FROM THE DIRECTOR

This fall the new students arrived only weeks before our new department chair, Dr. Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, took leadership. We are excited about both arrivals, although Dr. Bibbins-Domingo has been part of the department for several years. The PhD students met with her to discuss her vision for the department moving forward.

Many people have asked me about our outgoing chair, Dr. Bob Hiatt. After 10 years as chair, Bob is moving back to a primary focus on research, in particular via the SF Can initiative (http://www.sfcancer.org/). He has promised to stay very involved and committed to the PhD program!

Several new faculty recently joined the department, bringing a new influx of expertise in cancer, health disparities, aging, infectious disease, and biostatistics (see a bit of description here: https://epibiostat.ucsf.edu/news/seven-new-faculty-join-department)

Recently, in an effort to catch up to 2008, I’ve joined twitter and written a few blog posts on LinkedIn. Twitter is an unexpectedly great place for arguments and news about epi methods. The major downside of twitter is, of course, that it distracts time from writing research papers.

PhD Students Meet New Department Chair, Dr. Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo

The PhD students were thrilled to meet our new chair, Dr. Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, earlier this month. While her academic accomplishments are remarkable, what impressed us most was her willingness to listen, insightful observations of the strength of our program and her enthusiasm towards working together to collaborations within and outside UCSF. We discussed her educational background, interests in becoming chair and her commitment to training. Dr. Bibbins-Domingo sees epidemiology at the center of some of UCSF’s hottest topics like big data, precision medicine - and she “would like epi to continue to play a larger and larger role”. Just what we want to hear! We also discussed diversity in the PhD program and the department and what we can do to strengthen diversity in the program. Dr. Bibbins-Domingo recognized that improving diversity is a critical issue; She said “within a small program with leadership who is already committed to improving diversity, my challenge as chair is to figure out how to invest the resources to assure that our goals are actually realized.” Dr. Bibbins-Domingo closed with her commitment towards supporting career development for the PhD students; in her words, PhD students “are essential to the future of the department, both to who we are on this campus and our reputation outside.” Thank you Kirsten for the delightful meeting, we are looking forward to exciting times ahead in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics.

Cont’d on p 2
Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States, with nearly 600,000 deaths occurring in 2016, and ~1.6 million new cases diagnosed. It is estimated that lifestyle practices may prevent ~1/3 of cancer cases or cancer deaths. However, the biologic mechanisms underlying these associations are incompletely understood, and translation of this knowledge to improve cancer management and optimize survivorship remains limited. For example, further work is needed to understand the effects of specific diet and exercise factors on cancer, to develop lifestyle recommendations tailored to tumor type, treatment modality, or germline or tumor genetics. Our team conducts translational lifestyle research in oncology with the goals of elucidating the biological influence of lifestyle factors on cancer progression, and ultimately to develop diet and exercise recommendations to improve quality of life and survival for individuals with cancer. In short, our work is focused on addressing the question that the millions of people diagnosed with cancer every year ask themselves – What can I eat or do to maximize my chances of survival with this disease?

Continued page 5
Welcome New PhD Students for 2017-18!

Adrienne Epstein, MS

*Education: Macalester College (BA, Biology); Harvard University (MS Global Health and Population)*

My broad research interests include the application of spatial methods to improve surveillance for vector-borne diseases. I became interested in malaria while serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guinea. Although I worked as a teacher, health was a major issue in my community, and much of my work entailed malaria education. For my Master’s thesis, I investigated barriers pregnant women face to receiving proper malaria treatment in Guinea. As a doctoral student, I hope to expand my skillset to achieve a greater impact in improving health outcomes in malaria-vulnerable populations.

Dan Kelly

*Education: Princeton University (AB Chemistry); Albert Einstein College of Medicine (MD); UC Berkeley, (MPH)*

After graduating from Princeton University, I went to Albert Einstein College of Medicine, where I pursued a Global Health Fellowship in Sierra Leone. There, together with a local doctor was inspired to start Wellbody Alliance, a non-profit organization that provided high-quality healthcare to the rural poor. After my internal medicine residency at Baylor College of Medicine, I continued on as faculty to conduct HIV research in Sierra Leone. While doing an infectious diseases fellowship at UCSF, a close doctor friend died of Ebola virus disease (EVD). August 2014, I took a leave of absence to establish a coalition of Ebola response work with Partners In Health, care for Ebola-infected patients, and co-lead Ebola virus diagnostic trials. After the Ebola outbreak, I merged Wellbody Alliance into Partners In Health, completed my MPH at University of California, Berkeley, and finished my clinical infectious diseases fellowship at UCSF.

My interest is in the study of the epidemiology and natural history of EVD survivorship and unreported infections in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Democratic Republic of the Congo. I am interested in research capacity building to support the development of individuals and degree-granting programs in countries where viral hemorrhagic diseases and health inequities are endemic.

Crystal Langlais

*Education: Eastern Washington University (BS Biology); University of Arizona, (MPH)*

My professional research experience is centered around pediatric acute illness and injury. In my doctoral training, I am shifting my focus to genetic and early life exposures associated with chronic disease onset, particularly in relation to cancers and cardiovascular disease. I am especially interested in how modifiable risk factors associated with chronic diseases interact with genetic factors to influence disease onset and how these relationships result in different disease trajectories across populations.
**Accomplishments: Publications**

**Ackley, Sarah**


**Asiimwe, Stephen**


**Demb, Joshua**


**Mehrotra, Megha**

Mehrotra, M; Montoya O, Lama JR; Guanira, JV; Casapia, M; Veloso, V; Buchbinder, SP; Mayer, KH; Chariyalertsak, S; Schechter, M; Bekker, L.; Kallás, E; Grant, R. International Sexual Partnerships May Be Shaped by Sexual Histories and Socioeconomic Status. Sexually Transmitted Diseases: May 2017

**Engmann, Natalie**


**Kelly, Dan**


**Mooney, Alyssa**


**Rodriguez, Luis**


**Roh, Michelle**


**Arasu, Vignesh**


**Kalapatu, Raj**


**Aiemjoy, Kristen**


**Ray, Kathryn**


**Tai, Caroline**

As cancer and nutritional epidemiologists, we collaborate broadly with surgeons, oncologists, radiologists, pathologists, nutrition and exercise specialists, biostatisticians, bioinformaticists, behavioral scientists, geneticists, and molecular biologists to approach this common question. Recently, our team estimated that ~47% of lethal prostate cancer might be prevented if healthy men followed six lifestyle habits prior to diagnosis. We also reported that vigorous physical activity, not smoking, and greater intakes of cruciferous vegetables, vegetable fat, fish, and cooked tomatoes after a diagnosis of prostate cancer may reduce the risk of prostate cancer progression or lethal disease. Similarly, our team also reported that individuals with colon cancer who did vs. did not follow the American Cancer Society Guidelines on Nutrition and Physical Activity for Cancer Survivors (i.e., maintaining a healthy body weight, exercising regularly, & eating a diet rich in whole grains, fruits and vegetables) had reduced risks of cancer recurrence and death.

We conduct cohort studies, randomized clinical trials, and translational/correlative science research to address the following thematic questions:

- What lifestyle factors after cancer diagnosis are associated with tumor aggressiveness, metastatic potential, or lethality?
- What is the effect of exercise on cancer biology and risk of progression?
- Do technology-based lifestyle interventions motivate behavior change in individuals with cancer?

Our team works closely with nutritionists at the Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, patient advocates, and exercise physiologists at the UCSF Human Performance Center and Oregon Health Sciences University to develop evidence-based patient education materials, focused on diet and exercise for individuals living with cancer.

For further details about our studies, please see here:
https://urology.ucsf.edu/lifestyle-studies
http://cancer.ucsf.edu/gi/survivorship-research

If you are interested to learn more about research or training opportunities, please contact: Victoria.Mansour@ucsf.edu

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Conference Presentations

Asiimwe, Stephen and Rerolle, Francois

Roh, Michelle

Aiemjoy, Kristen
Defining Diarrhea: Validating caregiver-reported stool consistency Meaningful Modeling of Epidemiological Data; 05/31/17; Muizenburg, South Africa: International Clinics on Infectious Disease Dynamics and Data Program; 2017

Eng, Chloe

Mooney, Alyssa


S Rae Wannier
Maya Mascarenhas, PhD, presented her dissertation on “Does it take a village to get active? Physical activity and social support for mothers - trajectory, mixed methods, and intervention analyses.” Shown here with her committee members: Dr. June Chan and Dr. Rick Hecht.

Michelle Roh (ETS PhD student), Teresa Filshtein (ETS Post-doc), Ozan Sonmez, Maria Glymour (program director), Abdou Diallo and Andrea Pedroza-Tobias (GHS PhD student) hiking at Angel Island.
Photo: Victoria Mansour

Dr. Eric Vittinghoff presenting the 2nd Vittinghoff Innovation Award to PhD student, Megha Mehrotra, for her paper Precision Medicine and the Transportability of Subgroup Analyses of RCTs.
Chloe Eng and Kristina Dang, 2nd year PhD students, presenting their poster on “Husband’s Education and Cognitive Performance in Older Adult Women: Any Evidence for a Spousal Spillover?” at the 2017 Society for Epidemiologic Research (SER) annual meeting in Seattle.

Dan Kelly, 1st year PhD student and team conducting an eye clinic at Democratic Republic of Congo.

Dan Kelly, 1st year PhD student working in the past several months at Democratic Republic of Congo trying to understand the post-infectious clinical sequelae among survivors of Ebola virus disease.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, November 15, 2017
1:00 – 4:00 pm, Mission Hall 1406
Mastering Metrics: The Path from Cause to Effect
Joshua Angrist, PhD
MIT Department of Economics

Friday, November 17, 2017
10:00 – 11:00 am, Mission Hall 2800
Core Epidemiology Methods Journal Club: Continuous outcome
Ekland Abdiwahab, MPH

Friday, November 17, 2017
12:00-1:00 pm, Mission Hall 1406
Randomized Controlled Trials to reduce cancer disparities among Underserved Asian Americans
Sunmin Lee, SD
University of Maryland

Monday, November 20, 2017
12:00 – 1:00 pm, Mission Hall 3700
Femoral Artery Atherosclerosis: A more sensitive marker of early leg pain and declines in physical function
Christina Wassel, PhD
University of Vermont

Friday, January 26, 2018
12:00 – 1:30 pm, Mission Hall 2500
Promoting diversity in recruitment processes
Dr. Sarah Schaeffer

Wednesday, January 31, 2018
3:30 – 4:30 pm, Mission Hall 1406
Annie Rimoin, PhD, MPH

Wednesday, February 7, 2018
1:00 – 4:00 pm, Mission Hall 1406
Quantitative Bias Analysis
Hailey Banack, PhD

Wednesday, March 14, 2018
1:00 – 4:00 pm, Rock Hall 102
Jarvis Chen, ScD

What are these PhD students up to?

From top to bottom

2nd year PhD Students, Kristina Dang, Francois Rerolle & Chloe Eng sailing in southern France, where they gathered to review case cohort designs.

Dr. Meghan Morris and Dr. Robert Hiatt hosting a cocktail hour with PhD students, faculty and colleagues at the 2017 Society for Epidemiologic Research conference in Seattle.

PhD students, Natalie Engmann and Stephen Asiimwe with visiting PhD student from Netherlands, Joost Groeniger, at a Giants game, planning a study on the health effects of social capital.