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Visit the ACE Website at
www.acepidemiology.org for
COVID-19 updates & resources

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The American College of Epidemiology was incorporated in 1979 to develop criteria for professional recognition of epidemiologists and to address their professional concerns.

ACE serves the interests of its members through sponsorship of scientific meetings, publications, and educational activities, recognizing outstanding contributions to the field and advocating for issues pertinent to epidemiology.



Message from the American College of Epidemiology President, CAPT Diana Bensyl, MA, PhD, FACE

Hello ACE,

What a year it has been! So many challenges it's hard to know where to start with proposing solutions. But as epidemiologists seeking to find the root of health problems, we can find peace in creating hypotheses and determining what seems to make a difference. And, at least for me, understanding how I can make a positive contribution to improving health outcomes for everyone has helped me feel less anxious, and sad, and it has helped me from feeling powerless over the last six months.

As the COVID-19 pandemic was taking off in my community, I was able to help at the health department. I reviewed informational materials for clarity and scientific content. I also contacted case patients, and their contacts, to gather information and help them understand their role in decreasing transmission. In addition, I was asked to work on contact tracing strategies with people experiencing homelessness. Though it meant I was particularly busy with my regular work, these rewarding experiences on the front lines of public health helped me remember why I chose a career in epidemiology. And they revealed disparities, front and center, even before the murder of George Floyd made people who had never done so before, enter the conversation on disparities and systemic racism.

ACE sent out a solidarity statement to show our support. One comment I received regarding this statement was that unless we were going to do something, it was pointless to make a statement. Making a statement was jumping on the bandwagon and saving face, but it was not actually doing anything to make a difference. This has stood out in my mind and has pushed me to have ACE not just say we support Black lives, but to do something. And to know that we are not doing enough, whatever it is we are doing. It made me examine ACE's actions from prior years to see how systemic racism might have affected our choices over the years in funding our Minority Affairs Committee (MAC), selecting speakers for our meetings, and in choosing our board members.

Small, tiny steps we are taking to be more present in this conversation include having someone from the Executive Board as a MAC Liaison. Cathy Critchlow, the ACE Secretary, is now serving as the Liaison. She is a senior leader and can help ensure that the MAC always has the ear of the board and has the resources they need to function most effectively. Another step is having the ACE President (me for a little bit longer and then Steve Jacobsen) meet with the MAC to hear their perspectives and to join their meetings. Understanding where we are and not leaving it up to one small volunteer group (MAC) to define the way forward for ACE is necessary. Our management company Capitol Hill also ran the numbers to show us how many ACE members are people of color and how the diversity of the college has changed over time. This can help guide us to think about how we move forward together into the future to ensure equity. The MAC is currently working on a paper to describe this information. Hopefully you will all be able to read it soon,

Continued on next page

Message from the American College of Epidemiology President, *continued*

and we can use it as a tool for the way forward in ensuring ACE is unwavering in fighting systemic racism, decreasing disparities, and that we are not just offering platitudes.

As we move towards our first ever virtual meeting, I hope we can keep this conversation going at our board meetings, at the annual meeting, and in our daily work. What can ACE offer to other epidemiologists and how can we be a leader in effecting change? Please send me your ideas and thoughts (office@acepidemiology.org). Though my term as president ends at the end of September, I will still be on the board for another year and am committed to making a positive impact.

Please check out the rest of the information in the newsletter including updates on our annual meeting, election results, and other topics. Thank you to all our ACE volunteers and the committee chairs who give selflessly of their time whether it's as part of a committee, reviewing abstracts, being part of the annual meeting planning, or in other ways. Our committees always need help so if you would like to get more involved with ACE, just let us know. We can find a spot for you!

Sincerely,
Diana Bensyl

PUBLICATIONS UPDATE

Since the global pandemic of COVID-19 began, clinicians and scientists have scurried to mitigate and understand the threat, while sharing with other researchers what they know. **Annals of Epidemiology has experienced a surge of submissions on COVID-19, many of which have undergone expedited review.** To date, the journal has published 9 manuscripts, ranging in topics from the prevalence of the infection in New York and the response to COVID-19 to the association of voter turnout with county-level COVID-19 occurrence. In the first published paper, authors Rosenberg et al., conducted a statewide seroprevalence study in a 15,101-patron convenience sample at 99 grocery stores in 26 counties throughout New York State. Based on 1887 of 15,101 (12.5%) reactive results, estimated cumulative incidence through March 29 was 14.0% corresponding to 2,139,300 infection-experienced adults. Authors Flanders, Flanders, and Goodman investigated whether the increase in cases that was seen in all states after the election, was greater in counties with higher voter turnout after accounting for other relevant county-level population characteristics. Additional papers by Poteat et al., and Rodriguez-Dias et al., highlight the vulnerabilities and transmission dynamics among Black and Latino communities in the US.

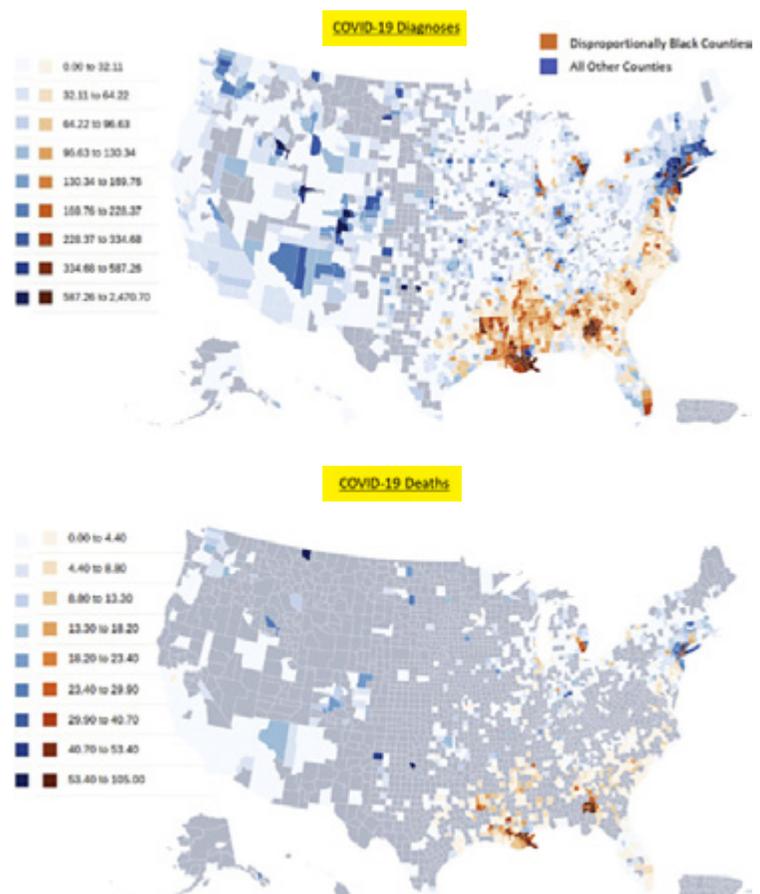
ACE ELECTION RESULTS! WELCOME NEW ACE OFFICERS!

Congratulations to Jan Eberth, PhD, who is our new President-Elect! Dr. Eberth is a current Board member and Associate Professor of Epidemiology and Biostatistics in the Arnold School of Public Health at the University of South Carolina. She is also the Director of the USC Rural and Minority Health Research Center.

Our new Board members representing ACE Fellows are Annette Adams, PhD, MPH, from Kaiser Permanente Southern California; Lisa Klesges, PhD, from the University of Memphis; and Stephen Waring, DVM, PhD, from Essentia Institute of Rural Health. Newly elected Board member representing ACE Members is Mia Papas, PhD, MS, from the Christiana Health Care System and representing ACE Associate Members is Deven Patel, PhD, MPH who is a AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellow at United States Department of Defense.

The future of ACE is secure and in good hands with this diverse and accomplished group of officers and board members!

In addition to our congratulations, we extend a special thanks to all the candidates who ran for office. We really appreciate the committed and talented people who were willing to run and look forward to their continued support. We are a volunteer organization and everything we do is possible because of your involvement and contributions. Thank you!



#ACEAnnual2020

Annual Meeting 2020 Virtual Conference



ACE | AMERICAN
COLLEGE OF
EPIDEMIOLOGY

Advancing Health Equity –
Epidemiologic Research, Education Policy, and Practice



SNEAK PEEK AT THE 2020 VIRTUAL ANNUAL ACE MEETING

The annual American College of Epidemiology meeting will be held virtually on **September 21-23, 2020**. Although we had originally planned to meet in College Park, MD, we transitioned to a virtual setting and we can assure you that an exciting and high-quality program is planned for everyone!

The theme of this year's conference is **"Advancing Health Equity: Epidemiologic Research, Education, Policy, and Practice."** The goal of the meeting is to highlight approaches and key areas where epidemiology can advance our understanding and promotion of health equity. 2020 ACE meeting details can be found [here](#).

We will kick-off on Monday, September 21st with hands-on virtual workshops. Topics include mixed models in epidemiologic research, qualitative mixed methods for quantitative researchers, and methods for spatial epidemiology. Conference sessions, roundtables, posters, and awards will commence on Tuesday, September 22nd. The keynote speaker this year is **Dr. Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable**, Director of the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Dr. Pérez-Stable will also be the guest speaker at the Minority Affairs Workshop to be held on Wednesday, September 23rd.

Plenary sessions will cover timely topics on social media and misinformation in the COVID-19 pandemic and health policies and the presidential election. Concurrent breakout sessions are planned on other theme-related topics, including environmental justice, urban-rural health disparities, epidemiologic tools for examining Ebola and other major epidemics, and novel population-based


ACE | AMERICAN
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EPIDEMIOLOGY
 2020 Annual Meeting
KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Dr. Eliseo Pérez-Stable, MD
 Director of NIH's National
Institute of Minority Health and
Health Disparities (NIMHD)
 SEPTEMBER 21 - 24, 2020

methods for examining health disparities. Awards sessions will occur on the last day and the conference will end with an exciting panel on "The future of epidemiology: perspectives from ACE presidents," which is sure to generate interesting discussion and viewpoints.

Although the format is different this year, it will remain the same rich program as in past years - filled with education, networking, and fun! Parts of the meeting will be recorded so that you can view content on your own schedule and attend all concurrent sessions. Posters will be available for viewing on September 22nd and 23rd.

Registration is now open, grab your login information and check out the details [here](#). Be sure to check your email and the ACE website for further updates! See you there!

UPDATE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

**SARAH GEIGER, PHD, FAHA
CHAIR**

Greetings ACE Membership! It is my great pleasure to update you on some changes in Membership Committee leadership and composition. Our fearless leader, Dr. Maurizio Macaluso, has completed his term as Chair. I know I speak for the Committee as a whole in thanking Maurizio for his service to the Committee and to ACE. He stepped into the Chair role during a time of real need, and I am so grateful to him for that, as well as his guidance and mentorship to me personally. Maurizio, THANK YOU!

This change also means that I now transition from Vice Chair to Chair, and Dr. Edwin van Wijngaarden has agreed to assume the role of Vice Chair. I have very much enjoyed working with Edwin thus far, and together with our new committee Manager Mr. Joel Begay, I'm confident we have a great leadership team in place! More about those two gentlemen later...

First I'd like to share with you a few things we've had cooking since our last newsletter update. Most exciting is probably our Win-back campaign. With the guidance of Meagan Bowker, ACE Executive Director, we embarked on a new initiative to "win back" lapsed members. We stratified lapsed members into several groups and started with those most recently lapsed. In a whole-committee effort, we worked with Meagan to come up with talking points about the benefits of ACE, each committee member composed an email detailing their own personal experience of benefitting from ACE, and we divided up the lapsed members for our campaign asking lapsed members to renew their dues and return to ACE. We're THRILLED to report that round 1 of outreach resulted in about **18% (n=16) renewal rate!** Round two ends in August, so we hope to see even more renewals resulting from continued follow-up. On this, our first try at a win-back campaign, and under majorly less than ideal circumstances (read: COVID-19), I just couldn't be prouder of our committee's work. Other things we have in the hopper are drafting standard operating procedures for the committee, and working with Meagan to hopefully host our annual job fair at the annual meeting, which has been so well-received the past couple of years. Well, enough from me and on to this edition's member profiles. **Who better to showcase than our committee's new Vice Chair and ACE Fellow, Dr. Edwin van Wijngaarden, and Committee Manager and Associate Member, Mr. Joel Begay.**



Edwin van Wijngaarden, PhD, FACE

Dr. van Wijngaarden received an MSc in Environmental Sciences from Wageningen University in The Netherlands, and a PhD in Epidemiology from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

He is a Fellow of the American College of Epidemiology. He is Associate Chair in the Department of Public Health Sciences. He has published over 120 peer-reviewed manuscripts primarily in the areas of environmental and occupational health, and in neurocognitive and neurobehavioral outcomes. Dr. van Wijngaarden's primary research efforts have focused on the influence of environmental exposures on cognitive outcomes in children and adults. He leads the Seychelles Child Development Study (SCDS) which for over 30 years has investigated the impact of pre- and postnatal methylmercury exposure on child development. Current SCDS research investigates how prenatal nutritional factors and genetics influence associations between prenatal methylmercury exposure and developmental outcomes. He also has significant collaborative research experience in clinical and population health research. Amongst other roles, he co-directs the Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (CTSI) Biostatistics, Epidemiology and Research Design (BERD) key function which provides support and a central source for technical collaboration to investigators for appropriate study design and statistical analysis in clinical and translational science research. Dr. van Wijngaarden also has substantial educational experience. Prior to his Associate Chair role, he was director of the Doctoral and Master's Programs in Epidemiology. He leads undergraduate programs in Epidemiology and Environmental Health, and directs the newly-established and innovative Health and Epidemiology Advanced Learning (HEAL) program, a dual degree program in which students who are accepted as an undergraduate are also given conditional assurance of admission to the MS in Epidemiology. He has mentored more than 80 graduate students in public health and numerous undergraduate students. He has also mentored eight junior faculty members, and is a mentor for NIH-funded training programs in Toxicology, Environmental Biostatistics, Clinical and Translational Cancer Control, and Oral Science.

1. Please describe how you joined ACE: what attracted you to the College?

The associate member committee definitely recognizes the need to stay in touch with early-stage Soon after

obtaining my first faculty position at University of Rochester, I decided to become member of the College which provides a great opportunity to network and to stay abreast of developments in our discipline above and beyond a focus on epidemiologic methods. Also, the fact that the College reviews membership applications for appropriate credentials made ACE membership more meaningful to me than that of some other organizations.

2. What has been the best experience you had as a Fellow/Member/Associate Member of the College?

I joined in 2004 as a member, and became a Fellow in 2016. The best experience as a member/Fellow has been my interaction with colleagues as part of committee activities. I joined the Publications committee in 2010 and stayed active on it until 2017, after which I joined the Membership committee and, as liaison, the Mentorship committee. I enjoy assisting with developing new initiatives and improving current ones. Everyone who I have met through committee work have been incredibly nice and committed to ACE and the discipline as a whole. While I wish I would be able to make it to the ACE meetings more often, my interaction with other volunteers has been educational and rewarding.

3. What keeps you engaged in ACE?

Initially, like many junior epidemiologists I'm sure part of my motivation to join a committee was to show on my CV that I was engaged in my professional community (I have to be honest!) And I believe this has indeed been beneficial in this respect – I am sure that my College activities were viewed favorably during reappointment and promotion reviews. But as my career has progressed I have found true professional value in learning about what other ACE members are involved with in their careers (membership is probably more diverse than some other epidemiology organizations), reading interesting contributions in the Annals of Epidemiology, and getting more organizational and collaborative experience from my committee activities.

4. What career advantages do you see coming from continued membership in the College?

Continued professional development is one of the primary advantages, as well as an opportunity to give back to the professional community.

5. What are your expectations of what ACE can do for you?

For me, it is not so much about what ACE can do for me, as it is about what I can do for ACE. I am a very collaborative person, and happy to assist with new initiatives that helps increase the visibility of ACE and provides value to colleagues in our profession.

6. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us about your ACE experience?

Join a committee! It has been a great experience for me and I'm sure it will be for others as well.



Joel Begay

Joel is a member of the Navajo Nation, originally from Shiprock, NM. He earned his B.A. in Biochemistry at Colorado College and his MPH in Hospital & Molecular Epidemiology and a Certificate in Healthcare Infection Prevention & Control at the University of Michigan School of Public Health.

He is an Associate Member of the American College of Epidemiology and is a Data Manager & Analyst with the Lifecourse Epidemiology of Adiposity & Diabetes (LEAD) Center at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. He oversees data management and analysis for an ongoing randomized control trial that aims to prevent obesity and Type 2 Diabetes in American Indian Youth through a culturally adapted diet and physical activity intervention and conducts longitudinal data analysis for a cohort study that aims to investigate the environmental exposures on child health and development.

While a graduate student, Joel was a Fellow with the Cancer Epidemiology Education in Special Populations (CEESP) Program where he investigated breast cancer screening adherence among American Indian women screened by a mobile mammography unit. Following graduate school, Joel served as an Epidemiologist and Program Coordinator with the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Epidemiology Center where he was instrumental in fostering collaborative partnerships with tribal, state, and federal stakeholders in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan to develop a regional opioid surveillance system.

As a native public health professional, Joel is an advocate for American Indian/Alaska Native health and is committed to building public health infrastructure. Recently, he has served on panels to discuss the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in AI/AN communities, while also highlighting their resilience. Joel has also spent some time educating native youth on personal, community, and environmental mitigation strategies to protect native communities from COVID-19.

1. Please describe how you joined ACE: what attracted you to the College?

While a graduate student, I heard about the College but didn't pursue membership until April 2019. As an

Associate Member, I have found the College to be a close-knit community of epidemiologists with many engagement opportunities. Soon after admission, I joined the Membership Committee and served as a Liaison to the Minority Affairs Committee -- both have been meaningful experiences.

2. What has been the best experience you had as a Fellow/Member/Associate Member of the College?

I have thoroughly enjoyed assessing diversity in epidemiology with the Minority Affairs Committee. This work has certainly highlighted the need for increased diversity, and I'm excited to support ACE in these efforts.

3. What keeps you engaged in ACE?

I've enjoyed working behind the scenes with the Membership Committee on the Win-Back Campaign. As Dr. Geiger mentioned, we've focused on the recruitment and re-engagement with ACE members whose memberships have lapsed. With a "divide and conquer" approach, I'm happy to see folks re-engaging with the College. In my brief tenure, my experiences have been positive, and I'm excited for others to tap into the community that is ACE.

4. What career advantages do you see coming from continued membership in the College?

In addition to first-hand knowledge of emerging topics and epidemiologic methods, I'm most excited to connect with public health professionals who represent a variety of backgrounds and sectors. The networking and collaboration opportunities are infinite.

5. What are your expectations of what ACE can do for you?

There are 573 federally recognized American Indian/Alaska Native tribes in the U.S., and each community is culturally diverse, small, and has specific health-related needs. As a native health professional, I am committed to serving and improving the health of my people and my native relatives through epidemiology. With ACE, I hope to engage in meaningful conversations surrounding epidemiologic and health-related research among small populations.

6. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us about your ACE experience?

I'm thankful to be a member of the ACE Community where I regularly engage with smart, humble, and kind people. ACE is a special place and I look forward to cultivating professional relations with others. Thank you and stay safe!



AWARDS COMMITTEE WELCOMES NEW CHAIR

Dr. Xinzhi Zhang, M.D., Ph.D., FACE, FRSM has been appointed Chair the Awards Committee. Dr. Zhang is a program director in the NCATS Division

of Clinical Innovation at NIH, where he manages a portfolio of Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA), including the CTSA National Center for Data to Health. He is also a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps.

Dr. Zhang joined the NIH in 2012 as a program director in the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities' Division of Extramural Scientific Programs where he provided leadership for scientific program development and project management on minority health and health disparities research. Prior to that, he was an epidemiologist in CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion's Division of Diabetes Translation and a Steven M. Teutsch Prevention Effectiveness Fellow with the National Center for Infectious Diseases Office of Surveillance at the CDC.

Dr. Zhang has had more than 70 articles published and serves as an associate editor of Health Equity.

Dr. Zhang received his M.D. from Peking Union Medical College in 1998 and his Ph.D. in health services administration from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 2003. Dr. Zhang has broad research interests that include clinical epidemiology, health services research, data science, health informatics, and their applications to promote health equity.

The importance of epidemiology is increasing in a changing world with persistent chronic conditions and emerging infectious epidemics. Dr. Zhang is very excited to serve in his new role to assist recognizing great achievements and contributions of our epidemiologist community. Please feel free to reach out to him with any new ideas and suggestions.

The American College of Epidemiology invites nominations for the Abraham Lilienfeld Award, Annual Outstanding Contributions to Epidemiology Award, and Annual Student Paper Prize. Applications for the 2020 Award will be accepted through August 15, 2020. For questions contact Xinzhi Zhang, MD, PhD, Awards Committee Chair at Xinzhi.Zhang@nih.gov. For more details, please visit: <https://www.acepidemiology.org/awards>.