as a fellow in the pediatrics department for one year. He began his graduate school career at Tulane University, School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in New Orleans, LA in 1998. While here, his research interests in chronic diseases grew. He served as a Research Associate in the Bogalusa Heart Study and participated in other research projects supported by grants from the National Institute of Health. After graduating from Tulane with his MPH in Epidemiology in 2000, and obtaining his PhD in Public Health with an Epidemiology concentration in 2007, he joined the faculty at Jackson State University School of Public Health as a tenure-track Assistant Professor. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 2013. As a Principal Investigator, he completed a pilot grant project on depression and metabolic syndrome and the role of C-reactive protein using the Bogalusa Heart Study data. The project is supported by NIH via Research Centers in Minority Institutions for Environmental Health at JSU. He has published 29 publications in peer-reviewed journals and presented numerous presentations at local, regional, and national scientific conferences.



L. Joy Bradley, PhD
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**HDREP 2019
RCMAR**

Dr. Bradley is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Community Medicine and Population Health at the University of Alabama (UA). Dr. Bradley completed graduate studies at the University of Louisiana at Monroe earning a Master of Arts degree in Marriage and Family Therapy. She received her doctorate in Health Promotion and Behavior from the University of Georgia in 2017. Working collaboratively with other researchers in the Institute of Rural Health Research at UA, she is piloting a maternal health intervention, TERM (Telemedicine-Towards Empowering Rural Moms). Her other research areas focus on understanding the intersections of race, age, and sexual wellness. Investigating and improving reproductive health for communities of color are the overarching goals of her research career.

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Vanessa Cardenas Soto, MD
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**HDREP 2019
MSM/TU/UAB
Partnership**

Dr. Cardenas Soto is an Assistant Professor in Pediatric, Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition. She earned her medical degree at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Dr. Cardenas completed her pediatric residency and pediatric gastroenterology fellowship at the University of Michigan. She then joined the UAB faculty in August 2019. Her research experience has been focused on characterization of Drug-Induced Liver Injury and liver related outcomes in pediatric oncology patients. Her current clinical focus at UAB is in patients with Inflammatory Bowel Disease and malnutrition. Dr. Cardenas is interested in looking at how social economic differences, location (rural/urban), and race/ethnicity affect management and outcomes of patients with inflammatory



Kelly Dineen, PhD, JD, RN
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**HDREP 2019
Creighton University**

Dr. Dineen is the director of the health law program at Creighton University School of Law and an Assistant Professor of Law, where she teaches health law and policy, bioethics, and torts. She holds a PhD, with distinction, in health care ethics from Saint Louis University, as well as a JD, with a concentration in health care law. Dr. Dineen practiced nursing for over a decade before attending law school both in an ICU and a specialized neurosurgical practice. She is an expert on opioid policy, especially opioid prescribing and the impact of decision-making by policymakers and health care providers on patients with highly stigmatized conditions; especially pain, substance use disorder (addiction), and serious mental illness. Dr. Dineen has served by invitation for both the American Bar Association and the American Health Lawyers Association on national working groups on the opioid crisis and currently co-chair of the Opioid Task Force for the American Bar Association. She is also an invited participant in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) sponsored workshop on research priorities for ethics and chronic pain management. Dr. Dineen is the co-editor and author of several chapters in *Prescription Drug Diversion and Pain: History, Policy, and Treatment*, published by Oxford University Press in 2018. Her work has been published in leading journals, such as the *American Journal of Law and Medicine*, the *Journal of Law, Medicine, & Ethics*, *The Hastings Center Report*, *Narrative Inquiry in Bioethics*, *The Kansas Law Review*, and the *Houston Journal of Health Law and Policy*. She is frequently quoted by media outlets, including the *Washington Post*, *the Associated Press*, *Vice.com*, and *NPR*.

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OHDR**

Dr. Gray obtained her Bachelors of Science in Biomedical Engineering from Duke University and subsequently her medical degree at the University of Louisville. She completed her Internal Medicine residency at the Medical University of South Carolina followed by fellowships in both Gastroenterology and Transplant Hepatology at the University of Cincinnati. She then joined faculty at UAB in 2018 as an Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology. Her clinical interests are in non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) and she has established UAB's first NAFLD Clinic which is a multidisciplinary clinic in collaboration with UAB's Weight Loss Medicine center. Her specific areas of interest are in dietary intervention for the prevention and reversal of NAFLD, specifically in patients living in food deserts with limited access to healthy food options. This includes, but is not limited to patients with HIV who are known to have a higher prevalence of metabolic comorbidities (including NAFLD) than the general population.



Charles Holsey, MD, PhD
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**HDREP 2019
MHRC**

Dr. Holsey is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences at Alabama Agricultural & Mechanical University. He earned an MD from Meharry Medical College in 1998 and a PhD in Medical Immunology & Microbiology from the Medical College of Georgia in 1991. He also earned an MS in Cell and Molecular Biology from the Medical College of Georgia in Cell and Molecular Biology in 1989. Dr. Holsey served as the Chief Executive Officer of Physicians Providing Community Services Group, Inc. in Chattanooga, Tennessee from 1998-2006 supporting the needs of individuals with Developmental Disabilities. Dr. Holsey's research interest involves identifying effective methods of educating minority undergraduates with reference to the ominous outcomes of obesity and hypertension.

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Fokhrul Hossain, PhD
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Dr. Hossain is an Instructor in the Department of Genetics at LSU Health Sciences Center (LSUHSC), New Orleans. He received his doctorate degree from the Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology with an emphasis in Cancer Immunology from LSUHSC in 2015. He completed his postdoctoral training with the aim to understand the biology of the Triple Negative Breast Cancer (TNBC). He has also been working on TNBC health disparities in Louisiana since 2017. His current research trajectory focuses on the understanding of the underline mechanisms of TNBC health disparities using both public health and basic science approaches.



Karen Johnson, PhD
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Dr. Johnson is an Assistant Professor at the University of Alabama, School of Social Work. Dr. Johnson received her PhD from the Columbia University, School of Social Work and completed post-doctoral training in Global Mental Health and Implementation Science from Columbia University / New York State Psychiatric Institute in August of 2018. Dr. Johnson's research focuses on 1). Decreasing sexual risk behaviors and other co-occurring risks such as intimate partner violence, common mental health disorders among low-income, drug using women across the life course; and 2). Evidence-based intervention development, adaptation, acculturation, and implementation. In addition to her research training, Dr. Johnson has over twenty years of direct practice experience working with low-income women with high rates of incarceration, homelessness, drug use, and sexual risk behaviors. Dr. Johnson has also served as a co-investigator and supported intervention adaptation and implementation efforts for two studies (funded by the National Institute of Drug Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration).



Christina D. Jordan, PhD
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**HDREP 2019
OHDR**

Dr. Jordan is a co-Principal Investigator for the All-of-Us research program and Director of Operations for Biobank at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC). She earned a doctorate in Clinical Health Sciences from UMMC, and worked as a Post-doctoral Researcher for the Jackson Heart Study program where she analyzed associations between cardiovascular health and leukocyte telomere length in African Americans residing in the Hinds County, Mississippi area. Her research interests focus on biomedical research and biostatistics as it relates to curtailing healthcare disparities in minority communities. Dr. Jordan has collaborated with oncologists, geneticists, and population health researchers and hopes to expand her research to focus on merging large datasets to explore links in disease progression which effect health outcomes in underserved populations

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Dr. Knowlden is an Associate Professor of Health Science at the University of Alabama. Dr. Knowlden's research focuses on the pathogenesis and prevention of adiposity and sleep-associated cardiometabolic disease risk factors. Dr. Knowlden has been successfully funded to support his research agenda by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (GRANT12745492). He is a member of the American Academy of Health Behavior, American Public Health Association, American Academy of Sleep Medicine, and Society for Public Health Education and previously served as Associate Editor for the peer-reviewed journal, Health Education and Behavior. Dr. Knowlden earned his MS and PhD degrees from the University of Cincinnati. He received his MBA from Franklin University while employed as a Legislative Analyst for the Columbus City Council (Ohio). Dr. Knowlden is a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) registered by the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing.



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**HDREP 2019
MSM/TU/UAB
Partnership**

Dr. Manga is a Reproductive Health Specialist who hails from Cameroon, Central Africa. He is in a postdoctoral program in reproductive health at the University of Alabama at Birmingham; which he is completing remotely while working as a clinical consultant for the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services (CBCHS), a large faith-based health organization in Cameroon. Simon completed his PhD in Population Health/Nursing Sciences in the University of Massachusetts Boston. His major research interest is on cervical cancer prevention among women in Cameroon; especially the most vulnerable women, such as women living with HIV and female sex workers. His objective is to reduce the health disparities between them and the general population. He hopes to extend his work to other sub-Saharan African countries with high prevalence of cervical cancer. He is also interested in family planning, sexually transmitted infections, infertility, and sexual dysfunctions.

2019-2020 Health Disparities Research Education Program (HDREP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



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Partnership**

Dr. Rotimi is an adjunct faculty in the Department of Biology and Cancer Research at Tuskegee University. His research focuses on understanding the contributions of genomic and environmental factors, including pathogens, to cancer disparities in Blacks. He is studying this interaction using a cocktail of genomics, molecular, and bioinformatics tools. He recently completed a yearlong Fulbright Visiting Scholar Fellowship at the Department of Translational Genomics, Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California, where he investigated the inter- and intra- tumoral heterogeneity of different types of cancers using RNAseq, single-cell genomics and spatial transcriptomics. He is the Director of Translational Research for the Prostate Cancer Transatlantic Consortium (CaPTC) and Program Director of the CaPTC's NCI Clinical Proteomic Tumor Analysis Consortium (CPTAC) tissue source sites in West Africa. Through CaPTC and other transatlantic cancer research consortia that Dr. Rotimi belongs to, he is now leading investigations that are identifying the pathogenic genomic 'thread' that connects indigenous African populations and African Americans, with the objective of identifying possible intervention opportunities to achieve equity in cancer outcome.



Tracey Shannon, DNP, MSN, RN
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Dr. Shannon is the Associate Dean of the School of Nursing and Allied Health at Tuskegee University. She received her Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa in 1986, a Master of Science Degree in Nursing (1992) and a Doctor of Nursing Practice Degree (2011) from Troy University at Montgomery. Dr. Shannon has more than 25 years of experience as faculty and administrator in the Associate Degree Nursing Program of the Alabama Community College System. Her decision to transition to the university setting was based on a professional goal and passion to participate in research that would impact patient outcomes globally. Dr. Shannon's research trajectory is to develop programs related to health disparities identified in the Black Belt of Alabama with the intent of incorporating these programs into high school curricula. It is her belief that early intervention is the best approach to improving outcomes.

2019-2020 Health Disparities Research Education Program (HDREP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



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**HDREP 2019
MHRC/ Peds**

Dr. Smitherman is an Assistant Professor of Pediatric Rheumatology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She attended medical school at University of Texas Southwestern, completed residency training at Duke University, and completed fellowship training at Cincinnati Children's Hospital and Medical Center. She earned a Master of Science in Clinical and Translational Research from the University of Cincinnati and completed advanced quality improvement coursework through the James M. Anderson Center for Health Systems Excellence. Dr. Smitherman's research focuses on patient outcomes and health system interventions in children with chronic rheumatic diseases. She is particularly interested in studying disparities in care and outcomes in childhood lupus and designing targeted interventions to achieve healthcare equity for this population.



LaKesha A. Tables, MD, MPH, FAAP
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**HDREP 2019
MSM/TU/UAB
Partnership**

Dr. Tables is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Community Health/Preventive Medicine at Morehouse School of Medicine. She received her Doctor of Medicine degree and completed a Pediatrics Residency at the University of Tennessee Health Sciences Center in Memphis, TN. After practicing as a pediatrician in underserved communities in the southeast for ten years, Dr. Tables entered and completed a second residency in Preventive Medicine at Morehouse School of Medicine. During her training in Preventive Medicine, she also earned her Master of Public Health Degree. Her research interests include obesity and reducing racial and socioeconomic disparities in outcomes among children and adults with cancer.

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University of South
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Dr. Teng is an Associate Professor at the University of South Alabama School of Medicine in Mobile, AL. He has a main interest to repair or generate glomeruli with glomerulosclerosis in light chain deposition disease.



S. Justin Thomas, PhD, DBSM
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Dr. Thomas is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). He is the Director of the UAB Behavioral Sleep Medicine Clinic and Training Program and serves on the Board of Directors for the Society of Behavioral Sleep Medicine. He has research funding from the American Heart Association, the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute, and the National Institutes of Health. His research interests are translational, spanning basic, clinical, and population science and focus on disparities in sleep and circadian mechanisms underlying health and disease, including hypertension, chronic pain, and HIV.