



**Arnold School of
Public Health**
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Fall 2023 Newsletter

The purpose of our Global Health Newsletter is to disseminate the global health research, education, and outreach of our faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

Faculty Spotlight

*Devin Bowes, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of
Environmental Health Sciences*



Tell us a bit about yourself, your career, and how it led you to USC.

My path to my current position has been an adventure. I began my undergraduate studies as a Health and Physical Education major at West Chester University of PA.

Growing up as an athlete, I was always passionate about physical activity and inspiring others to participate in a way that made sense according to each individual's needs. Part of the curriculum required me to take a basic nutrition course, and the rest is history! I fell in love with the field of nutrition and the science behind how the foods we eat interact with the various processes within our bodies and impact our overall health. This ultimately led me to switch my major to Nutrition & Dietetics, where I was introduced to classes such as Human Anatomy & Physiology and Nutritional Biochemistry, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Post-baccalaureate work experiences eventually led me to seek out an advanced degree where I could merge my passions of nutrition, health, and health promotion/empowerment into a single research focus. For a long time, I thought the most logical field was medicine given my new-found affinity for learning about human physiological processes. However, I couldn't ignore my passion for looking at health through the lens of a population or community. I discovered the field of wastewater-based epidemiology (WBE), where we can use community wastewater to understand population-level health to inform new and meaningful public health strategies, and my life was changed once again! I later earned my PhD at Arizona State University where my entire dissertation focused on WBE and how this tool can be utilized to address a variety of public health priorities, such as understanding population-level nutritional behavior and relating to incidence of chronic illness. My research program at USC will expand on the success of the work of my PhD, with a strong emphasis on exploring how we can use WBE to reduce

health disparities.

How would you describe your current global health research?

During my postdoctoral training at Boston University within the Center on Forced Displacement, I was introduced to the field of migration, and learned how very little is known or understood about the health of these communities during times of active mobility along migratory pathways. We explored how implementing a program where wastewater could be leveraged to inform relevant, effective, and targeted strategies in support of these communities in this context could enhance our current understandings of this. One major outcome of this work so far includes a proposed strategic framework for ensuring ethical compliance when conducting WBE in such sensitive populations. This work is ongoing, with the intent to expand in future years.

What other global health activities are you involved in?

Beyond the scope of understanding migrant health, I have experience conducting pathogen surveillance, particularly SARS-CoV-2, in communities across the globe, and have every intent to continue this work in my new role at USC. I have plans to expand into other realms of public health beyond pathogenic targets, such as malnutrition, chronic illness, and mental health. As we continue to see impacts from climate change and natural disasters, it is imperative to create an infrastructure now that will serve to support rapid and inclusive interventions around the world in order to mitigate substantial burden on those who are most greatly and oftentimes disproportionately impacted.

What advice would you give to current students interested in your field?

Ask questions and find mentors who will serve as your advocate. My field in particular is constantly and rapidly evolving, which opens up many opportunities to explore new ideas and spark collaboration, which can be extremely rewarding and exciting. However, this can also mean that it can feel overwhelming at times

to the point where sometimes there might be too many options to choose from when deciding on the next research project. I suggest you find what makes your own heart sing and go from there. The right mentors will help you find those opportunities and fine-tune what that looks like for you and your unique path.

Any additional thoughts you would like to share.

Always feel free to reach out to me! If I don't have the exact tools or knowledge needed to help guide you then I will absolutely do my very best to point you in the right direction to someone who can.

Alumni Spotlight

Anna Cofie, PhD, Social Science Research Analyst, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation



What degree did you receive from USC?
PhD in Health Services Policy and Management

Tell us a little bit about your current position and what you do in the field of global health.

I work as a Social Science Research Analyst for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation.

The Innovation Center aims to develop and evaluate new healthcare payment and service delivery models to improve patient care, lower costs, and better align payment systems to promote patient-centered practices. As a Social Science Research Analyst, my role partly involves managing and leading contractors who evaluate models' intended goals. For example, The Medicare Diabetes Prevention Program (MDPP) Expanded Model aims to slow trends in type 2 diabetes by preventing the onset of people with prediabetes. MDPP provides practical training and education, and our models

measure success by monitoring diabetes risk reduction and cost savings. Currently, my focus is broadly on the United States; however, having global experience working with diverse people helped prepare me for this work.

How did your time at USC prepare you for the career path you are on now?

It prepared me extensively. At USC, I participated in a study abroad program in Taiwan with a heavy focus on Taiwan's Health Insurance Program. This piqued my interest and propelled me towards my dissertation topic. My dissertation focused on Ghana's National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and how it affects its citizens, particularly pregnant women. I looked at correlates of the NHIS and expectant mothers' use of recommended health services, including the number of antenatal care visits (ANC) and the initiation of ANC in the first trimester of pregnancy. I also took a deeper dive to understand women's experiences using ANC services through qualitative research. These experiences, along with relatable coursework, all prepared me for my current position.

What do you recommend to current students at USC that are interested in global health?

I'd say:

- 1. Research your interests.*
- 2. Take advantage of the study abroad programs offered.*
- 3. Feel free to contact faculty, students, and mentors for assistance.*
- 4. Take courses that will broaden and enlighten your scope.*
- 5. Apply for internships and fellowships.*

Any additional thoughts.

The field of global health is vast, and there is no one path. Do take your experiences as they come and apply them where applicable!



Congratulations!

Victoria Adebisi has been awarded a Nestle Foundation Training Grant for her project titled "Breastfeeding Decision-making and Practices Among Working Mothers and Role of External Influences in Urban Nigeria"



UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina

Congratulations Victoria! Victoria Adebisi, a doctoral student in HPEB, has been awarded a Nestle Foundation Training Grant for her project titled "Breastfeeding Decision-making and Practices Among Working Mothers and Role of External Influences in Urban Nigeria." This work will form the basis of her dissertation.

Highlighting Global Health Work at USC

As we continue to build our semester newsletters, it would be helpful to get your suggestions on individuals (faculty, staff, students, or alumni) that we should highlight. If you know of anyone at or affiliated with USC who is currently doing global health work that you recommend we reach out to, please email emkenney@email.sc.edu.

Global Health Events

Save the Date

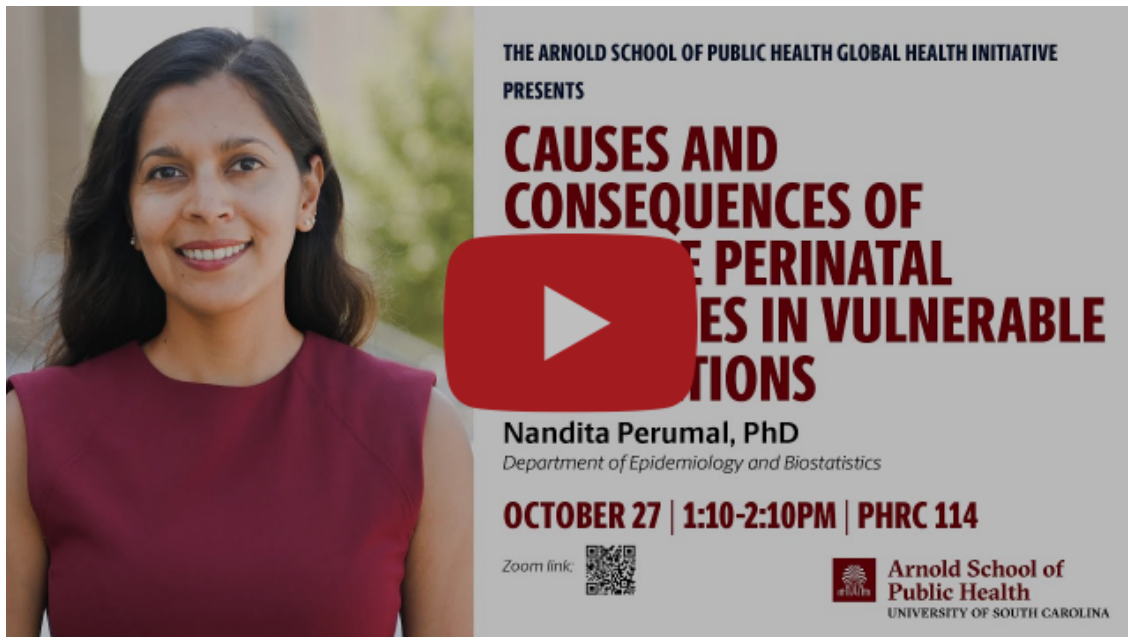
Dr. Deborah Billings will present some of her work on Group Care Global on January 19th from 2-3PM in DISC140.



Save the Date: Dr. Deborah Billings will give a presentation on some of her work with [Group Care Global](#), a major implementation research project whose mission is to promote group health care for mothers, infants, partners, and their families to improve maternal and child health and well-being.

Date: January 19, 2024, from 2-3PM

Location: Discover Building Room 140





THE ARNOLD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH GLOBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE
PRESENTS

CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF PERINATAL OUTCOMES IN VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Nandita Perumal, PhD
Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics

OCTOBER 27 | 1:10-2:10PM | PHRC 114

Zoom link: 

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The perinatal period – the time between conception and the first year of life – is a sensitive period of rapid change for both the mother and the infant. In low- and middle-income countries, the prevalence of adverse maternal and neonatal outcomes in the perinatal period is disproportionately high. This seminar from Dr. Nandita Perumal examines the causes, with a particular focus on nutrition, and the

consequences of adverse perinatal outcomes for health and development throughout the life course.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AND GLOBAL HEALTH FORUM: PRESENTERS NEEDED



Each year, the ASPH enrolls around 100 international students who have diverse backgrounds, varied experiences, and come from a variety of countries. We want to hear from you! We are seeking international students who will volunteer to make 15–20-minute presentations on any aspect of public health improvements or challenges related to their home country.

If interested, please contact Victoria Adebisi (vadebiyi@email.sc.edu).



Each year, the ASPH enrolls around 100 international students who have diverse backgrounds, varied experiences, and come from a variety of countries. The International Student and Global Health Forum is a place for students to present their international interests and expertise in global health.

We want to hear from you! We are seeking international students who will volunteer to make 15–20-minute presentations on any aspect of the public health improvements or challenges of their home country. Please email Victoria Adebisi (vadebiyi@email.sc.edu) if you are interested in presenting. Also, join the Global Health Student listserv for updates on events, opportunities, and more.

Join the Student Listserv

Recent Publications

Aggarwal A, Zhang R, **Qiao S, Li X**, et al. Physician–Patient Interaction Quality Mediates the Association Between HIV-Related Stigma and HIV-Prevention Behaviors Among Sexual Minority Men in Zambia. *AIDS Behav*. Published online October 24, 2023. doi:[10.1007/s10461-023-04171-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-023-04171-4)

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Faculty Directory update – we've recently updated our [Global Health Faculty Directory](#). If you would like to be included in the directory, please email emkenney@email.sc.edu.

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