

# CHERISH

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



NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2022

## Congratulations Corner



**Zachary Meisel**, CHERISH Dissemination & Policy Core director, has been promoted to Professor of Emergency Medicine at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. An accomplished faculty member and principal investigator, Meisel continues to test and innovate persuasive narratives to translate research for patients, providers, and policy makers.

**Margaret Lowenstein**, CHERISH Dissemination & Policy Core co-director, received an NIH career development award (K23) to improve treatment continuity for hospitalized patients with opioid use disorder. Lowenstein's study is critical as emergency departments are increasingly becoming reachable moments for health care providers to engage with people who use substances.

**Rachel Epstein**, CHERISH Research Affiliate, received an NIH career development award (K01) to improve treatment for opioid use disorder and HCV infection among pregnant women who inject drugs. Epstein's proposed study aims to evaluate the clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of employing interventions in perinatal care to reduce opioid-related mortality and HCV transmission.

**Catherine Maclean**, CHERISH Research Affiliate, became an associate professor at the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University in August 2022. Maclean is an accomplished health and labor economist whose work focuses on substance use, mental health, and public policies.

**Natasha Martin**, CHERISH Research Affiliate, will lead a successfully renewed T32 training program aimed at fostering the next generation of prevention scientists with expertise in HIV and related co-morbidities among people who use substances. Funded for its fourth cycle, the program will mentor four predoctoral and four postdoctoral fellows and offer trainees an opportunity to develop as independent investigators.

**Kosali Simon**, CHERISH Research Affiliate, was elected as the American Society of Health Economists (ASHEcon) President-elect. She will become President of ASHEcon at the end of the 2023 ASHEcon conference that will be held on June 10 - 14 in St. Louis, MO.

**Kara Rudolph, Dhruv Khurana, and Xiao Zang**, became CHERISH Research Affiliates.

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# Five Researchers Receive CHERISH Pilot Awards to Advance the Treatment of Substance Use Disorders, HCV, and HIV



The Center for Health Economics of Treatment Interventions for Substance Use Disorder, HCV, and HIV (CHERISH) is proud to recognize five early-stage researchers who each received up to \$20,000 in one-year pilot grant funding beginning in the Spring of 2022. Through CHERISH pilot grants, researchers can investigate innovative methodologies or applications, collect preliminary data to inform external grant proposals, and collaborate with investigators at CHERISH who have complementary expertise.

## Dion Allen, MSc

Dion Allen is a doctoral candidate in the Sociobehavioral and Administrative Pharmacy Department at Nova Southeastern University College of Pharmacy. Allen finds immense value in connecting with experienced investigators through the CHERISH pilot grant. With the support of CHERISH Research Affiliate Ioana Popovici, Allen's pilot project, "An Economic Analysis of Factors Associated with Preexposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV Prevention Use Among Women," will identify gaps contributing to low PrEP uptake in women and the potential role of family planning clinics and specialty substance abuse treatment centers to facilitate uptake.

## Shimrit Keddem, PhD, MPH, MUSA

Shimrit Keddem is a new investigator in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health at the University of Pennsylvania and the Department of Veterans Affairs. An experienced health services researcher, Keddem will use the CHERISH pilot grant opportunity to collaborate with clinical colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania, learn about the processes for rolling out new technologies within a primary healthcare setting, and develop strategies for improving the implementation of injectable PrEP to serve historically marginalized patients.

## Megan Rose Curtis, MD, MS

Megan Rose Curtis is an associate physician at Brigham and Women's Hospital and a first-year post-doctoral fellow in the Boston University Clinical HIV/AIDS Research Training (BU-CHART) Program at the Boston Medical Center. Through the BU-CHART program, Curtis is constructing a novel state-transition simulation model to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of interventions focused on improving health and economic outcomes for individuals with perinatally-acquired HCV. She applied for the CHERISH pilot grant to gain proficiency in analyzing large databases to evaluate healthcare utilization in this population.

## Revathy Suryanarayana, MSc

Revathy Suryanarayana is a doctoral candidate pursuing her PhD in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management at Cornell University. Skilled at performing data analysis and econometric modeling, Suryanarayana looks forward to working in a multidisciplinary setting to analyze health insurance claims datasets in the U.S. and meeting other investigators.

Through her pilot project, "The Impact of Out-of-Pocket Costs on Initiation and Completion of HCV Treatment Among Medicare Beneficiaries," Suryanarayana will study the relationship between out-of-pocket costs and hepatitis C virus (HCV) treatment initiation and completion among Medicare patients diagnosed with HCV, including older Baby Boomers and younger Medicare beneficiaries who have mental health and substance use disorders.

## Yunyu Xiao, PhD

Yunyu Xiao is an assistant professor in the Division of Health Informatics in the Department of Population Health Sciences at Weill Cornell Medicine. Her research often examines social determinants of health in relation to mental health, suicide, and minority populations. Her pilot study, "Polysubstance Use Phenotypes and Healthcare Utilization among U.S. Youth with Suicide Attempts," aims to address alarming trends of substance-use-related suicide attempts and overdose deaths among youth.

Read the full interview on our website:  
[www.cherishresearch.org/news-blog/](http://www.cherishresearch.org/news-blog/)

# Intern Spotlight

CHERISH welcomed four astounding interns this summer: Grace L. Edwards, Jessica Girard, Lyric Harris, and Antara Saha. The interns matched with CHERISH investigators to gain new perspectives on how health policy, health economics, and substance use research come together to inform interventions that can have a positive impact on populations affected by substance use. Learn more about their academic pursuits and the time they have spent with the investigators.

## Grace L. Edwards

SUMR Scholar at University of Pennsylvania



**Degree program:** Bachelor of Arts in Health & Societies; Minor in Journalistic Writing

**Most skillful at:** Singing for fun (but is also classically trained on the violin)

Based on my previous encounters with educational and health inequities, I hope to improve healthcare services through the use of medical journalism, patient narratives, and participatory medical research. In addition, I hope to educate communities of color on health practices through journalistic writing, medical research, and the practice of medicine.

## Jessica Girard

NIDA Summer Research Intern



**Degree program:** Bachelor of Science in Cognitive and Behavioral Neuroscience; Minor in Chemistry

**Most skillful at:** Collegiate horseback riding

While studying at the University of Florida, I took a class called, "Neurobiology of Substance Abuse," which I loved. The NIDA internship was the perfect opportunity to combine my academic interest in drug addiction research with my passion for advocacy. The ineffective policy imposed on the vulnerable clients at the public defender's office was extremely frustrating to witness and left me questioning how long-term treatment could be effectively delivered to these clients. I chose to match with Dr. Sean Murphy because I knew an understanding of health policy and economics was crucial to actualizing my end goal of developing treatments for criminally-involved individuals with psychiatric disorders.

## Lyric Harris

NIDA Summer Research Intern



**Degree program:** Bachelor of Science in Healthcare Management and Policy

**Most skillful at:** Building Legos (especially with Marvel sets)

This internship has taught me a lot about how providing care for individuals who use substances takes a multifaceted approach and requires careful consideration of factors that affect an individual and how they engage with treatment. The work I have done so far also trained me to look at barriers to care through a lens that examines the structural factors and the challenges they pose to individuals and groups receiving care. I find these experiences helpful in guiding how I approach becoming a family nurse practitioner and finding the right treatment for patients.

## Antara Saha

NIDA Summer Research Intern



**Degree program:** Bachelor of Science in Psychology; Concentrations in Biology and Chemistry

**Most skillful at:** Reading, writing, and speaking in Spanish, French, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, and Punjabi

I am very grateful to have experienced a different side of academia so early on in my professional career. As I work through this internship, I have come to realize my interest in conducting research on a national level and making an impact on health care policy. Personally, I am very glad I was paired with Dr. Angélica Meinhofer who is so dedicated to her work. After being exposed to various facets of the work we do, I have a better understanding of how certain fields like clinical psychology and health care policy overlap and differ.

Read the full interview on our website:  
[www.cherishresearch.org/news-blog/](http://www.cherishresearch.org/news-blog/).

## Research Highlights

**Medicaid Hepatitis C Virus Treatment Policies: Impact on Testing and Treatment in the Commercially Insured.** Epstein RL, Wang J, White LF, Kapadia SN, Morgan JR, Bao Y, Linas BP. *Am J Prev Med.* 2022 Jun 17:S0749-3797(22)00161-1. Epub ahead of print.

Led by former CHERISH pilot grant recipient **Rachel Epstein**, this study showed that relaxing Medicaid policies that restrict HCV treatment increased HCV screening rates among commercially insured individuals. This research builds upon Epstein's CHERISH pilot study funded in 2019.

**Prevalence of HIV Preexposure Prophylaxis Prescribing Among Persons With Commercial Insurance and Likely Injection Drug Use.**

Streed CG Jr, Morgan JR, Gai MJ, Laroche MR, Paasche-Orlow MK, Taylor JL. *JAMA Netw Open.* 2022 Jul 1;5(7):e2221346.

HIV PrEP is highly effective for preventing HIV. Yet, in this new study, coauthor and CHERISH investigator **Jake Morgan** and colleagues found that HIV PrEP delivery for commercially insured people who use substances remains low.

**Cost-effectiveness of extended-release injectable naltrexone among incarcerated persons with opioid use disorder before release from prison versus after release.** Jalali A, Jeng PJ, Polsky D, Poole S, Ku YC, Woody GE, Murphy SM. *Journal for Substance Abuse Treatment.* 2022. Epub ahead of print.

Individuals with OUD involved with the criminal justice system have a high risk of overdosing after their release. A new study led by CHERISH Research Affiliate **Ali Jalali** shows how extended-release naltrexone can be a cost-effective treatment for that population.

**Medicare Part D Coverage Restrictions and Patient Cost-Sharing for Opioids Commonly Used for Cancer Pain, 2015-2021.** Bao Y, Zhang H, Hartung DM, Witkin LR, Paice JA. *JCO Oncol Pract.* 2022 Jul 7:OP2100867. Epub ahead of print.

In a recent study led by CHERISH investigator **Yuhua Bao**,

findings suggest how extraordinary increases in coverage restrictions and out-of-pocket costs in the past seven years may limit access to opioids for cancer-related pain.

### WHERE TO FIND CHERISH

**The 13th National Harm Reduction Conference**  
October 13-16, 2022  
Presented by the National Harm Reduction Coalition

**The 10th International Conference on Health and Hepatitis Care in Substance Users (INHSU)**  
October 19-21, 2022

**The Society for Medical Decision Making (SMDM) 44th Annual North American Meeting**  
October 23-26, 2022

**The Association for Multidisciplinary Education and Research in Substance use and Addiction (AMERSA) 46th Annual Conference**  
November 10-12, 2022

**The 15th Annual Conference on the Science of Dissemination and Implementation in Health**  
December 11-14, 2022

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