

Society for Epidemiologic Research

Spring Newsletter 2012



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President's Message

Dr. Polly Marchbanks

Dear Colleagues and Friends...Greetings! I have been in my position as President of SER since June 2011. I have three comments about these past months.

First, it is a privilege to serve as your President. Our organization remains strong and promises to become even stronger, thanks to the continuing efforts of a superb SER staff, as well as a dedicated and forward-thinking Board.

Second, SER is not content to stay the same – SER is committed to evolving and growing, to more effectively meet the changing needs of our membership. What exactly does that mean? For starters, it means that SER is venturing into the realm of social media to maximize our

JOIN US IN MINNEAPOLIS

SER's 2012 Annual Meeting will be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota from June 27–30th. Participate in our Pre-Conference Workshops on Wednesday, June 27th.

Registration

Register before May 18th to receive the early registration rates. www.epiresearch.org/meeting/reginfo.html.

Accommodations

Stay at our conference hotel, The Hyatt Regency Minneapolis. www.epiresearch.org/meeting/accom.html

Workshops

Register to attend our pre-conference workshops. We are offering seven different workshop options. Discounts available for attending multiple workshops. More workshop details on pages 8 & 9 or visit our website at www.epiresearch.org/meeting/workshops.html.

President's Message Continued...

communication - be on the look-out for more developments and updates soon. Also, we are making exciting headway on our new initiative to foster the professional development of not only students and post-docs, but also Early Stage Investigators (ESIs). Yes, students and post-docs will still be a major focus of our organization, but we have realized that ESIs could benefit from enhanced attention as well. You can read more about the ESI initiative in this newsletter. Finally, and very importantly, we are exploring ways to open the doors for greater direct member involvement within our organization. One avenue for this will be through committee work, such as the Communications Committee which is leading our social media activities. Our hope and expectation is that greater member involvement will have reciprocal benefits for individual members, as well as the organization as a whole.

Third, your SER staff and Board have crafted a blockbuster annual meeting for this coming June 27-30, 2012, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Don't miss it! The meeting will be a time for intellectual renewal, learning with colleagues and friends, and deepening your sense of connection to the field of epidemiology. Ward Cates will be our Keynote Speaker – reading Ward's personal odyssey in this newsletter will give you a flavor of how dynamic his presentation is sure to be. Sherman James will give the John C. Cassel Lecture – Sherman is always a powerful speaker, but this lecture is certain to be especially poignant, since Sherman knew Dr. Cassel. We are fortunate beyond measure to have both Ward and Sherman on our annual meeting line-up. And, thanks to the enduring creativity of Allen Wilcox, our meeting will additionally feature many exciting posters, spotlight sessions, roundtables, and symposia.

In closing, the months since June 2011 have been amazing ones for me. I am reminded of the philosophical concept of a "beginner's mind". This is an attitude that is not clouded by preconceptions (especially about how things used to be or ought to be), and it is not pessimistic due to previous disappointments or complacent due to previous successes. A "beginner's mind" is a fresh, open, and ready perspective that can entertain many possibilities. Ward commented in his personal odyssey that he still can't drive fast enough every day to get to work. As SER President, I can't seem to run fast enough to keep up with the new ideas and energy of the SER staff, Board, and members. And, that makes SER really fun! Come join the fun in Minneapolis!

All best wishes, Polly



Polly Marchbanks, PhD
SER President
Centers for
Disease Control (CDC)

SER ELECTIONS NOW OPEN

Ballots for the 2012 elections are available online at: <http://www.epiresearch.org/members>. Vote online for your chance to win one of three **free memberships!*** Candidate statements can be found on pages 14-17.

President—Elect Candidates

Germaine Louis
National Institutes of Health

Pat O'Campo
University of Toronto

Member at Large Candidates

Maria Glymour
Harvard School of Public Health

Roland Thorpe
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg
School of Public Health

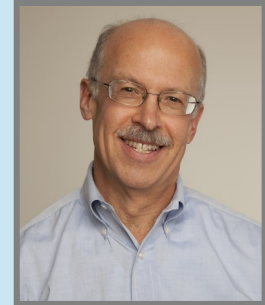
**Voting is open only to current members. Login to the 'Members Only' section is required in order to vote. Renew your membership online at www.epiresearch.org/membership.*

**Deadline for voting is
Monday, May 21, 2012.**

ESI Emerging Scholar Initiative

SER's objective for ESI is to foster the professional development of Early Stage Investigators, defined as junior faculty in academia and early stage professionals in governmental positions or the private sector.

Join us Thursday, June 28th from 12:15—1:15pm for our inaugural ESI Session at SER's Annual Meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota. We will begin with **"Time Management"** from Dr. David A. Savitz. Following Dr. Savitz we want to hear from you. Help us structure SER's ESI program to cater to your interests and needs. Helping ESI's grow and meet career goals is a critical mission of SER and we as a society are well positioned to use our membership, annual meeting, and other resources to play a significant role in facilitating this effort.

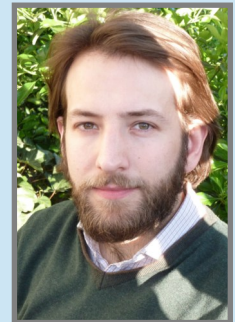


David A. Savitz, Ph.D.

Professor, Departments of Epidemiology and
Obstetrics and Gynecology
Brown University

2012 ABRAHAM LILIENFELD PRIZE PAPER

Congratulations to the 2012 Abraham Lilienfeld Student Prize Paper Winner, Henrik Salje. Henrik is a PhD student at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. He will present his paper entitled, "Revealing the micro-scale spatial signature of dengue transmission and immunity in an urban population" during the Friday morning Plenary Session at SER's Annual Meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota.



PRELIMINARY PROGRAM

The Preliminary Program will be available soon. NEW this year—online searchable Program! A beta version will be available online in the next 2-3 weeks—look for it on the SER website.

ALUMNI REUNIONS

A number of universities have organized successful receptions for faculty, alumni, and students at past SER meetings. If you would like to have a reunion at the conference hotel, you may contact: Monie Kocher, Sr. Catering Manager. Her phone number is 612.596.4533 and her email address is monie.kocher@hyatt.com.

2012 KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Willard Cates, Jr., M.D., M.P.H.

SER and ME: A Personal Odyssey



So how did I become an epidemiologist anyway? My odyssey began during the mid-1960s, right after my undergraduate years. I was a dilettante student in the UK, where the British system of education is far different than what Americans experience. In England, students spend more time self-educating than in formal classes. No intervening tests, lots of discussions, one final exam after 2 years. In short, I found in America I had so much work to do I didn't have time to think, while in England I had so much thinking to do I didn't have time to work. This led to a personal transformation in which I evolved from being a libertarian individualist to a more socially concerned, population-level thinker. I became absorbed with Jeremy Bentham and his utilitarian philosophy of "the greatest good for the greatest number." I also decided to go into medicine, with an emphasis on public health – "the greatest health good for the greatest number."

Returning to medical school for the second half of the 1960s, the whole world had changed. I was the oldest person in my medical school class, which together with the England experience allowed me to have a certain perspective on the molecular-level lectures we had in our first year. I became even more committed to the concept of population-level public health and the greater human good it could achieve. Moreover, the science of epidemiology seemed the natural foundation for public health actions.

Now let's fast forward to how I got to my main field of scientific discipline – sexual health. In my case, it was largely serendipity, a testimony to the ways in which life's unplanned vicissitudes can have a happy ending. In 1974, after my clinical training, I joined CDC in hopes of furthering a career in preventive medicine and learning its basic science of epidemiology. The CDC scientific farm system – then and now – is the Epidemic Intelligence Service, a two-year fellowship in applied epidemiology. The EIS officers receive their initial CDC assignments through a system analogous to residency matching. During the match weekend, I listed a variety of positions, any of which I thought would allow optimal development of my epidemiologic skills. Like nearly all my EIS classmates, the odds were that I would probably wind up in one of the infectious disease or state health department positions. However, when the match was announced, I had been assigned to the Family Planning Evaluation Division in its Abortion Surveillance Branch. Though somewhat surprised – since I could not distinguish a surgical curette from a calculator – nonetheless, this act of fate provided amazing career opportunity.

At the time, the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision had just been announced, and the public health impact of legalizing abortion needed to be assessed. This "natural experiment" in public policy provided a remarkable opportunity for a developing epidemiologist. We were able for the first time to collect data about the numerators and denominators for this important issue facing women with unintended pregnancies. Together with my CDC colleagues, we learned more about a single surgical procedure – legally induced abortion – than we know about any other operation. The experience was both scientifically and programmatically rewarding – every year we had an important SER presentation, and we were able to translate our epidemiologic findings rapidly into policy actions. During the 1970s, our data directly influenced Supreme Court decisions, Congressional legislation, Presidential Executive Orders and even HHS funding – heady stuff....

These data, plus others collected during the 1970s, clearly established the safety of legal abortion. However, the epidemiologic evidence was not welcomed by all. By 1981, the political realities of a new administration bit. I was offered several career changing directions, the most intriguing of which was the fledgling Task Force for Kaposi Sarcoma/Opportunistic Infections. The rest is history, as they say. Because of these two acts of fate, the EIS match and the 1980 election, neither of my own choosing, my career transcended the two main disciplines of what has become the field of sexual health – reproductive health on one side, and sexually transmitted infections on the other.

During the next decade, HIV managed to infect nearly a million Americans. The role of HIV political activism in influencing public health became honed to a fine art. At CDC, those of us involved with HIV saw our budgets rise tenfold, and our political savvy in dealing with activists on both the left and the right increase even faster. We were heckled at times, chained to our desks at times, and lauded for our pioneering public policies at times.

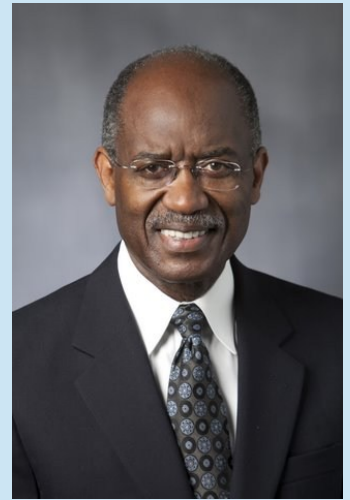
During these controversial years of abortion and AIDS, SER provided a wonderful scientific haven. At the annual meetings, my colleagues and I could present our methods and findings to an objective audience whose main goal was shedding light rather generating heat. Truth rather than political gain was our SER goal. Moreover, by serving in leadership capacities for the organization, I was able to learn from, and contribute to, our burgeoning science.

During this same interval, HIV ramped up its international pace. The generalized HIV destruction in Africa was recognized, a "concentrated HIV fortress in Asia was built, and an emerging HIV foothold in Eastern Europe was established. In 1994, it became time for me to venture outside the confines of Atlanta's Interstate 285 and move to Family Health International in North Carolina. This opportunity provided a wonderful chance to become involved at the global level with the reproductive health and HIV agendas. Seventeen years later, I still can't drive fast enough every day to get to work.

So, that's my odyssey – part choice, part chance, 100% satisfying, and founded on an epidemiologic tradition.

2012 JOHN C. CASSEL LECTURE

Sherman A. James, PhD



John Cassel: An Appreciation and Some Brief Reflections

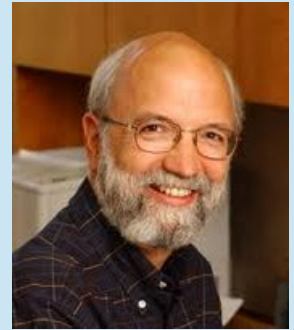
It seems like just a few years ago, rather than an astounding 39 years, that I first met John Cassel. In early 1973, he was the renowned Chairman of the Department of Epidemiology at the University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill, and I was an “ABD” (all but dissertation) graduate student in psychology at Washington University in St. Louis. On a lark, I had accepted the invitation from a search committee, appointed by Cassel, to interview for the “psychologist” faculty position that had opened up the previous year due to the departure of David Jenkins (of Type A Behavior fame) to Boston University. My meeting with Cassel took place at the end of the first day of my two day visit. When I walked into his office around 4pm, mentally exhausted after a long day of trying to understand what virologists, parasitologists, health services researchers, cardiovascular and cancer epidemiologists were talking about, I had already concluded that, under no circumstances, would I accept this job even if they were foolish enough to offer it to me. Fiddling with his pipe, Cassel sat in a chair behind his book-cluttered desk and warmly invited me to sit in a chair directly facing him. After an exchange of pleasantries, but before I could signal my nonchalance, he began talking about the field of epidemiology, and more specifically about social epidemiology, and why I – a budding social scientist and son of the American South (where, he emphasized, racial health disparities abounded) - should be interested in a field like epidemiology where a love of science and a commitment to social justice are mutually reinforcing. With that, he got my full attention, and kept it for the next hour as he explained the interdisciplinary character of epidemiology, the department’s teaching and research programs, and how I might fit into their plans for the future- if offered the job. To my later surprise and delight, they did offer me the job. And, beyond that, because of Cassel’s remarkable capacity to mentor junior faculty and graduate students alike, my transformation from psychologist to social epidemiologist went more smoothly than it might have otherwise.

Cassel died in 1976, at age 55; I was his last faculty hire. Many of the students and junior faculty he mentored, directly, are now approaching retirement, but there is every reason to believe that they passed on to their students Cassel’s inspiring vision of what the science of epidemiology - at its best – could be.

John Cassel was one of the Founders of SER, which was created 44 years ago explicitly to foster meaningful, extended dialogue between young and more senior epidemiologists on an annual basis. By almost any metric, SER has fulfilled this mission, spectacularly. In 2007-2008, I was privileged to serve as SER president, a role I thoroughly enjoyed. SER has honored me, once again, by the invitation to give the Cassel Lecture at our 2012 annual meeting, in Minneapolis. I hope to see you there.

From the dust-bin of SER history: Innovations of 1998

Allen Wilcox, M.D., Ph.D.



During its early years, the SER annual was a mix of plenary sessions, symposia, and small concurrent sessions of 10-minute talks, with posters relegated to a hallway somewhere. The concurrent sessions were put together by the program organizers from the highest-scoring abstracts and assembled (loosely) by topic – inevitably leaving a motley collection in a session labeled “Potpourri.” (For those assigned to this session, it felt more like “Dregs.”) Once the oral sessions were assembled, moderators were drafted to lead them.

By the time I became SER’s president-elect in 1997, attendance was starting to fall off, especially among the senior people. Some reorganization seemed in order. Lynn Lyon and Peggy Christensen were willing to consider just about any crazy notion that might inject some new life into the meeting. The SER 1998 meeting in Chicago became our laboratory for experiment.

Posters come out of the closet

In most scientific disciplines, posters are the main way to present new results – posters allow in-depth discussion and relaxed interactions. Why couldn’t epidemiologists do the same? We moved the posters to a nice room, made more time in the program for the poster sessions, brought in food, offered prizes for the best posters, and organized “poster tours” with senior people commenting on their favorites. The goal was that people should feel that an invitation to present a poster at SER was an honor, not a consolation prize.

Birth of Spotlight Sessions

The other side of this equation was to reinvigorate the oral sessions. With the SER officers interested in attracting more senior people to the meeting, there seemed to be an opportunity here. So I invented a new job: “create your own oral session, and then run it.” I asked a bunch of famous epidemiologists to look over the list of accepted abstracts and put together a session on a topic of their choice (regardless of how the abstracts had been scored by reviewers). These sessions would be 90 minutes, and session leaders could pick three or four abstracts for presentation.

My motive for limiting these sessions to 3 or 4 talks was to allow more time for discussion. For years the SER tradition had been 5 minutes for discussion. Without tight controls on time, even those 5 minutes easily disappear – but questions can be the most interesting part. I asked moderators to leave at least 10 minutes per talk for discussion (15 minutes if possible) – and “Spotlight Sessions” were born. Spotlight sessions had the added benefit of undermining the caste-system of talks over posters. In the new plan, abstracts chosen for talks were not necessarily the “best” – they were simply the abstracts that fit into someone’s theme.

Roundtables

Another attempt to attract senior people (and to make things more fun for the rest of us) was to create roundtables. These were an even easier invite – “come with no preparation and discuss your favorite topic.” I had originally planned to have these over the lunch hour. I never imagined that in years to come, people would be willing to get up at an ungodly hour of the morning to take part.

Socials

As our final stab at reorganizing, we dropped the annual banquet. Banquets had gotten tired – no matter what venue was chosen, what food was offered, or how much the tickets were subsidized, only about 200 people would show up. So in 1998 we organized a “before-dinner” social at one of Chicago’s terrific art museums. Have a drink, see the art, and socialize with your colleagues. It was a disaster -- over 600 members came, with huge lines at the hors d’oeuvres tables that quickly ran out of food. Oops – I guess people didn’t read the fine print that this was not actually meant to be a meal. (The museum was great.)

In retrospect

How well has all this worked? Thanks to some skillful adjustments by later officers (and by the able SER staff), most of this stuff has survived. But there’s always room for improvement. (If you have suggestions, let your SER officers know.) For example, posters don’t necessarily get the attention they deserve – there must be ways to improve that. (There are probably limits, too, to the ability of our feeble brains to absorb new information. I get saturated around Day Two.) I still occasionally hear moderators of the spotlight sessions say something like “we only have time for one question” – which still makes me nuts. A couple of pungent questions are worth an hour of polished talks.

And yes, as much as I hate to be presentable at 7AM, I do get out of bed for round-table discussions. They are fun. (Reuel Stallones went one step further, and said, “if it’s not fun, it’s not epidemiology.”)

See you in Minneapolis.

[My thanks to Lynn Lyon and Peggy Christensen for helping dredge up some of the details of ’98.]

SYMPOSIA SESSIONS

A Case of Fraud: Implications for Epidemiologic Research

Michel A. Ibrahim

Advances in Nutrition and Chronic Disease: Interactions among Diet, Lifestyle, and Genetic Factors

Mark A. Pereira

Bayesian Epidemiology: In Practice

Ghassan Hamra

Complex Systems Dynamic Modeling Approaches to Population Health: Promise for a Cells-to-Society Analytic Approach?

George A. Kaplan

Effect Decomposition: The Lost Epidemiologic Analysis

Chanelle J. Howe and Whitney R. Robinson

Foodborne Disease Epidemiology: Growing Importance and Neglected Opportunities

Michael T. Osterholm

Measuring Challenging Populations: Is There a Need for Methodological Innovation?

Justin Lessler and Sufia Dadabhai

Mendelian Randomization in Epidemiology: Methodological Challenges and Progress

Brandon Pierce and M. Maria Glymour

Menopausal Hormone Therapy and Women's Health: For Which Women are Hormones Advisable?

Louise Brinton and Britton Trabert

Methods for Prediction of Risk: Examples from CVD Epidemiology

Aaron Folsom

Spillover Effects in Epidemiologic Research

Tyler VanderWeele

Teaching Epidemiologic Methods

Richard MacLehose and George Maldonado

The Changing Face of Epidemiology: "Big Epidemiology" to "Colossal Epidemiology": When all Eggs are in One Basket

Miguel Hernan and David Savitz

The Use of a Complex Systems Approach in Epidemiologic Research: If and When it's Worth it.

Geetanjali Datta and Magdalena Cerda

Toward an Epidemiology of Global Mental Health

Ezra Susser



WORKSHOPS

SER will be offering seven Pre-Conference Workshops. Workshops are led by individuals with exceptional relevant expertise. The smaller audience size permits more interaction between registrants and Workshop leaders. Workshops will be held on June 27, 2012, in the conference hotel. All workshops are half-day, and you may register for one or two Workshops at the time you register. Receive a 20% discount with registration of both an AM and a PM Workshop.

Morning Workshops (8:30 am to 12:30 pm)

Methods for Causal Mediation Analysis

Faculty: Tyler VanderWeele, Harvard School of Public Health

The workshop will cover some of the recent developments in causal mediation analysis and provide practical tools to implement these techniques. Mediation analysis concerns assessing the mechanisms and pathways by which causal effects operate. The course will cover the relationship between traditional methods for mediation in epidemiology and the social sciences and those that have been developing within the causal inference literature. For dichotomous, continuous, and time-to-event outcomes, discussion will be given as to when the standard approaches to mediation analysis are valid. Using ideas from causal inference and natural direct and indirect effects, alternative mediation analysis techniques will be described when the standard approaches will not work. The no-confounding assumptions needed for these techniques will be described. SAS, SPSS and Stata macros to implement these techniques will be covered and distributed to course participants. The use and implementation of sensitivity analysis techniques to assess how sensitive conclusions are to violations of assumptions will be covered. Discussion will be given to how such mediation analysis approaches can be extended to settings in which data come from a case-control study design. The methods will be illustrated by various applications to perinatal, genetic and social epidemiology. Some knowledge of counterfactuals and familiarity with linear and logistic regression will be required to fully benefit from the course.

Introduction to Directed Acyclic Graphs

Faculty: Charles Poole, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

The directed acyclic graph (DAG) has become widely recognized as a useful tool for contending with confounding and selection bias in study design and data analysis. This workshop will introduce participants to the basic concepts, terminology and rules for drawing DAGs and interpreting them. We will focus on their use in identifying appropriate and inappropriate sets of covariates for restriction, matching, stratification and adjustment. As we work through concrete examples of increasing complexity, we will become adept at user-friendly, free software for analyzing DAGs. Additional topics will include the use of DAGs in estimating direct and indirect effects in mediation analysis and in assessing bias from missing data and measurement error. Throughout, we will compare and contrast the use of DAGs with traditional concepts and tools. To get the most from the workshop, participants should bring a computer with the slides, examples and software, which will be provided in advance.

Health and Demographic Data from the Minneapolis Population Center

Faculty: Michael Oakes, Miriam King, David Van Riper and Katie Genadek, Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota

This half day workshop will introduce the main features of free online databases created at the Minnesota Population Center. These resources for health research include both microdata and small-area aggregate data from the U.S. National Health Interview Survey, U.S. and international censuses, the American Community Survey, and the Current Population Survey. Along with summarizing the scope and key features of IHIS (Integrated Health Interview Series), NHGIS (National Historic Geographic Information System), and IPUMS (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series), the speakers will provide examples of how the data can be used for epidemiological research. These free online resources are designed to facilitate comparative research across time and space; they include tens of thousands of variables; include GIS boundary files; and they provide information about health and social structure across over 60 countries and a half century of dramatic change.

The speakers have directed the creation of these databases and provide technical support to researchers around the world. They will outline current and forthcoming data features, address questions and comments from current and potential data users in the audience, and will be available for one-on-one follow-up discussions about using these data.

Career Panel: Career Insights from Senior and Recently Minted Epidemiologists

Faculty: Polly Marchbanks (CDC), Bernard Harlow (University of Minnesota), Vanessa Perez (Exponent, Inc.), Alyssa Mansfield (Department of Veterans Affairs), Arjit Nandi (McGill University), Edgar Simard (American Cancer Society)

This workshop will feature a panel of epidemiologists in different career stages-- from new graduates to department chairs - and settings: academia, consulting, and government. After providing a brief description of their career trajectories and the unique aspects of their workplaces, our panelists will share their perspectives on finding the right professional fit, getting hired in a difficult economic climate, and carving out a productive and enjoyable career path. A question-and-answer session will follow to encourage informal and candid discussion on advantages and pitfalls of each career choice. This workshop is co-sponsored by the Student and Postdoc Committee.

Full bios on faculty are available at www.epiresearch.org/meeting/career.html

WORKSHOPS *continued, pg. 9*

WORKSHOPS *continued...*

Afternoon Workshops (1:00 pm to 5:00 pm)

Assessing Food and Nutrient Intake using Nutrition Data System for Research (NDSR)

Faculty: Lisa Harnack and Denise King, Nutrition Coordinating Center, University of Minnesota

Nutrition Data System for Research (NDSR) is widely used for assessing food and nutrient intake in nutritional epidemiology studies. This software and its accompanying food and nutrient database are developed and maintained by the University of Minnesota Nutrition Coordinating Center (ncc.umn.edu). During this workshop, to be held at NCC, the opportunity for hands-on experience with the software and database will be provided. The workshop will also provide current NDSR users with the opportunity to ask questions and share their needs with NCC software engineers and database scientists. Visit www.epiresearch.org/meeting/workshops for more details.

Introduction to Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

Faculty: Charles Poole, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Participants in this workshop will receive an introduction to systematic review and meta-analysis sufficient to enable them to begin a systematic review of their own. The concepts, methods and issues will be illustrated with published examples on a wide range of topics in observational and experimental epidemiology. Participants will develop an appreciation for delimiting the scope of a systematic review and for defining, searching and retrieving “the literature” on a topic. We learn the use and interpretation of a variety of meta-analytic methods, including the drawing of forest plots, the drawing and analysis of funnel plots, assessment of overall heterogeneity and meta-regression. We will discuss at considerable length what it takes for a literature to be “meta-analyzable” and for the representation of a literature in the form of a single summary estimate to be warranted. A special topic will be the understanding of random-effects summary estimates. The value of systematic reviews that are not meta-analyses will be stressed. Finally, we will consider the applied value of systematic reviews and meta-analyses in informing policy decisions and guiding future research. The slides and examples will be provided in advance. Each participant should bring a calculator.

Analysis of Probability Surveys using SAS®

Faculty: Chris Daman, SAS Institute

Health surveys are mainly based on probability-based complex sample designs, including stratified selection, clustering, and unequal weighting. To make statistically valid inferences from the sample to the study population, researchers must analyze the data taking into account the sample design. In this four-hour workshop the applications of SAS survey procedures SURVEYREG, SURVEYLOGISTIC, and SURVEYPHREG (in version 9.3) to perform regression analysis, logistic regression, and survival analysis will be presented. Data exploration and descriptive statistical methods used in survey analysis will be demonstrated using the SURVEYFREQ, SURVEYMEANS, and the new SG graphic procedures. Public use health surveys, such as the National Health and Nutrition Survey and others, will be used in the demonstrations.

STUDENT DISSERTATION WORKSHOP FIRST ANNUAL REUNION

SER held their first Student Dissertation Workshop in 1977. Thirty-five years later, this program is still a treasured part of our annual meeting, and competition among students considering doing their Ph.D. is as intense as ever. Over the years, there have been more than 415 student participants with approximately 140 faculty contributors. SER wishes to express a special thank you to Dr. Julie Buring from Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Harvard Medical School, for her dedication in making this workshop possible each year. For the past 15 years, Julie has served as the Grant Liaison and coordinator for the workshop.

Join us for our first annual Dissertation Workshop Reunion in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The reunion will be held on Thursday, June 28th beginning at 7:00 pm. All participants, faculty contributors, and SER Presidents over the past 35 years are invited to attend. Please contact SER Administrative Manager, Sue Bevan (sbevan@epiresearch.org) to RSVP.

STUDENT & POSTDOC COMMITTEE

STELLA ASLIBEKYAN, *SPC PRESIDENT*

As population scientists, we love surveys. Especially our fall Student and Postdoc Survey, which gives us a chance to reflect on our past activities and devise ways to serve you better in the coming year. This time was no exception: more than 150 of you responded, and we listened!

As the NIH budget is flat lining and departmental funding is becoming scarce, many of you expressed concerns about the costs of travel to the Annual Meeting. This year, we are pleased to offer 9 travel scholarships; each award will include up to \$400 to pay for travel-related expenses, free registration for the SAS Training workshop, and free student membership to SER for the 2012 year. Additionally, in an effort to make attendance more affordable, we will host a web board to facilitate sharing accommodations, cab rides to and from the airport, and opportunities to pay the registration fee by volunteering at the Meeting.

We are currently in the midst of planning a variety of professional development and social activities for our student and postdoc members. Our pre-meeting Career Panel workshop will feature both established and junior investigators from academia, government, and industry, all eager to share their experiences and offer tips on navigating the tough job market. We will also offer your perennial favorite, a SAS workshop that will provide hands-on training in programming magic (or at least macros!) During the Meeting itself, we will organize breakfast discussions with renowned epidemiologists ("Meet the Experts"), poster tours, and a noontime session on the (not-so-secret) life of postdocs and junior faculty.

Minneapolis, our 2012 host city, provides the perfect backdrop to the excitement of the Meeting. Tired of ORs and would rather calculate RBIs? We will provide discounted tickets for those interested in attending a Twins game. Unimpressed by baseball and yearning for the finer things in life? We will have sign-up sheets for the Walker Arts Center and tours of downtown architecture. Finally, what SER-SPC gathering is complete without a happy hour? Stop by on the first day of the Meeting and meet your fellow epidemiologists-in-training. And of course, do not forget the raffle during the Opening Reception—an opportunity to practice your probability calculations and win books, software, and free memberships. We are an enthusiastic bunch and look forward to meeting all of you in June!



SPC STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Leona Bessonova

University of California, Irvine

Shannon Conroy

Alberta Health Services
Cancer Care

Guy Harling

Harvard School of
Public Health

Bertha Hidalgo

University of Alabama

Amie Hwang

University of Southern
California

Candice Johnson

Emory University

Anne Marie Jukic

NIEHS

Mayura Shinde

Texas A&M Health
Science Center

Deirdre Tobias

Harvard School of
Public Health

Winners each receive a
\$400 Travel Scholarship to the SER
Annual Meeting in Minneapolis.
Congratulations!

EPIDEMIOLOGIC METHODS 2.0:

REFLECTIONS FROM THE INAUGURAL WEB MEETING

Let's face it: the next generation of epidemiologists is coming of age in an increasingly wired world, where most trendy products are prefixed by i- (for information) or e- (for electronic), concepts like "virtual clinics" are crossing over from the Syfy channel to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, and tools like Twitter are being used to track epidemics. Keeping up with the technological zeitgeist, on November 5th the Student and Postdoc Committee (SER-SPC) held its first web conference on epidemiologic methods. The virtual meeting featured a debate between Dr. Charles Poole and Dr. Malcolm Maclure on the use of absolute vs. relative measures of association, followed by student presentations. Three presenters—Meena Subbaraman, Maral DerSarkissian, and Joshua Rosenbloom—were selected from numerous submissions to share their findings in real-time, and received scholarships to attend the SER Annual Meeting in Minneapolis.

The online presentations were innovative, engaging, and creative. Judging by participant feedback, the new technology did not disappoint either. "I recall dreaming, back in the era of chalk boards and overhead projectors, what technology might bring to the in-person lecture and seminar," says Dr. Poole. "My wildest dreams have been exceeded, by a wide margin. I'm now dreaming of an SER meeting in my lifetime when full personal and electronic participation will be indistinguishable. That is, except for the social hour!" Dr. Maclure, an early and ardent proponent of the web meeting technology, concurs, "Despite a few technical glitches, I was delighted by SER-SPC's first steps on a long path towards web meetings that are dazzling in ways we can hardly imagine today."

Like our panelists, we expect the web meeting technology to continue evolving at breakneck speed, providing SER with new opportunities to disseminate epidemiologic findings and promote active learning. For Dr. Poole, the student presentations were the highlight of the web meeting. "I learned so much from each and every one of them," he comments. "One presenter and I continued our discussion by email. I learned a lot from that as well. I keep mentioning how much I learned because that's my highest compliment." The student participants were equally appreciative of the chance to learn from top methodological experts—all from the comfort of their own time zone!

Encouraged by the success of this inaugural meeting, the SER-SPC, together with Dr. Maclure and Dr. Poole, is already planning next fall's web conference. As always, we welcome suggestions and ideas from SER members! To propose a topic or offer feedback, e-mail Stella Aslibekyan at saslibek@uab.edu or come to the SER-SPC table at the opening reception in Minneapolis. We look forward to meeting you, in person or virtually!

WEB MEETING SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Meena Subbaraman
University of California, Berkeley
School of Public Health

Maral DerSarkissian
University of California,
Los Angeles

Joshua Rosenbloom
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Ctr
Harvard School of Public Health

Wenny (Shih-Wen) Lin
National Cancer Institute
Division of Cancer Epidemiology
& Genetics

SPOTLIGHT SESSION

Co-Chairs:

**Stella Aslibekyan &
Abdul El-Sayed**

Discussant:

Dr. Charles Poole

"The winning abstracts of the mid-year Epidemiologic Methods Applications Conference will be featured in a Spotlight Session on Friday, June 29th, 3:30- 5:00pm. The Session will include fresh, cutting-edge perspectives on selected topics in causal inference such as propensity scores, marginal structural models, and double robustness. Don't miss this chance to meet the future authors of your methods textbooks!"

-Stella Aslibekyan



Louise A. Brinton, Ph.D., M.P.H.

**National Cancer Institute
Division of Cancer Epidemiology & Genetics
Chief Hormonal and Reproductive
Epidemiology Branch
Senior Investigator**

What sparked your decision to become an epidemiologist?

I initially went to graduate school to pursue medical anthropology. My decision to transfer into an epidemiology department had more to do with my disillusion with the way anthropology was being taught than with anything else. I was fortunate to be at UNC-Chapel Hill with a first class epidemiology department, led at that time by John Cassel, who along with some other excellent faculty members inspired me to become an epidemiologist.

Where is your favorite place to vacation?

I tend not to vacation consistently in the same place as I love to travel to new destinations. I do, however, have a soft part in heart for the village of Mata Ortiz, Chihuahua, Mexico, as I collect pottery from there and am friends with a number of the potters.

What do you see as the biggest obstacle facing epidemiologists in the next five years?

The field has changed a lot during the course of my career. Certainly reduced funding and the inability to launch large-scale field efforts will change the course of future events and opportunities.

Do you have any pets?

Yes, I have a collie rescue dog named Tucker.

Outside of epidemiology what do you enjoy doing?

I love to travel, particularly to places that many would consider off the beaten path.

Why did you join SER? What keeps you coming back?

I think it is a great organization that retains a focus on some of the essentials of the field, such as the proper conduct of large-scale investigations.

What advice do you give students who want to become epidemiologists?

Make certain that at some point in your career you actually have the opportunity to perform field work. This will give you a new appreciation for data analysis.

What is something that not many people know about you?

After completing my Ph.D. degree at Hopkins, I spent a year in Oxford, where I worked with and lived in the home of Sir Richard Doll.

INSIDE PEEK



Irene H. Yen, Ph.D., M.P.H.

Associate Professor
Division of General Internal Medicine
Department of Medicine
University of California, San Francisco

Associate Director, Experiential Learning,
Health & Society Pathway

What sparked your decision to become an epidemiologist?

I studied microbiology and political science as an undergraduate! While it seemed to everyone to be an odd combination at the time, in retrospect it isn't too far from public health, understanding political economy and microbes and what they do all at the same time. I wanted to learn research methods to be able to adapt to multiple interests. I didn't have a specific disease in mind. Originally I was interested in primary health care in less developed settings. Later I became more generally interested in prevention and inequities.

Where is your favorite place to vacation?

I don't really have a favorite. I would love to go to Cinque Terre, Barcelona, and Turkey. These are at the top of my "list."

What do you see as the biggest obstacle facing epidemiologists in the next five years?

This one is easy - funding!

Personal History...

My parents were both born and raised in China. My father's side stayed on the mainland. My mother's side moved to Taiwan. They met at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. Even if they wanted to go back to China after they finished their studies, they would have faced political problems because of my mother's families affiliations, i.e. with the Kuomintang. My father was a math professor. I grew up in East Lansing, Michigan. I'm a Midwesterner!

Do you have any pets?

We have a pet turtle.

Outside of epidemiology what do you enjoy doing?

I have been dancing Argentine tango for about 15 years. I also like to cook, bake, read, and eat.

Why did you join SER? What keeps you coming back?

I joined as a graduate student. I see it as my professional "home." Early on there weren't so many sessions that related to my areas of interest. Together with several others, we requested some sessions on social epidemiology with invited speakers. Several years in a row, Pat O'Campo and I have advertised for a session on race and class inequalities. Now there seems to be plenty of social epidemiology-related content at the annual meetings.

What advice do you give students who want to become epidemiologists?

It's a great field, with new things going on all the time. Establish relationships with people who can mentor you; meet with them regularly. Think about what your purpose is in the field. Do you want your research to be translated? into clinical practice? into policy? If so, think about the collaborations that can serve that purpose.

What is something that not many people know about you?

I've started a Facebook page about Complete Streets - it's about local and state laws to put in place design principles to make streets safe for people of all ages and abilities.

MEMBER-AT-LARGE CANDIDATE



Maria Glymour, ScD

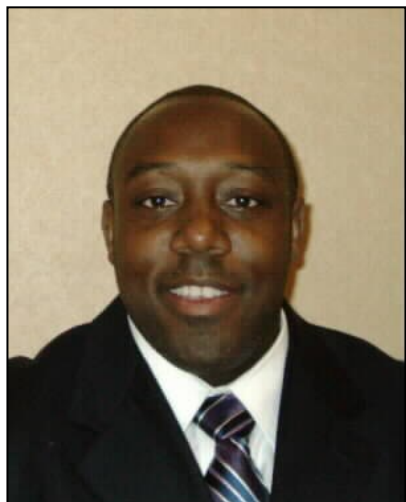
Assistant Professor

**Department of Society, Human Development, and Health
Harvard School of Public Health**

It is an honor to be nominated as a candidate for SER member-at-large. I am currently an assistant professor at the Harvard School of Public Health. If elected to serve as an SER member-at-large, I will focus on representing the interests of epidemiologists in early career stages. Examples of issues affecting junior faculty include: obtaining funding; effectively managing teams and projects, including budgets, staff, and collaborators; successfully mentoring students; balancing publication expectations and the desire to do the best science; teaching well while maintaining research productivity; and keeping up-to-date with advances in research ideas and methods. If elected, I will advocate for SER to support resources or professional development activities to help with these types of challenges. I also believe SER members who are not in traditional tenure-track academic jobs are a key part of our community. Important research is conducted by those working in a variety of positions for a diverse set of organizations (including government and non-profit groups). If elected, I will represent the range of issues relevant for nurturing early-career epidemiologists, and I will work to find opportunities for SER to support all of us in the various epidemiology research career paths we have chosen.

My graduate training was at the Harvard School of Public Health and I completed post-doctoral work at the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University. I am a social epidemiologist and my research primarily focuses on cognitive aging and stroke. I have particular interests in methods for stronger causal inference in social epidemiology and lifecourse research. Regardless of specific substantive interests, I consider SER a critical venue for all of us for exposure to the best research, learning new methods, discussing progress in our field, and debating important controversies. I warmly remember the first SER annual meeting I attended, as a graduate student in 2003. Since then, I have attended each year, finding the SER meeting rewarding and challenging in countless ways. In years to come, I hope SER continues to provide an opportunity for lively scientific engagement, learning, connecting with old friends and new colleagues, and professional development. If elected, I would be pleased to represent the epidemiology community to contribute to the continued success of SER.

MEMBER-AT-LARGE CANDIDATE



Roland J. Thorpe, Jr., PhD

Assistant Scientist

**Hopkins Center for Health Disparities Solutions
Department of Health Policy and Management
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health**

I would be delighted to support the newly launched Emerging Scholar Initiative by serving as a Member-at-Large on the Executive Committee of the SER. As a Member-at-Large, I would represent SER's junior faculty and early stage professionals, a group that has not been explicitly represented on the Executive Committee in the past. I look forward to serving as the conduit between the Executive Committee, Student Caucus, and this group of SER members.

After completing my doctorate degree at Purdue University and postdoctoral fellowship at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, I joined the faculty at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. My research focuses on understanding the etiology of race- and SES-related disparities in functional and health status of community-dwelling adults across the life course in three principal areas: 1) social factors (mainly race and SES) that influence functional and health outcomes in middle to late life, 2) race, segregation and health outcomes, and 3) men's health. I have been involved in designing and conducting studies that focus on understanding mechanisms that underlie health disparities in adulthood. These studies include the Exploring Health Disparities in Communities (EHDIC) Study; the National Black Men's Health Pilot Study; Diagnosis and Decisions in Prostate Cancer Treatment and Outcomes (DAD) Study; and the Baltimore Men's Health Assessment Project. In addition, I have conducted or am presently conducting analyses using data from the Health Aging Body and Composition (Health ABC) Study, the Women's Health and Aging Studies, the Baltimore Study of Black Aging, and the ARIC Study.

The SER provides an important professional environment where members collaborate, obtain career advice and guidance, engage in discussions regarding the pedagogy of epidemiology, and translate research into practice that will inform health and public policies. I am very excited to be a part of such a valuable organization that has—and will continue—to be at the forefront of addressing vital public health issues. Since joining as a graduate student in 2002, I have been actively involved in the following capacities: SER-Student Caucus Treasurer and Abstract Committee Chair (two consecutive terms), abstract reviewer, poster and oral presenter, symposium organizer, and moderator. Most recently, I served as the Chair of the Spotlight Session on Aging and served on the Planning Committee for the 3rd North American Congress. In summary, I remain fully committed to serving the SER. In advancing my commitment, I seek the opportunity to work with all facets of SER and to ensure that the needs of the junior faculty and early stage professionals are being effectively addressed. My aim is to support these SER members as we strive to achieve our career goals and become the next cadre of leaders in epidemiology and public health.

PRESIDENT—ELECT CANDIDATE



Germaine Louis, Ph.D., M.S.

**National Institutes of Health
Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of
Child Health and Human Development
Division of Epidemiology Statistics and Prevention Research**

I joined SER in graduate school, and remain committed to its mission for research excellence and mentoring future generations of epidemiologists. I have benefitted in many ways from being a member of SER, including my participation in the SER Student Dissertation Workshop, past recipient of the Abraham Lilienfeld Student Prize Paper Award, and organizer and participant in various symposia sessions and workshops offered at the annual meeting. Currently, I am the Director and Senior Investigator of the intramural Division of Epidemiology, Statistics and Prevention Research at the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Health and Human Development where I design and conduct epidemiologic research focusing on the interplay between environmental chemicals, lifestyle and human reproduction and development, while mentoring fellows and serving our profession. Prior to joining NICHD in 2000, I was a tenured professor in the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at the University at Buffalo, State of New York, where I developed a successful graduate track in reproductive and perinatal epidemiology. I am currently one of the founding faculty members of the NICHD-CIHR Summer Institute in Reproductive and Perinatal Epidemiology, which provides a forum for intensive training and mentoring for graduate students interested in research careers focusing on reproductive and perinatal epidemiology. My specialized research interests in no way narrow my focus, and I remain committed to broader issues that impact the sustainability of our profession. These include the availability of high quality data resources for dissertation and early career research, reducing funding barriers that dissuade epidemiologists from pursuing or staying in research careers, and creating venues for translating our research discovery into behaviors and policy to improve population health across the globe. I have had no previous executive leadership roles in SER, but I have served as secretary then president of the *Society for Pediatric and Perinatal Epidemiologic Research*, and also on the executive boards for the *American College of Epidemiology* and the *International Society for Environmental Epidemiology*. I have served on a number of advisory panels for The National Academies, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, World Health Organization, and other U.S. and foreign governmental agencies. Also, I have served on editorial boards, including eleven years of service to the *American Journal of Epidemiology*. As President, I would strive to develop and implement a vision for ensuring the continued success of education in Epidemiology and novel venues for the exchange of research findings, while promoting the research and professional stature of our field for continued public health discovery and the elimination of health disparities.

PRESIDENT—ELECT CANDIDATE



Patricia O'Campo, Ph.D.

**University of Toronto
Dalla Lana School of Public Health
Division of Epidemiology
Social and Behavioral Health Sciences**

I stumbled upon epidemiology as an undergraduate at Berkeley and quickly became excited as I saw the potential of the field. Like many of you, I pursued graduate training and stayed within the field of epidemiology to make a difference to our society. After receiving my Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins, I have had the great fortune of spending much of my career working closely with those who use evidence in their program planning and policy making. I've been fortunate to work with community (even before Community Based Participatory Research was coined) and city, state and provincial health departments co-creating evidence to improve population health.

We are told that science is important because it tell us "how the world really works." And much of Epidemiology is, indeed, about demonstrating associations and explaining those relationships. However, what is less clear is how epidemiology is contributing to the much needed solutions to address society's problems. For example, all around us is evidence that the current economic crisis is impacting population well-being, just look at some recent headlines: "US Housing Crisis Is Now Worse Than Great Depression," (CNBC.com, 2011), "More Middle Class Families 'Will Become Homeless' Due to Recession,"(The Telegraph. 2011), "Length of Unemployment Continues to Break Records."(The New York Times. 2011). Yet, is epidemiology generating relevant evidence to better understand the role of health and the health impact of these issues? If one of our motivations for being epidemiologists is to 'make a difference' then we should also be studying the most pressing issues facing society. And while this example points to the need for social epidemiologists to examine their fields of inquiry, the same process applies to other subdisciplines such as chronic disease epidemiology, cancer epidemiology, environmental epidemiology, genetic epidemiology and so on.

What better place to have such discussions and debates about what we should focus on and how to advance and improve our field than the annual SER meetings? My goal as President would be to maintain the strengths of our current meetings, such as the focus on new and existing methods, but to provide more opportunities to discuss just how we, with our science, directly contribute to the improvement of society either through the topics we study, the partners we engage to undertake our research, or the means by which we communicate and disseminate our findings. This is a particularly important topic for students as they are the epidemiologists of the future. Recent meetings have touched upon the important topic of dissemination but we could go further to ensure greater uptake of our work by program planners and policy makers.

