



UAB HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH TRAINING PROGRAM

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER 2025



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A message from the Directors



Michael Mugavero,
MD, MHSc



Emily Levitan,
ScD

As we wrap up the second year of the current AHRQ T32 grant cycle, we have much for which to be grateful. The UAB Health Services Research Training Program just completed its 22nd year and continues a long legacy of developing the next generation of health services and outcomes researchers. Despite the many challenges facing us, our trainees and alumni are a reminder that this training program transforms careers and lives. We hope you will join us in celebrating their successes by reading of their hard-won accomplishments in the pages that follow.

Programmatically, many of the innovations proposed for this grant cycle are well underway. With Dr. Emily Levitan and Geri Davis' leadership, Friday Fellows, our signature seminar series, continues to serve the UAB community well beyond our T32 training program. The variety and high-quality nature of the series' career journeys and methods talks are hallmarks each semester. The monthly career development workshops are a new interactive opportunity for T32 trainees to develop academic life skills. Local program alumni frequently give back by leading workshops. Dr. Rachel Wells continues to provide a thoughtful discussion of her Individual Development Plan and how she uses it to focus and advance her career and mentoring relationships. Dr. Reed Bratches also shared his strategy for preparing a job talk and ultimately securing a faculty position at UAB School of Nursing. We concluded the 2024 – 2025 series with the second annual Works-in-Progress Symposium in May, a half-day event that brought together the T32 trainees for rapid-fire project updates and feedback. Pictures from this year's event are included in this newsletter. We invite all local alumni and alumni abroad to join in the fun in 2026!

We are also thrilled to say that the Postdoc "fishbowl" office has risen to the occasion. As part of the T32, we ask all postdocs to maintain their primary office in a shared space in the COERE's physical home on the 8th Floor of the Boshell Building. Beyond camaraderie, the shared space has yielded scientific outputs that 'may not have been' if not but for daily interactions between clinical and research-intensive fellows. For instance, second-year postdoc Dr. Will Bradford, first-year postdoc Dr. Jordi Garcia-Diaz, and 2024 alum Dr. Reed Bratches recently received a pilot award from the UAB Center for AIDS Research to explore the use of natural language processing to identify and treat alcohol use disorder in people living with HIV. Recent alumni have published a number of manuscripts together: PMC10811454, PMID: 40265277, PMC11813669.

We are both proud and sad to see our wonderful graduating trainees depart for the next step in their careers. At the same time, we excited about the year ahead, our 4 new trainees who start this summer, and all that is to come.

Onwards!

In Loving Memory Of
Latesha Elope,
MD, MSPH



We are deeply saddened by the untimely loss of Dr. Latesha Elope. A uniquely talented investigator, Latesha had a commitment to lifelong learning and an unwavering passion and conviction to deliver HIV prevention to the most impacted communities domestically. She established a robust research portfolio and national prominence in advocating for and advancing HIV prevention for women, African Americans, and rural communities in Alabama and across the Deep South. In numerous leadership roles at UAB, she was a fierce advocate for calling people in and increasing representation of persons traditionally underrepresented in medicine and research. Closer to home, Latesha was one of the T32's Core Faculty and a dedicated mentor to Drs. Anais Mahone, Will Bradford, and Matt Gravett. She will be dearly missed by all of us at the COERE.

With sincere thanks to Shyla Fields, Nik Layman, and all who contributed photos, a memorial video has been created from Latesha's Friday Fellows "Career Journey" and her HSOM research focus area, health across the lifecourse, testimonial.



Our Team



Michael Mugavero, MD, MHSc
Director



Emily Levitan, ScD
Director



Madeline Gibson, MPH
Deputy Director



Geri Davis
Program Coordinator

Core Faculty



Latesha Elope, MD
School of Medicine -
Infectious Diseases



Allyson Hall, PhD
School of Health Professions -
Health Services Administration



Larry Hearld, PhD
School of Health Professions -
Health Services Administration



Gabriela Oates, PhD
School of Medicine -
Pulmonary, Allergy,
Critical Care



J. Nicholas Odom, PhD
School of Nursing- Acute,
Chronic & Continuing Care



Tina Kempin Reuter, PhD
Political Science & Public
Administration

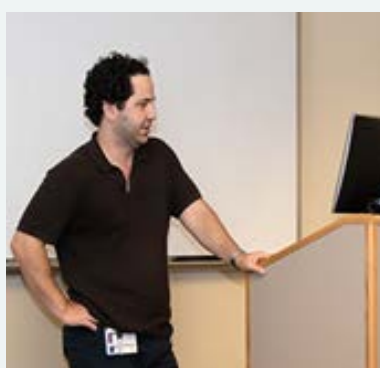
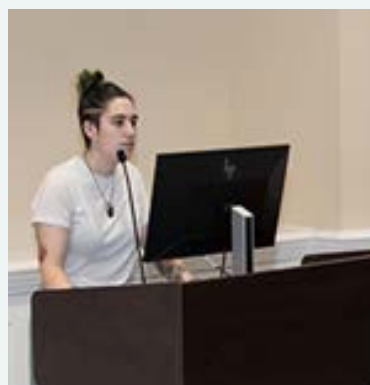


Gabriel Tajeu, DrPH
General Internal Medicine
& Population Science

Works-in-Progress Half-Day Symposium



May 16, 2025



New Trainees



Jeffrey Franks, PhD, MSPH

Mentors: Gabrielle Rocque, MD MSPH, Kelly Kenzik, PhD and Andres Azuero, PhD

Postdoc: Hematology & Oncology
University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

Jeffrey is a quantitative methodologist who earned both his MSPH and PhD in epidemiology from the UAB School of Public Health. Before and during his doctoral training, he worked as a staff statistician on a health services research team in the UAB Division of Hematology & Oncology. Broadly, his research focuses on the impact of comorbid conditions in patients with cancer. He also has extensive expertise applying advanced epidemiologic methods to clinical data, including large administrative, patient-reported, and electronic medical record databases.



Hannah Kumarasamy, MSN, MPH, CNM, WHNP-BC

Mentors: Patricia Patrician, PhD, RN, FAAN and Felesia Bowen, PhD

Predoc: Nursing
University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

Hannah is a Nurse-Midwife and Women's Health Nurse Practitioner who graduated from Lakeview College of Nursing in Charleston, IL with a BSN in 2010, Indiana University Bloomington in Bloomington, IN with an MPH in 2012, and the University of Pennsylvania in 2018 with an MSN (CNM/WHNP). She served with the U.S. Peace Corps/USAID Global Health Service Partnership in Tanzania for 2-years before then transitioning to global maternal health development work in multiple countries throughout Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Since returning to the U.S. in 2020, she has been practicing at a public safety-net hospital and working with the GA Department of Public Health on maternal mortality. As a third-year PhD student in the School of Nursing, her research is focused on understanding what pregnancy burden is and its contributors and characteristics, to guide the development of a community-informed pregnancy burden model.

New Trainees



Abigail Poe, PhD

Mentor: Frank Puga, PhD and Karen Heaton, PhD

Postdoc: Nursing

University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

Abigail (Abbey), originally from Atlanta, Georgia, attended Samford University for undergraduate studies earning a BSN. Prior to beginning her PhD program, she became a registered nurse with a focus on adult and pediatric behavioral health. Abbey has since completed her PhD at the University of Alabama at Birmingham where she focused on the relationship between decision-making involvement and daily anxiety and depressive symptoms among Hispanic & Latinx dementia caregivers. Her current research focuses on facilitating improved communication during medical care decision-making processes among the healthcare provider, caregiver, and individuals living with dementia.



Rebecca Williams, M.A.

Mentors: S. Justin Thomas, PhD and Gabriela Oates, PhD

Predoc: Psychology

University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

Rebecca is a student in UAB's Medical/Clinical Psychology Ph.D. Program. Her research focuses on sleep, circadian rhythms, and health equity. Her dissertation project is assessing neighborhood-level moderators (ADI and EJI) of behavioral sleep medicine treatment response. For her master's thesis, she analyzed the relations between neighborhood deprivation and sleep quality as well as shift work status.

Returning Trainees



Elliott Botelho, BA

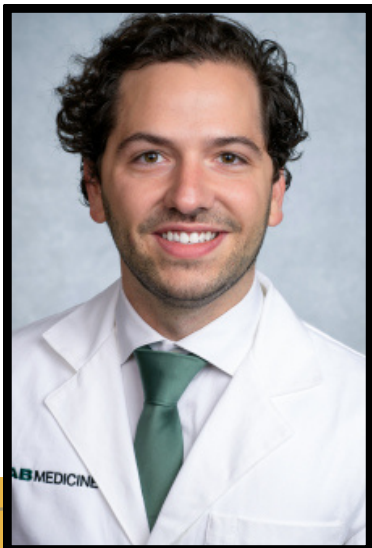
Mentors: Kaylee Crockett, PhD and Christina Muzny, MD

Predoc: Psychology

University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

Elliott is a student in the Medical/Clinical Psychology Ph.D. program working with Drs. Kaylee Crockett and Christina Muzny. Their research primarily focuses on HIV, eating disorders, and healthcare access and quality within transgender adults. They are a mixed-methods researcher, primarily studying individuals from the Southern U.S.

Recent Celebrations: The American Psychological Association of Dissertation Research recognized & awarded Elliott's dissertation research as a promising contribution to psychological science. They also received the Spain Rehabilitation Center Division of Rehabilitation Psychology Award and the Center for AIDS Research (CFAR) Spark Award. Elliott completed the coursework for and received admission to doctoral candidacy!



Jordi Garcia-Diaz, MD

Mentors: Lauren Walter, MD, Ellen Eaton, MD, Karen Cropsey, PsyD, and Davis Bradford, MD

Postdoc: Emergency Medicine

University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

Jordi is a Birmingham native and attended the local school systems before attending UAB for college, medical school, and residency. Upon finishing Emergency Medicine residency in 2024, he started a Research Fellowship under the Primary Mentorship of Dr. Lauren Walter. With the support and funding from the AHRQ T32 program, his research focuses on the efficacy of Naltrexone for patients suffering from Alcohol Use Disorder presenting to the Emergency Department.

Recent Celebrations: Jordi received pilot grant funding from the UAB CFAR Development Core. A presentation was accepted for the Association for Multidisciplinary Education and Research in Substance use and Addiction (AMERSA) National Conference. He also passed his Emergency Medicine written boards and got married!

Returning Trainees



Anais Mahone, PhD, MSW

Mentors: Latesha Elopre, MD, MSPH, Tina Kempin Reuter, PhD, MA, and Donald (Donny) Gerke, PhD, MSW

Postdoc: Infectious Diseases
University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

Anais earned her PhD in Social Work from Rutgers – The State University of New Jersey, following completion of an MSW from Temple University and her undergraduate studies at the University of Pittsburgh. Anais is interested in investigating and evaluating the policy and political barriers to equity in HIV/STI prevention and care for Black communities in the Deep South. As a doctoral student, Anais supported studies investigating the effects of social networks and stigma on HIV prevention care for Black women. Additionally, she served as project coordinator for an innovative training program designed to increase providers' knowledge of Black women's HIV care needs. In her spare time, Anais enjoys being in nature and visiting museums.

Recent Celebrations: Anais had abstracts accepted by multiple national conferences: the International AIDS Society (IAS), the Association of Providers of AIDS Care (IAPAC) Continuum, and the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI). She also received the CROI New Investigator Scholarship award. Plus, she got engaged!



Nicole Rademacher, MD

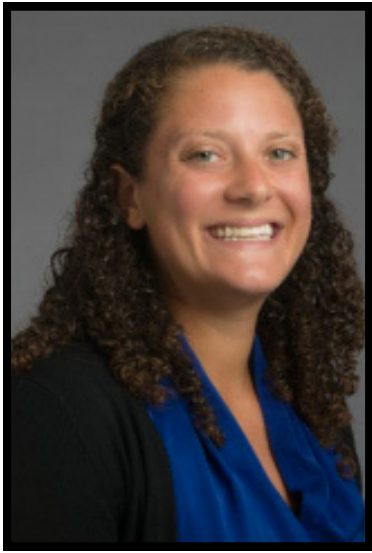
Mentor: Kristy Broman, MD, MPH

Postdoc: Surgery
University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

Nicole is a general surgery resident interested in health services research. She attended Medical College of Wisconsin for medical school before completing two years of general surgery residency at UAB. She is pursuing a dedicated research fellowship in surgical oncology health services research under the mentorship of Dr. Kristy Broman and with the support of the AHRQ T32 program. Her research foci include understanding the factors that drive quality of cancer care within regional cancer care markets and health system-level strategies to address regional variation in cancer mortality. During her research fellowship, she is also pursuing an MSPH in Outcomes Research.

Recent Celebrations: Nicole's oral presentation was accepted for the American College of Surgeons annual meeting, she made finalist for the Association for Academic Surgery (AAS) and Society of University Surgeons (SUS) resident research awards, and recently submitted four first-author & three co-author manuscripts.

Returning Trainees



Petra Sprik, MPH, MDiv

Mentors: Larry Hearld, PhD

Predoc: Health Services Administration
University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

Petra is a doctoral student in the Health Services Administration program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). A recent transplant to Alabama, she previously completed her undergraduate studies at Duke University, a Master of Divinity at Princeton Theological Seminary, and a Master of Public Health from the University of South Carolina. Petra's primary research goal is to improve healthcare quality, outcomes, and affordability by studying the intersection of healthcare worker well-being and patient-centered care. She is informed by seven years of clinical experience as a healthcare chaplain, and the patient experience of living with Type-1 Diabetes. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, a competitive Peloton ride, and spending time with her family.

Recent Celebrations: Petra has received multiple awards: the Dr. Richard Thompson Memorial Endowed Scholarship, the Graduate Student Government (GSG) Travel Award, the Proassurance and Department of Wellness Financial Support for Dissertation, and the Healthcare Management Annual Meeting Monetary Award. Petra also presented and passed her dissertation proposal!

Graduating Trainees



William Bradford, MD

Mentors: Latesha Elopre MD, MSPH, and Ronnie “Matt” Gravett, MD, MSPH

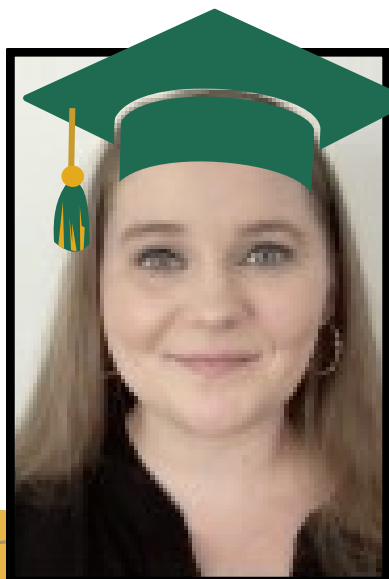
Postdoc: Infectious Diseases

University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

William is a native of Raleigh, NC, and attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for undergraduate studies before enrolling at Wake Forest School of Medicine for his MD. He completed residency in internal medicine at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia, PA, where he developed a passion for treating patients with serious injection-related infection. He worked as hospitalist at the University of California, Davis for two years before returning to training in the Infectious Diseases fellowship program at UAB. In his spare time, he enjoys mountain biking, rock climbing, and spending time with his children.

Recent Celebrations: Will received a CAPPI Pilot Grant and gave poster presentation & published abstract at the ASAIO Journal 70th Annual Conference. He was inducted as a member of UAB Center for AIDS Research (CFAR). In 2024 Will completed his ID Boards and welcomed the arrival his second child.

Next Step: Will continues his career as an Assistant Professor in UAB Division of Infectious Diseases.



Andrea Davis, MA

Mentors: Gareth Dutton, PhD

Predoc: Psychology

University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

Andrea earned her BA in psychology from Rhodes College in Memphis, TN, and her MA in clinical psychology from Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, TN. Broadly, her research interests are the development and refinement of behavioral weight management interventions. Her current research proposes a brief Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) intervention that aims to address psychological characteristics that have been demonstrated to hinder weight loss efforts, including presence of emotional eating, weight self-stigma, and negative body image.

Recent Celebrations: Andrea submitted her first lead-author manuscript to the Obesity Research & Clinical Practice Journal, gave poster presentation at the Society for Behavioral Medicine Annual Meeting, earned the APF/COGDOP Graduate Research Award, and received Dr. Jesse B Milby Endowed support funding.

Next Step: Andrea matched for internship at Ohio State University-Wexner Medical Center in the clinical health psychology track.

Graduating Trainees



Noon Eltoum, MD, MPH

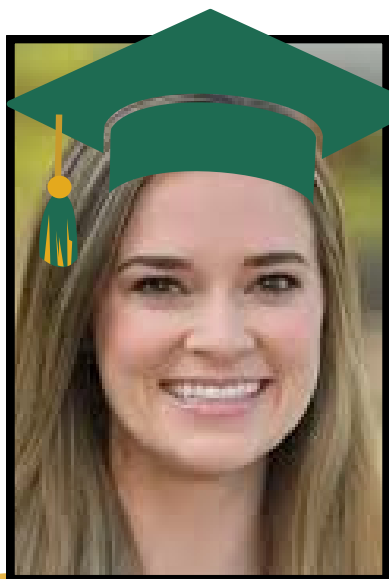
Mentors: Anna Sorace, PhD and Gabrielle Rocque, MD

Postdoc: Hematology & Oncology
University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

Noon attained her medical degree from the University of Medical Sciences and Technology in Khartoum, Sudan. Noon completed a Master of Public Health with a concentration in Epidemiology from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Her postdoctoral fellowship was in the Department of Radiology at UAB under the mentorship of Dr. Anna Sorace and with the support of the UAB Health Services Research Training Program. Her research interests include breast cancer and imaging, effects of novel radiological approaches on patient outcomes, and improving healthcare access and quality globally.

Recent Celebrations: Two of Noon's papers were accepted for publication; the Journal of Breast Imaging (lead author) and the Journal of Nuclear Medicine (JNM). She presented an abstract at the San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium. Plus, Noon got married!

Next Step: Noon got married and has moved abroad. We hope she stays in touch!



Kayleigh "Elizabeth" Keith Skipper, PhD, BSN, RN

Mentors: Wendy Landier, PhD, RN, and Smita Bhatia, MD, MPH

Predoc: Nursing
University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

Elizabeth earned her BS in nursing from the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, AL, in 2019. Before starting her PhD program, she worked as a nurse at Children's of Alabama in hematology/oncology, bone marrow transplant, as well as cardiovascular and interventional radiology peri-operative services. Broadly, her research interests include patient/family education in pediatric oncology and health literacy. Her current research focuses on understanding the role health literacy may play in parental ability to comprehend education related to caring for their child with cancer at home.

Recent Celebrations: Elizabeth completed her program coursework with 4.0 GPA, successfully defended her dissertation, and earned her degree by May 2025. She has submitted 2 manuscripts from her dissertation work, one being a lead-author. She she received an Oncology Nursing Foundation Doctoral Scholarship.

Nest Step: Elizabeth accepted a postdoctoral fellowship in Oncology Nursing at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX.

Graduating Trainees



Joshua C.J. Lewis, PhD

Mentors: Patricia Drentea, PhD, David Warner, PhD, Verna Keith, PhD, Myles Moody, and Olivio Clay, PhD

Predoc: Sociology

University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

Originally from Atlanta, Georgia, Joshua C.J. Lewis was a doctoral student in the Medical Sociology program at UAB. Prior to his graduate studies, he finished his BA in Philosophy from Texas A&M University and worked as a federal U.S. health lobbyist and advocate for health workforce development, minority health, and the reduction of health disparities. As a social scientist, Joshua combines his experiences in health policy, background in ethics, and sociological training to elucidate the mechanisms and social factors that perpetuate American health inequities. His current research focuses on addressing health disparities across the life course with an emphasis on chronic stressors, psychosocial resources, social determinants of health, and cardiovascular disease.

Recent Celebrations: Josh earned the Outstanding Graduate Student Award by the UAB Dept. of Sociology and Medical Sociology. His poster won an award at the Population Association of America (PAA) Annual Meeting, and his first-authored publication in *The Gerontologist*. Josh applied for the NIA's R36 and received an impact score of 16. He also successfully passed dissertation proposal defense!

Next Step: Josh has accepted a postdoctoral fellowship in the School of Public Health at the University of Maryland, in College Park, MD

We wish all of our graduating T32's the best of luck in their future endeavors!



WHERE ARE OUR ALUMNI NOW?



GIVE

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