

UVA MPH Newsletter

Spring 2024



In this newsletter, you will find:

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- **Department Hellos**
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We want to hear from YOU!

Please click [HERE](#) to participate in our Alumni Survey and enter for a chance to win a \$15 Starbucks gift card!

A Huge Congratulations

MPH Class of 2024

In August of 2023, the Master of Public Health Program welcomed **51** new students to the UVA School of Medicine (SOM). This May, **59** students graduated from the SOM Master of Public Health or Clinical Research program. With the Department of Public Health Sciences faculty, many students were able to join ceremonies held in Culbreth Hall on Sunday, May 19, 2024.

The **nationally accredited** Master of Public Health has a 42-credit hour curriculum and offers an individualized and interdisciplinary experience. Students choose a concentration in **Research in Practice** or **Healthy Policy, Law, & Ethics**. Each student works closely with their faculty advisor to develop competencies in population health and clinical research, health policy analysis, and community engagement strategies.

UVA MPH graduates are employed in consulting firms; health departments and other local, state, and federal agencies; healthcare delivery systems; and nonprofit community agencies. Some students pursue further education in medicine, law, business, or doctoral training in public health.



Keep reading to hear more about our graduating class and their accomplishments!

See more in the [SOM Medicine in Motion News](#).

Department Hellos

Dr. Aaron Pannone

Aaron Pannone, PhD, MS has been named the **Director of the MPH Program**. Dr. Pannone is an Associate Professor and has worked with the MPH Program since 2007. Previously, he directed the Research in Practice Concentration. Dr. Pannone looks forward to working with students, alumni, and community partners in this role. Ruth Bernheim, founding director of the MPH program, continues as a professor in Public Health Sciences teaching core courses and working on public health projects.



Dr. M. Norman Oliver



In the fall of 2023, Dr. M. Norman Oliver returned to the UVA SOM Department of Public Health Sciences to share his **insights**. As a professor, he teaches a course titled “**PHS 7200: U.S. Healthcare: Policy, Organization, and Administration**,” where his vast healthcare experience brings a unique perspective to the course’s content. Currently, he also acts as a Senior Advisor to the McChrystal Group.

Prior to his new role in the SOM, Dr. Oliver served as the **State Health Commissioner** at the Virginia Department of Health. As the head of the VDH from 2018-2022, he led the Commonwealth of Virginia’s COVID-19 pandemic response.

See more in the [SOM Medicine in Motion News](#).

Department Hellos

Dr. Matthew Gurka

Matthew Gurka, PhD, a national leader in child health research, has returned to UVA as the **Chair of the Department of Public Health Sciences (PHS)**. Effective February 12, 2024, Dr. Gurka succeeded Dr. Ruth Bernheim, JD, MPH, who served as chair since 2010.



Beginning an academic and professional career here in 2004, Dr. Gurka rose to the role of Associate Professor in the Division of **Biostatistics** and **Epidemiology**. During his original time at UVA, he discovered not only his love for teaching and child health, but also his appreciation for UVA's culture.

Dr. Gurka offers a wealth of experience to the PHS Department as both an educator and an academic leader. Prior to his return to UVA, he served as **Vice Chair of Health Outcomes and Translational Research** and **Director of the Pediatrics Research Hub** in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Florida. Before that, he served as the **Founding Chair of the Department of Biostatistics** at West Virginia University's School of Public Health. His unique experience across departments and institutions makes him the perfect candidate to advance UVA's department.

As the new PHS chair, Dr. Gurka is eager to head a passionate and dedicated department committed to the growth of research and clinical care. "I look forward to working with this vibrant faculty, staff, and student body to lead innovative research while teaching and mentoring the next generation of public health practitioners and researchers," Gurka said.

See more in the [SOM Medicine in Motion News](#).

Spring Poster Day

MPH Class of 2024



On May 1st, the Master of Public Health program was excited to host the Public Health Sciences **Spring Semester Poster Day**. **32** graduating MPH students presented their work and recommendations to improve health outcomes and health equity.

'24 Poster Day Photo

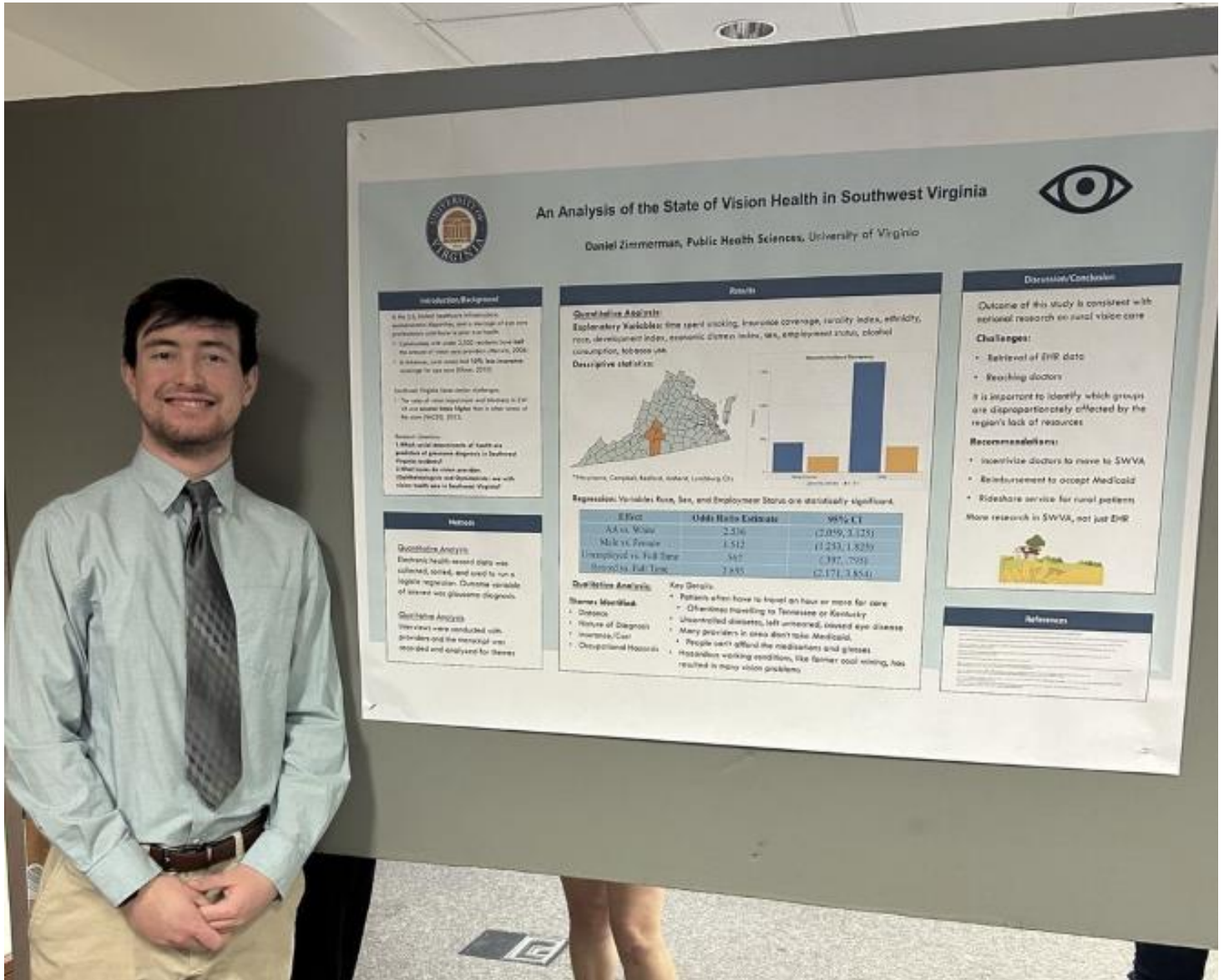
All MPH students complete a final project known as an **Integrative Learning Experience** (ILE) that demonstrates synthesis of MPH knowledge and skills developed over a 42-credit hour curriculum. Students select an ILE topic with an MPH program faculty advisor appropriate to their educational and professional goals, based on their program concentration. The students may choose one of a variety of methodologies such as economic analysis, policy analysis, geospatial/GIS analysis, program evaluation, health care quality assessment, qualitative analysis, health impact analysis, and quantitative analysis.

In the **Research in Practice** concentration, students develop the knowledge and skills public health professionals and clinicians use to conduct research and create and evaluate programs. Students can choose to focus on quantitative and qualitative methods. In **the Health Policy, Law, & Ethics** concentration, students explore the U.S. healthcare and public health systems by developing and analyzing health-related policies and laws. Students utilize numerous methodological approaches, including quantitative, qualitative, economic, evaluation, and ethical analysis.

See more in the [SOM Medicine in Motion News](#).

Spring Poster Day 2024

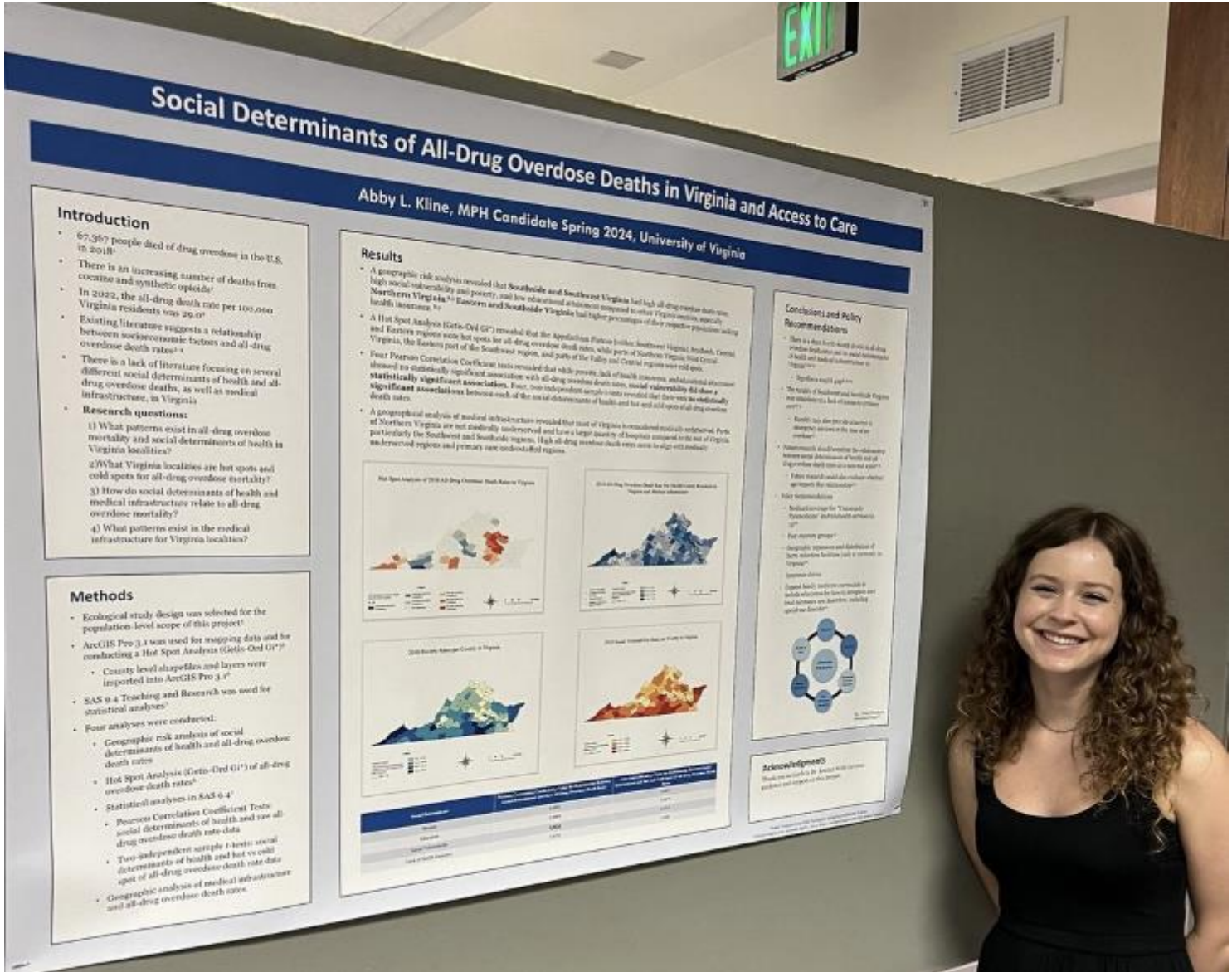
Follow PHS Social Media for More Student Posters!



Daniel Zimmerman: An Analysis of the State of Vision Health in Southwest Virginia

Spring Poster Day

MPH Class of 2024



Abby Kline: Social Determinants of All-Drug Overdose Deaths in Virginia and Access to Care

Spring Poster Day

MPH Class of 2024

Missing Resources For Doulas to Protect Families

UVA Health Charity – MPH Candidate, Spring 2024 UVA Health

Introduction

1. Family Preservation: process of strengthening families so they can stay together and thrive
2. The City of Charlottesville lacks a viable family preservation program, leaving families unprotected
3. Birth Sisters of Charlottesville is a community based doula collective that supports BIPOC women through their birth journey and into motherhood
4. There is a gap in resources for preventative services and respite care for families in the Child Welfare System
5. Goal: Create a resource to serve as reference point for Birth Sisters (doulas) to educate and use while in the community and working with clients who experience child welfare involvements.

Materials

Resources on: Black mothers & policing, family regulating systems, mandated support vs. report, child protection reform, family preservation, foster care, and child welfare system

Results The pamphlet created foundational pieces for an Orientation Reference Document that will be provided to doulas.

PROTECTING FAMILIES matters

WORDING MATTERS
To provide informative support to families, we must be comfortable with the following terms in an instance that they need to be discussed to a client or to their family:
family regulation, mandated reporter, harm reduction, respite care, preventative services, wellness framework, intimate partner violence, and unsafe environment

We never want to purposely create fear in clients. For this reason, wording and phrasing matters when discussing CPS involvement, or any sort of laws, regulations, or protocols that may relate to Child Protective Services. Conversations that relate to a possible separation of mother and child, should be approached cautiously as to not scare off the client, but also informative. Be receptive and prepared to answer any questions the mother may have. BSC is here to protect families, which means having conversations that may prevent future CPS involvement for the family.

CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM FAMILY POLICING SYSTEM
The "child welfare system" was designed to protect children and support families, instead it provenly has torn children from homes, punished Black, Latinx, and low income children and families. Additionally, the welfare system acts as a family policing system that has validated surveillance, control, and oppression on mothers and children of color. BSC wants to ensure that we are vigilant in working towards protecting mother and baby (and the family as a whole) when the Child welfare system is involved.

VULNERABILITIES
It is imperative that you are familiar with vulnerabilities. Vulnerabilities are circumstances in that put clients at an increased risk for possible Child Protective Service involvement.
Health Vulnerabilities
• Mental Health Issue, Substance Use Disorder, Access to medical care (for mom and baby), or Miscarriage
Domestic Vulnerabilities
• Intimate Partner Violence, Lack of Family Support, Homeless, Living in an Unsafe Environment, or Access to children (i.e. leaving a child in car during an interview or shift)

RISK ASSESSMENT

- As Birth Sisters we are not mandated reporters and there for are not required to report client encounters as if we are.
- As community-based doulas, it is our duty and goal to provide resources and point the clients to help in which will allow for their family to remain protected.
- Our objective is to provide HELP out cause HARM

OVERALL INTENTION
Birth Sisters of Charlottesville's overall intention is to provide tools and resources to ensure mothers and babies remain safely together.

Conclusions

1. There is a high demand for education and extensive research for alternative safety nets for families in the Child Welfare System.
2. Community doulas need a more expansive resource than the pamphlet to be able to provide wide-ranging support for families.

PROTECTING FAMILIES MATTER "EXPANSIVE EXPLORATIVE DOCUMENT"
THIS DOCUMENT IS STILL IN REVISION UNDER A DRAFTING PHASE AND BELOW ARE PRELIMINARY SUBJECTS


Signs of CPS:
VA laws, Preparing Criminalization
How doulas see this in our work:
Birth Sister location

Witnessing Vulnerabilities:
understanding CPS, CPS, mandated reporter, contacting police, potential legal steps

Tools:
assessment tool, Edinburgh Depression screening

Resources:
Family preservation, VA Family Law Center, VA Legal Aid Justice Center

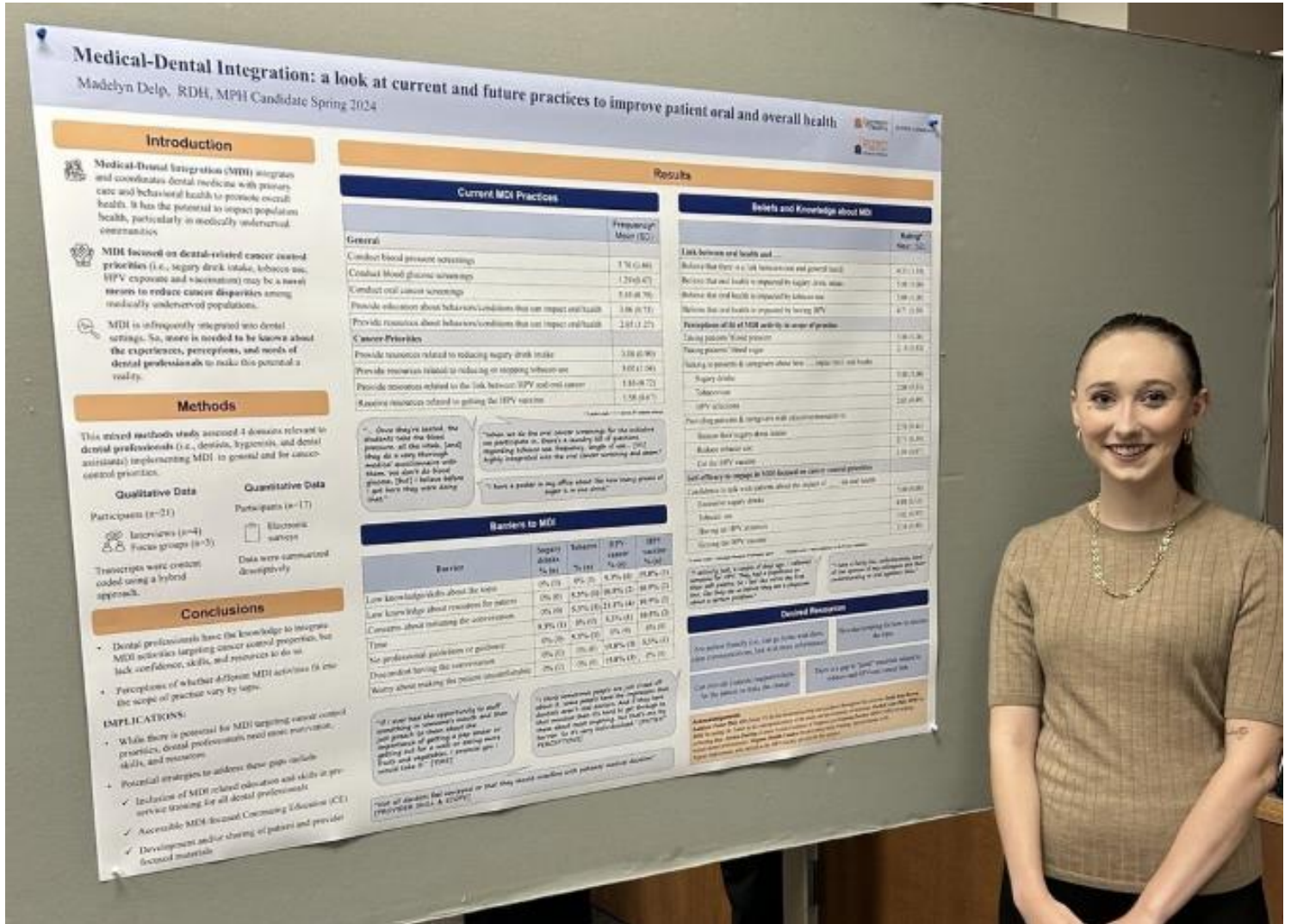
Acknowledgments
Thank you to Birth Sisters of Charlottesville for sharing your abundance of wisdom and allowing me to be apart of sharing your passion for supporting women of color in the Charlottesville community these past 2 years!



Charity Battle: Missing Resources for Doulas to Protect Families

Spring Poster Day

MPH Class of 2024



Madelyn Delp: Medical-Dental Integration: A Look at Current and Future Practice to Improve Patient Oral and Overall Health

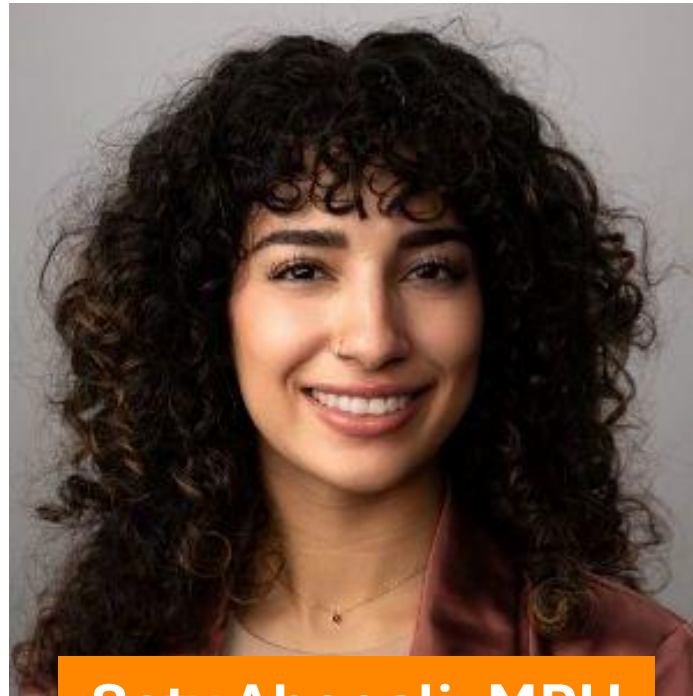
MPH Adventures

2023-2024

On **April 26th**, MPH students were invited to a local restaurant, **Fig**, for our annual spring celebration. Students (and some faculty!) let loose, enjoyed catered food, and bonded all together one last time before graduation. See below for photos of the night and other semester adventures!



Recent Graduate Spotlight



Sety Abooali, MPH

Sety Abooali graduated from the 4+1 MPH program with a concentration in Research in Practice in May 2023. Her ILE project was a qualitative study on the **experience of adults and children with autism in the Emergency Department**, and how the healthcare system can be tailored to fit their unique needs. After graduating, she joined the **Accenture Federal Services** in July 2023 as a **Strategy and Consulting Analyst** out of their Metro DC office. We wish you all the best, Sety!

Send us your information for a future feature!

PHS News

Hoos in STEM Graduation Episode Features PHS Graduate Student Grant GianGrasso



In a UVA podcast hosted by Ken Ono, PhD, and produced by students Reeya Verma and Catherine Cossaboom and titled *Hoos in STEM*, 2024 MPH graduate student Grant GianGrasso was interviewed as a “shining example of our amazing Class of 2024!”

In the fall, GianGrasso was awarded the **Rhodes Scholarship** to study for a doctorate degree in **clinical medicine** at the **University of Oxford**. He is one of 32 Americans selected for the program and the 56th Rhodes Scholar at UVA.



Graduating in May with an MPH, GianGrasso is a “**Double Hoo**” and completed his undergraduate degree at UVA, double majoring in human biology and French. During his studies, he investigated **cryptosporidium**, a diarrheal parasite with large impacts on children in low- and middle-income countries.

See more in the [SOM Medicine in Motion News](#).

PHS News

Kelsie Kelly Smith, PhD, MPH, Attended AAMC Early Career Women Faculty Leadership Development Seminar

In February, five UVA School of Medicine faculty members were selected to participate in the 2024 **AAMC Early Career Women Faculty Leadership Development Seminar**: (from left) Monique Vaughan, MD, Ashley Garneau, MD, Chelsea Braun, PhD, Catherine Varney, DO, and PHS's very own, **Kelsie Kelly Smith, PhD, MPH**. All those invited received the Leadership Development Travel Awards from the Committee on Women in Medicine and Science (COWIMIS) to support their seminar attendance.

The yearly seminar provides women at the **assistant professor level** with **foundational leadership knowledge and skills** that allow them to thrive as successful leader in academic medicine and science. "It has positioned me well to prepare myself for the tenure and promotion process with confidence in negotiating and owning what I bring to the university, academic scholarship, and mentoring the next generation of public health professionals," Dr. Kelly Smith shared.



See more in the [SOM Medicine in Motion News](#).

Stay in Touch!

Hoping to see MPH news outside of this newsletter? Stay up to date with MPH happenings with our social media. Our social media accounts are listed below.

Instagram: [@uva_phs](#)

Facebook: [UVA Department of Public Health Sciences](#)

LinkedIn: [UVA Department of Public Health Sciences](#)

Our social media accounts are provided in link form below.

Instagram: [@uva_phs](#)

Twitter/X: [UVA Department of Public Health Sciences](#)

LinkedIn: [UVA Department of Public Health Sciences](#)



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