

## Collaborative Research at the Brown University School of Public Health: An Introduction

BESS H. MARCUS, PhD  
GUEST EDITOR

Research is the cornerstone of the Brown University School of Public Health. In fact, the Program in Public Health became a School of Public Health in 2013 in large part due to the outstanding research conducted in the research centers that were originally part of the Brown School of Medicine. Long-standing centers such as the Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies, the Center for Biostatistics and Health Data Science, and the Center for Gerontology and Healthcare Research serve as anchors for school.

Other centers that played an important role in the School's development over its first decade include: the Center for Global Public Health, the Mindfulness Center, the Center for Health Promotion and Health Equity, the Hassenfeld Child Health Innovation Institute, the Center for Long-term Care and Quality, and the Center for Evidence-Synthesis in Health.

Newer centers that will play an important role at the school in our second 10 years and beyond include: the Pandemic Center, the Center for Climate, Environment and Health, the Center for Advancing Health Policy Through Research, and the Center for Health System Sustainability. Hospital-based Centers, including the Centers for Behavioral and Preventive Medicine and the Brown University AIDS Program remain vital to the success of our school and provide numerous opportunities for our faculty and students.

In this special issue, readers will learn about the work underway across the Brown University School of Public Health and at several of its centers that support research, training, and community partnerships. These articles highlight the range of public health research at the School, including efforts to address health equity, improve care for older adults, reduce substance use and chronic disease, strengthen global health systems and examine how environmental and social conditions affect health.

The contributions described below showcase both the history and current focus of the School's centers, and reflect their role in generating evidence to inform public health practice, and health care delivery and policy in Rhode Island and beyond.

**ALISON TOVAR, PhD, MPH**, is an Associate Professor of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the Brown University School of Public Health and Interim Director of the Center for Health Promotion and Health Equity. Trained in

psychology, public health, and nutrition science, her work focuses on culturally tailored interventions to promote healthy eating in Latino communities and evaluating policies that promote healthy eating. In her article, Dr. Tovar traces the evolution of the Center from its roots in community-based cardiovascular disease prevention to its work in equity-centered research addressing structural racism, environmental justice, food access, overdose prevention, and chronic-disease disparities among historically marginalized populations.

**ROSA R. BAIER, MPH**, is the Director of the Long-Term Care Quality & Innovation Center and Professor of the Practice of Health Services, Policy & Practice at the Brown University School of Public Health. For more than two decades, she has developed and refined pragmatic approaches to improve care for older adults, and prior to Brown, she directed the state's quality reporting program as a contractor for the Rhode Island Department of Health. In her article, she uses case-based examples to describe how the research group she directs at Brown has emerged as a national leader in equity-centered, community-based participatory aging research.

**EMILY GADBOIS, PhD**, is an Associate Professor of Health Services, Policy and Practice at the Brown University School of Public Health and a faculty member of the Center for Gerontology & Healthcare Research. A health services researcher and gerontologist, her work focuses on the experiences and outcomes of older adults—particularly those with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias—and how healthcare policies and organizational practices shape care quality. In her article, she examines nursing home administrator perspectives during the COVID-19 pandemic, identifying lessons to strengthen policy and emergency preparedness in long-term care.

Associate Professor of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Epidemiology **DIANA GRIGSBY-TOUSSAINT, PhD, MPH**, is a social epidemiologist at the Brown University School of Public Health. She studies how neighborhood environments influence health, with a focus on diet, physical activity, and sleep among low-income and racially and ethnically diverse populations. In her study, she describes Rhode Island's greening efforts and the Project G-SPACE study, which examines how access to green space affects children's sleep, mental health, and physical activity.

**OMAR GALÁRRAGA, PhD**, is Professor of Health Services, Policy and Practice and Director of the Center for Global Public Health at the Brown University School of Public Health. In his article, he highlights the Center's global partnerships and research over the past decade, showing how culturally grounded, economically sound interventions can improve population health at scale while advancing equity.

**CHRISTOPHER W. KAHLER, PhD**, is Professor of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Psychiatry and Human Behavior and Director of the Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies at the Brown University School of Public Health. A Fellow of the American Psychological Association and Vice President of the Research Society on Alcohol, he is an internationally recognized addiction scientist whose work focuses on reducing alcohol and tobacco use. In his article, he highlights the Center's 43-year legacy of generating rigorous evidence that reduces substance-related harm and advances recovery.

A licensed psychologist and clinician-scientist at the Brown University School of Public Health and Warren Alpert Medical School, **HAYLEY TRELOAR PADOVANO, PhD**, is an Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Human Behavior and of Behavioral and Social Sciences. In her article, Dr. Treloar Padovano describes a community partnership with Clínica Esperanza/Hope Clinic that used on-site liver screening and culturally responsive counseling to detect previously undiagnosed liver disease and connect patients to early intervention and care.

**THERESA I. SHIREMAN, PhD**, is Professor of Health Services, Policy and Practice and Epidemiology and Director of the Center for Gerontology & Healthcare Research at the Brown University School of Public Health. Her research has advanced understanding of medication use and outcomes among patients on chronic dialysis, and she has helped develop novel methods to track medication exposure. In her article, she highlights the Center's leadership in

aging research, demonstrating how interdisciplinary, policy-relevant studies and national data resources have improved healthcare quality and outcomes for older adults and people with chronic conditions.

It has been my great pleasure to organize this special issue of the *Rhode Island Medical Journal*. This collection spotlights some of the important work conducted since the School's inception in 2013. Additionally, it highlights some of the exciting opportunities that lie ahead. This is an exciting time for the field of Public Health and researchers at Brown continue to be at the forefront of this important work.

#### Guest editor

**BESS H. MARCUS, PhD**, is Professor of Behavioral and Social Sciences and served as the second Dean of the School of Public Health at Brown University. She is a clinical health psychologist who has spent over 35 years conducting research on physical activity behavior and has published over 300 papers and book chapters as well as three books on this topic. She has developed a series of assessment instruments to measure psychosocial mediators of physical activity behavior and has also developed low-cost interventions to promote physical activity behavior in community, workplace, and primary care settings. Dr. Marcus is actively involved in numerous NIH grants on physical activity behavior and public health. Her work increasingly focuses on promoting physical activity in underserved and vulnerable populations.

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