

CHERISH

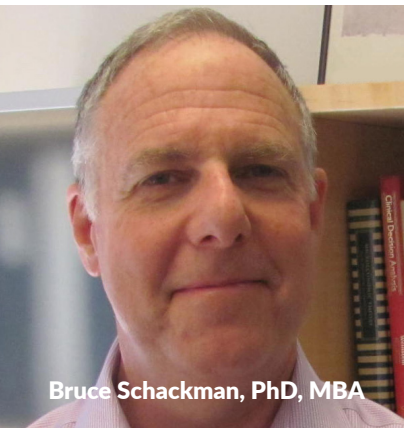
Center for Health Economics of Treatment Interventions for Substance Use Disorder, HCV, and HIV



NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2022

Congratulations Corner



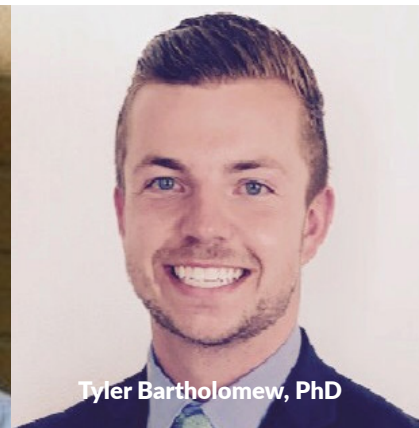
Bruce Schackman, PhD, MBA



Natasha Martin, DPhil



Joshua Barocas, MD



Tyler Bartholomew, PhD

CHERISH Director Bruce Schackman joins a group of illustrious Society for Medical Decision Making (SMDM) leaders as the named honoree of the Lee B. Lusted Sub-Award for Health Services Outcomes and Policy Research. In October 2021, SMDM selected Schackman, the Saul P. Steinberg Distinguished Professor and Executive Vice Chair of the Department of Population Health Sciences at Weill Cornell Medicine, for his work in the field of health services, health economics, HIV/AIDS, and substance use research.

CHERISH Research Affiliate Natasha Martin has been promoted to Professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases and Global Public Health at the University of California San Diego. Martin is a leading researcher on modeling the impact and cost-effectiveness of hepatitis C prevention and elimination strategies, particularly among people who inject drugs. Her dynamic transmission models have informed World Health Organization guidelines on HCV treatment and elimination strategies. A co-Principal investigator and organizer of the OUD Modeling Consortium funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, Martin continues to innovate modeling practices to inform public policy.

CHERISH Research Affiliate Joshua Barocas, an assistant professor at the Boston Medical Center (BMC) for more than three years, has joined the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus as an associate professor of medicine. During his time at BMC, Barocas led an interdisciplinary research program that focuses on improving health outcomes for patients with infectious diseases, including HIV and HCV, and substance use disorders. Barocas continues to serve as the Director of the Health Economics and Modeling Core for the Massachusetts HEALing Communities Study.

Former CHERISH pilot grant recipient Tyler Bartholomew is now a research assistant professor in the Division of Health Services Research & Policy at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. A co-Principal Investigator of the University of Miami Harm Reduction Research Group, he recently published a study in the *Harm Reduction Journal* highlighting how syringe service programs are effective and cost-saving interventions for people who inject drugs.

Inside This Issue:

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Improving Opioid Overdose – Modeling For Policy Change



In the summer of 2021, the National Institute on Drug Abuse awarded Bruce Schackman, CHERISH director and Saul P. Steinberg Distinguished Professor at Weill Cornell Medicine, and Natasha Martin, CHERISH Research Affiliate and professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of California San Diego, a 3-year scientific conference grant to provide simulation modeling groups an opportunity to swiftly develop best modeling practices to inform public policy and reduce fatal opioid overdoses and injection-related hepatitis C and HIV infections in North America.

Drug overdose deaths have been increasing rapidly in the United States, contributing to nearly 90,000 deaths in the 12 months ending November 2020. Overdose deaths have also been rising in Canada during 2020, and the risks for greater opioid use are increasing in Mexico. Simulation models have demonstrated their relevance in informing policies and interventions to control the spread of COVID-19 and will continue to be a valuable tool to address the opioid crisis that is surging in this continent.

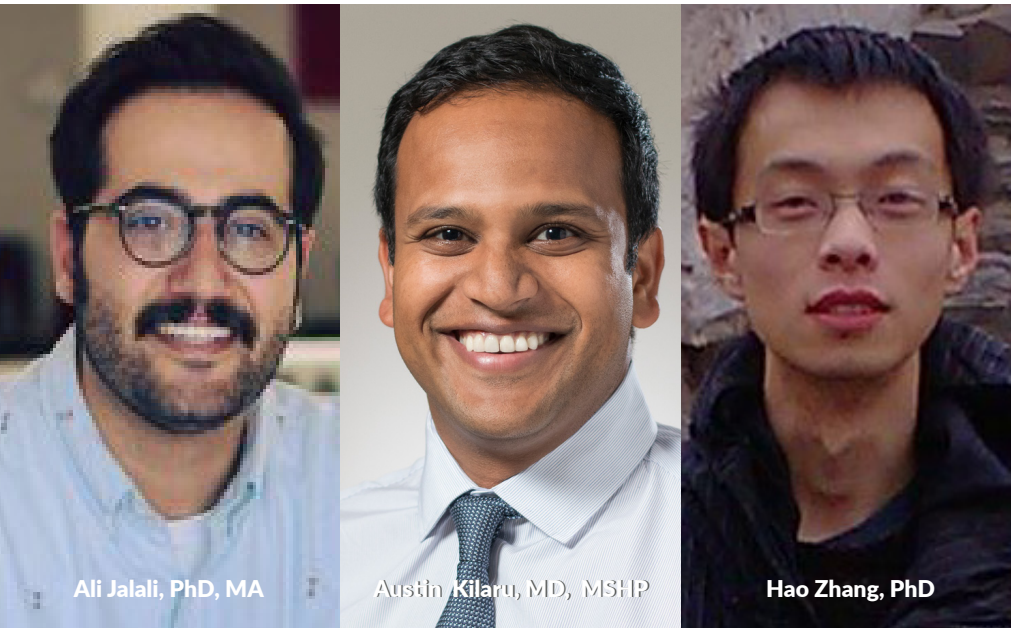
In October 2021, the organizing committee, including Schackman, Martin, CHERISH Population Data & Modeling Core Director Benjamin Linas, and CHERISH Research Affiliate Ahmed Bayoumi, hosted the first conference, “Improving Opioid Overdose Modeling for Policy Change.” The forum was divided into three sessions: “Addressing Public Health Data Gaps,” chaired by Eli Rosenberg, Deputy Director for Science, in the Office of Public Health, at the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and an associate professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the University of Albany; “Engaging People with Lived Experience: Best Practices,” chaired by Bayoumi, a professor in the Institute of Health Policy, Management, and Evaluation at the University of Toronto; and, “How Can Models Inform Overdose Prevention in Criminal Justice Settings?” chaired by Sarah Larney, an assistant professor at the University of Montreal. The meeting featured a robust panel who discussed their work happening on the ground across North America: Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Mexico City, and New York.

Panelists included:

- **Leo Beletsky**, JD, MPH, School of Law and Bouvé College of Health Sciences at Northeastern University, Boston, MA
- **Annick Borquez**, PhD, University of California San Diego, San Diego, CA
- **Allan Clear**, New York State Department of Health, New York, NY
- **Rubén Diazconti**, MS, Clínica Condesa, Mexico City
- **Zoe Dodd**, MS, South Riverdale Community Health Centre, Toronto, ON
- **David Frank**, PhD, NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing, New York, NY
- **Jonathan Giftos**, MD, Project Renewal, New York, NY
- **Angélica Ospina-Escobar**, PhD, CIDE-Central Region, Mexico City
- **Harold Pollack**, PhD, MPP, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL
- **Amanda Slaunwhite**, PhD, Provincial Overdose Cohort at the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control, Vancouver, BC

During the next three years, Schackman and Martin will continue to bring simulation modelers and policymakers together to further the science of simulation modeling by addressing issues of model design, data availability, integrity, and translation.

Catching Up With Pilot Grant Recipients



Ali Jalali, PhD, MA

Austin Kilaru, MD, MSHP

Hao Zhang, PhD

Every spring, the Center for Health Economics of Treatment Interventions for Substance Use Disorder, HCV, and HIV (CHERISH) awards competitive pilot grants to investigators to develop and conduct health economic research in our areas of interest, with a focus on supporting junior investigators and trainees. Funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, CHERISH pilot grants provide these investigators an opportunity to initiate new research and address the feasibility of the proposed study before seeking additional funding.

While 2020 ushered in new challenges for researchers, the sixth cohort of pilot grant recipients, Ali Jalali, Austin Kilaru, and Hao Zhang, concluded their funding year with new analytical skills and unique accomplishments. “We have been fortunate with all of our pilot grant recipients. They do great and interesting work, and this class was no different,” says CHERISH Pilot Grant & Training Core Director Brandon Aden.

As CHERISH welcomes a new group of pilot grant recipients, we are delighted to continue supporting the sixth cohort on their journeys as early career researchers.

How has this pilot grant shaped or supported your career?

Ali Jalali, PhD, MA

Weill Cornell Medicine

CHERISH organized multiple avenues and virtual events in the past year for early career investigators like myself to network and build a mentorship group with CHERISH Research Affiliates and investigators. Effective mentorship and access to a network of interdisciplinary scholars is invaluable at this stage in my academic career.

Austin Kilaru, MD, MSHP

University of Pennsylvania

The experience has opened the often siloed work that can happen in my specialty, and it brought together investigators with similar interests from different institutions together. The research becomes more feasible and fun, like we’re all pulling together intellectual and analytical firepower.

Hao Zhang, PhD

Weill Cornell Medicine

This project was the first time that I served as a principal investigator. Through the process I became familiar with the grant application procedure, enriched my research and publication experiences, and gained insight on the impact of prescription drug monitoring programs among different populations.

Research Highlights

The Impact of Recreational Cannabis Laws and Cannabis Use Disorder Among Pregnant Patients

To date, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists advises pregnant patients not to use cannabis because of the increased risks of health complications to the pregnant individual and the newborn. However, as states expand access to recreational or medical cannabis, there is growing evidence of increased cannabis use and positive perceptions of cannabis among pregnant patients. To guide public health interventions during a time of increased cannabis use and legalization, lead author Angélica Meinhofer, a CHERISH Research Affiliate and an assistant professor of population health sciences at Weill Cornell Medicine, shares new comprehensive findings that report how cannabis liberalization policies and cannabis use disorder impact maternal and newborn health.

Meinhofer A, Witman AE, Hinde JM, Simon K. *Marijuana liberalization policies and perinatal health. J Health Econ.* 2021;80:102537. Epub ahead of print.

Meinhofer A, Hinde JM, Keyes KM, Lugo-Candelas C. *Association of Comorbid Behavioral and Medical Conditions With Cannabis Use Disorder in Pregnancy. JAMA Psychiatry.* 2022;79(1):50-58.

Ending HIV in the United States Will Require a Substantial Financial Commitment

“What will it take to end HIV in the United States?” is a pressing question posed by public health officials, researchers, and policy makers alike. CHERISH Population Data & Modeling Core Director Benjamin Linas seeks to answer that question by amplifying notable results from a simulation modeling study published by researchers at Johns Hopkins. In an editorial issued in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Linas underscores the urgency to expand comprehensive and population-wide HIV interventions to reduce HIV transmission.

Ending HIV in the United States Will Require a Substantial Financial Commitment. Linas BP. Ann Intern Med. 2021;174(11):1620-1621.

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