

IT'S ABOUT A BILLION LIVES WORLDWIDE

UCSF Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education

Fall 2021

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2021 Postdoc Tobacco Control Research Fellows

In spite of the challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fall of 2021 brought glorious results! Six new postdoctoral scholars joined the Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education (CTCRE)! Our founding director, Dr. Stanton Glantz, has retired, and our new director, Dr. Pamela Ling, is forging a new path. We faced our obstacles by focusing on the opportunities the pandemic illuminated — connecting with each other more often, sending gifts by mail, playful virtual tools, and once we got vaccinated, planned meet-ups in the great outdoors!



Dian Gu, PhD, received her doctorate in Health Economics/Health Services Research from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. Along with her PhD study, she was a PhD trainee at MD Anderson Cancer Center. In that role, she gained experience in applying health economics to cancer research, on multiple projects concerned with cancer patients' healthcare utilization, expenditures, and health outcomes. After finishing her PhD, she joined the Institute for Health & Aging at the University of California, San Francisco in

2019. In the work here, she had a wide range of tobacco economics research projects. For example, she analyzed the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), Medical Expenditure Panel Survey data (MEPS) and California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) to evaluate the economic impact of a \$2-per-pack cigarette tax increase due to Proposition 56 on smoking behaviors, healthcare costs, and the financial burden on low-income people in California. As a postdoctoral fellow, Dr. Gu is interested in integrating both cancer and tobacco research. Her current research areas of interest include estimating economic costs attributable to tobacco use of cancer and other tobacco-related illnesses; examining the role of tobacco use in cancer prevention and development; evaluating the economic impact of different tobacco control policies on the financial burden on vulnerable populations.



Eileen Han, PhD received her doctorate in Communication from the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania. During and after her PhD studies, she mainly conducted qualitative research about social media, with a focus on collective memory and social activism. She published a book about social media and collective memory in China, which was an expansion of her dissertation research. Since then, she has been expanding her research to look at social media in many other contexts, including health and medicine, in which she is primarily interested in the use and understanding of expertise and authority in the digital age. Her current research mainly focuses on the public discourses on social media about health issues, including how Twitter users talk about doctors and the medical community during the COVID-19 pandemic. She has also received an MS degree in Information from the University of Michigan, where she had trainings in programming, data analysis, natural language processing and machine learning. As a CTCRE fellow, she would like to combine her qualitative and computational skills to explore promising topics in the tobacco regulatory field.

"It's About A Billion Lives" Symposium - Jan 28, 2022, 8:00AM—12:30PM

Keynote: Pebbles Fagan, PhD, MPH, Director of the Center for the Study of Tobacco, University of Arkansas Medical Sciences

New Fellows' Bios (continued)



J. Alton Croker, PhD, received his doctorate in Health Services & Policy focusing on cannabis policy, health outcomes, and health disparities. He graduated from the University of Iowa in 2021, where he served as a research investigator for the Cannabis and End-of-Life Study, along with research associate roles within the RUPRI Center. He previously worked in public affairs at GLAD (GLBTQ Advocates & Defenders), an impact litigation firm focusing on social equity for LGBTQ persons, people living with HIV/AIDS, and their families. He also held research and grant management roles at Fenway Health Institute and the SARDI Center for Interventions at Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine, working to meet the health needs of communities of color. With a focus on health and social equity for Black people and LGBTQ youth of color, he also served in policy and community engagement roles with the National Black Treatment Advocates Network. As a postdoctoral fellow at UCSF, Dr. Croker hopes to investigate adverse health effects of cannabis use, the 'reinvestment' of cannabis revenues by states and local governments into communities of color disproportionately impacted by the War on Drugs, and the role of the cannabis industry in the policy making process.

Karla Llanes, PhD, received her doctorate in Health Psychology at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). During her PhD training, she worked for A Smoke Free Paso del Norte, a west Texas, southern New Mexico, and Juarez, Mexico regional initiative targeting tobacco control in adolescents and adults. She has also taught several Statistics courses and Motivation and Emotion courses at the University of Texas at El Paso. Her research interests are in judgment and decision-making processes in the context of health-related decisions (e.g., vaccination decisions, driving under the influence of alcohol, marijuana use, and novel tobacco use). Her goal is to identify judgment biases that distort risk communications and risk perceptions and, eventually, impact individuals' decisions to engage in health-threatening and health-promoting behaviors. As a postdoctoral fellow, Dr. Llanes plans on continuing her research investigating predictors of drug use, drug use initiation, and cessation. She is particularly interested in investigating risk factors associated with tobacco use, novel tobacco use, and co-use (e.g., e-cigarette and alcohol use). By understanding what leads to harmful real-life decisions, then she can help develop interventions that may help people change for the better.



Sheiphali Gandhi, MD is a pulmonologist specializing in occupational and environmental respiratory disease. She graduated from Indiana University School of Medicine in 2012. She went to the Univ. of Minnesota for her internal medicine residency and global health chief residency where she received her Certificate in Tropical Medicine through the Center of Disease Control and American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. She completed fellowships in Pulmonary and Critical Medicine at Northwestern University and Occupational and Environmental Medicine at the University of California San Francisco. During this time, she specialized in occupational pulmonology namely pneumoconioses with projects in coal mine and silica dust respiratory disease surveillance. As a postdoctoral fellow at UCSF, Dr. Gandhi plans to investigate the environmental and occupational risk factors for mesothelioma in the collaboration through a case-control study in collaboration with the California Department of Public Health and the California Cancer Registry. Additionally, she will conduct a feasibility study of the creation of a rapid case ascertainment and patient contact study utilizing natural language processing techniques using electronic pathology records.

Vira Pravosud, PhD, received her doctorate in Epidemiology and Biostatistics from the University of Kentucky. Having obtained an undergraduate degree in Social Work & Sociology and a Master's degree in Healthcare Management and Administration from the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy in Kyiv, Dr. Pravosud came to the U.S. in 2014 as a Fulbright Scholar from Ukraine pursuing more expertise in public health research. Her dissertation focused on examining whether the use of social-networking and dating online platforms can facilitate engagement in HIV-related risk behaviors among young adult men who have sex with men. In her doctoral program, Dr. Pravosud conducted studies assessing respiratory health outcomes, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, and nontuberculous mycobacterial lung infection. As a postdoctoral fellow, Dr. Pravosud will study the health impacts of novel tobacco products (electronic cigarettes and heated tobacco products). Additionally, she is interested in digital media usage for prevention of novel tobacco product consumption, especially among youth.



CTCRE Director Receives Harold S. Luft Mentorship Award

We are proud to announce that our Tobacco Center Director **Pamela Ling, MD, MPH**, is this year's recipient of the Harold S. Luft Award for Mentoring in Health Services and Health Policy Research, awarded by the Philip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies. Those of us that have worked with Dr. Ling over the years are delighted but not surprised. We are amazed at how well she is able to rise to the demands of so many responsibilities as a clinician, Director, Professor, researcher, mentor, mother and wife - while staying focused on priorities and yet showing compassion for others. The Selection Committee was "profoundly impressed with the depth and breadth" of her mentorship and said that the nomination letters passionately described the impact that her mentorship had on the careers and personal lives of her mentees. One mentee sums it up by saying, "Despite her enormous responsibilities, Dr. Ling always makes herself available to mentees and devotes time to meet each fellow weekly. Whenever we need her support she always gives us priority by adjusting her schedule to provide timely feedback to our research projects, manuscripts, and grant proposals." *Congratulations, Pam! We are looking forward to celebrating this honor with you!*



Pamela Ling, MD, MPH

CTCRE Appoints New Fellowship Program Co-Directors



Dorie Apollonio, PhD

We are excited to welcome new leadership to the Tobacco Center Fellowship Program! **Dorie Apollonio, PhD**, Professor, Health Policy, Dept. of Clinical Pharmacy and **Maya Vijayaraghavan, MD, MAS**, Associate Professor, School of Medicine have joined the CTCRE as Co-Directors. Both of them come with a rich expertise in Tobacco Control research and have mentored many CTCRE fellows. We are enjoying the creative ideas and the rejuvenating energy they bring!



Maya Vijayaraghavan,
MD

2022 'Billion Lives' Symposium Keynote Speaker:

Pebbles Fagan, PhD, MPH, Professor and Director of the Center for the Study of Tobacco, at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. Dr. Fagan is a Professor and the Director of the Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health, Dept of Health Behavior and Health Education and the Director of Research in the Office of Health Initiatives and Disparities Research, College of Medicine University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. She is also a Senior Advisor to the Director of the Office on Smoking and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She formerly served as Program Director for the Cancer Prevention and Control Program at the University of Hawaii Cancer Center and served as a Health Scientist in the Tobacco Control Research Branch at the National Cancer Institute. Dr. Fagan has over 25 years of experience in conducting research that aims to prevent tobacco and cancer-related health disparities.



Pebbles Fagan,
PhD, MPH



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Check us out!
<https://tobacco.ucsf.edu>

Tobacco Research Fellowships Available Now - Apply Online!

The CTCRE is accepting applications now for its highly regarded postdoctoral training program, which begins in **July, 2022**. **The deadline for receiving applications is January 26, 2022!** Our program provides extensive training in tobacco control research supervised by renowned members of the CTCRE faculty. Please visit: <https://tobacco.ucsf.edu/fellowship>

CTCRE Grant Writing Mentorship Gets Fellows Funded!

Life beyond the fellowship begins with a CV that reflects a diverse list of accomplishments, such as published research papers, presentations, teaching experience, professional recognition, coursework and grant making skills. Each cohort passes through a rigorous grant writing course, closely mentored by tenured faculty. Between 2006-2019, 18 CTCRE postdocs have been awarded funding as Principal Investigator. These successes provided them with at least one additional year to continue their research studies on their own terms. What makes CTCRE mentorship so special? It is the combination of attentive participation by our faculty and their expertise as experienced grant writers with relentless attention to detail.

For more information about our fabulous CTCRE Fellowship Alumni, please visit: <https://tobacco.ucsf.edu/alumni>

Visit **CTCRE Booth 1722** to
**Meet Fellows, Faculty &
Alumni at Denver APHA!**



American Public Health Association

Congratulations to our Newest Alumni!

Minji Kim, PhD, Assistant Professor, University of South Carolina
Arturo Durazo, PhD, Community Engagement Scholar & Health Scientist, UC Merced
Neil Sircar, JD, LL.M, Staff Attorney, Public Health Law Center, St. Paul, MN

We are so proud of your accomplishments !!!

Did you know? The programs and activities of the CTCRE are supported by private gifts as well as government and foundation funds. Many critical and innovative programs of the CTCRE are made possible in part by gifts from individuals and family foundations. If you or your organization would like to know more information about our program or make a donation, please email our Administrative Director, Jonathan Leff, at jonathan.leff@ucsf.edu Or, call 415-476-4683

Briger Fellowship for International Candidates

In 2019, we were honored to receive a generous contribution by Peter and Devon Briger making it possible for the CTCRE to fund a two-year Fellowship. Our Briger Fellowship is dedicated to research in global tobacco use that can energize education and policy to end the tobacco epidemic. A Briger Fellow is not required to be a US Citizen/Permanent Resident, allowing us to emphasize trainees with international potential.

Featured Publication: *Emerging Indoor Air Laws for Onsite Cannabis Consumption Businesses in the U.S*

Research Specialist **Thomas Rotering, MPH**, relocated from Colorado to join the CTCRE in September 2019, where he has focused on the emerging cannabis industry and policy addressing the use of this substance. We are excited that he is presenting for the second time at APHA. This year his topic is "Cannabis industry influence in the Colorado State Government". Below is an introduction of his recently published paper in *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, (August 13, 2021).

"Secondhand cannabis smoke, like secondhand tobacco smoke, creates unhealthy indoor air quality. Ventilation and engineering techniques cannot reduce this pollution to healthy levels, and complete smoke-free policies are the only way to provide healthy indoor environments. Even so, multiple state and local governments have begun to allow indoor smoking of cannabis in businesses."



**Thomas Rotering,
MPH**

Use the link below to see the full text:
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2021.05.012>