

Public Health Connections

Southern Connecticut State University
School of Health and Human Services

Department of Public Health



A Message from the Chair Dr. Jean Breny

Here we are, once again, winding down another year! And, as so many late-night talk show hosts have called 2021; this has been the worst year of the past two years. I sat down to write this Welcome so many times. But once I would start; ten new things I needed to attend to would need attending. Or, I would be distracted by yet another tragic reminder that we are still in a pandemic, or that killer storms ravaged the south, or that it was yet another anniversary of the Sandy Hook tragedy.

Life is a lot right now, for everyone. I know that very well from experiencing personal and tragic losses this year, but also because I hear from so many of you who have been dealing with such struggles, uncertainties, and tragedies these past (almost) two years. Most especially, our colleagues working the front lines of public health! We see you – please know you are appreciated!

No one has been immune to the grief that comes from living through a pandemic we cannot seem to control, political divisiveness that seems to have no end, and the sheer exhaustion of it all. Because that, I have decided to share with you a poem that speaks to me in these times, and I hope it does to you as well. Please be gentle with yourselves this holiday season, spend some time taking care of yourself and your loved ones, and my hope is for a happy, healthy and abundant 2022!

Turning to One Another

By Margaret Wheatley

There is no power greater than a community discovering what it cares about.
Ask “What’s possible?” not “What’s wrong?” Keep asking.

Notice what you care about.
Assume that many others share your dreams.

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.
Talk to people you know.
Talk to people you don’t know.
Talk to people you never talk to.

Be intrigued by the differences you hear.
Expect to be surprised.
Treasure curiosity more than certainty.

Invite in everybody who cares to work on what’s possible.
Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.
Know that creative solutions come from new connections.

Remember, you don’t fear people whose story you know.
Real listening always brings people closer together.

Trust that meaningful conversations can change your world.

Rely on human goodness.
Stay together.



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Meet Professor Betsy Rosenblum

By Rebecca Stearns, Department of Public Health Graduate Assistant



I recently got to chat with Professor Rosenblum who teaches public health management here at Southern. Betsy has been a part of Southern for a while now, first completing her undergraduate degree in communications and finding her passion realized in creating connections for students here at Southern and other universities here in Connecticut.

I asked Betsy about what drew her to public health after having such a diverse career in healthcare administration. Rosenblum told me, “When you become a social worker, particularly working in the VA system with both long-term care and short-term rehab, you learn about the social determinates of health and how deeply they affect your patients. You notice what influences your patients. So even though I don’t have a degree in public health, I pulled from my colleagues and these experiences. I wanted to educate on disease prevention for these patients and influence the administrators and politicians I was working with.

I asked Professor Rosenblum what brought her from administrative life to academic life and what drives her to educate so many here in Connecticut. *“I love making connections with students in a way that will be helpful, the mentorship (of it). I didn’t realize that my style of mentorship would be so significant. I listen to feedback and build on my skills, which is important when building caregivers and helping students learn about who they are as providers, because they are important. I get so much back from my students. I learn so much from my students. I am very humbled (because of them).”*

I asked Betsy more about those connections she makes for her students, particularly here in the public health department. Rosenblum comes from healthcare administration, but she also teaches in communications, healthcare studies, and teaches organizational behavior in the business department. I thought this was a great reminder for many of us who have had a few careers and wonder how they all link together. Betsy found a way to make those bonds. She gave this advice:

*You need to put on your critical thinking cap at all times
Check out other perspectives, especially the ones you don’t agree with, otherwise you won’t be able to connect with the community you’re trying to help
Always have your elevator speech ready. You never know when something great is gonna happen for you.
Be aware of what your skills are
Keep your work to look back upon and see what you are capable of
Keep an open mind*

Listening to Betsy’s advice after sharing some time with her, it was clear that these are words of wisdom that she has practiced in her own life. She repeatedly said, “We don’t operate in silos” and these words remind us, particularly in public health, of the need to work in community and how deeply we affect each other.

Before we signed off, I asked Betsy if there are words of wisdom that encourage her. She quoted Dr. Maya Angelou *“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”* If you have a chance to take one of Professor Rosenblum’s classes or have a moment to speak with her, I’m sure you will see how she lives out these words.



Examining Prison Breastfeeding and Pumping Programs in the United States to Determine Best Practice Guideline for the Lactation Program at York Correctional Institution

Special Project Research By Ellen Clinesmith

Last week I submitted my special project, completing all requirements for my MPH degree! When I started the graduate program at Southern in 2018, I had no idea where my public health journey would take me. For my research methods literature review, I examined breastfeeding interventions in underserved communities and learned that although overall breastfeeding rates in the United States have increased over the past ten years, disparities presently exist. Infants born to mothers living in low-income, underserved communities, including prison and jail, were less likely to be breastfed. With this knowledge, I began researching the lived experience of pregnant and breastfeeding inmate mothers and the corrections staff working with them in carceral settings. Their powerful stories were the driving force behind my special project research.

The purpose of my project was to collect data about prison breastfeeding and lactation programs in the United States through personal interviews and publicly available data sources such as reports, research articles, webinars, and policies related to prison lactation. Data collected was used to develop best practice guidelines for York Correctional Institution, a high-security women's prison in Niantic, Connecticut. Once completed, I was able to provide my preceptor, Laura Dawson, with research-based recommendations to help improve access to lactation among eligible inmate mothers.

We know providing access to breastmilk will significantly improve health outcomes for both mother and child. Additionally, participation in lactation while incarcerated helps a mother feel connected to her infant, reduces postpartum depression and can reduce recidivism. Unfortunately, there is limited research published about lactation and incarceration. The data collected for my special project is rich and inclusive and will provide a framework for further exportation of this under-researched practice.

I will continue to work with Laura Dawson as she develops the lactation program York. I will also continue working with my incredible mentor and special project advisor, Dr. Michele Griswold, researching prison breastfeeding and lactation.

If you have questions or want to learn more, feel free to email me at clinesmithe1@southernct.edu.

Incarceration and Women in the US

- Since 1980, the incarceration rate for women in the US has increased by over 700%, from 26,000 in 1980 to 213,000 in 2016.
- **Between 3% and 5% of women are pregnant during intake.**
- The median age of a female inmate is 34.
- Two-thirds of all incarcerated women are mothers, with 75% identified as their child's primary caregiver.
- Black American are incarcerated at five times the rate of whites in the US.

Prison Lactation Program Benefits

- Improved health outcomes for mother and child
- Promotes mothers/infant bonding
- Mothers feel a sense of purpose and self-control
- Fosters community among participants
- Reduces post-partum depression
- Maintains breastmilk supply allowing mothers to breastfeed after release
- Fostering attachment to infants can reduced recidivism

Orlando House Open House

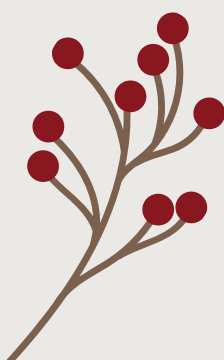


On the afternoon of Wednesday September 29, we held the O-House Open House, to celebrate being back on campus. The Open House allowed students to see where the building was, buy some department swag, meet faculty they knew through previous Zoom classes in person, and visit with each other on the front lawn. We had 18 students come by to visit and hang out with the faculty and Dean. It was also a fun way to kick off our final year in the building before moving to our new home in the new HHS building. With sunny skies above, everyone had a good time!



Department of Public Health Swag

Interested in purchasing a Public Health sweatshirt or backpack? Email **Ellen Clinesmith** at clinesmithe1@southernct.edu for more information.



This semester, we participated in meme Friday on social media to increase engagement and to raise vaccine awareness with humor!

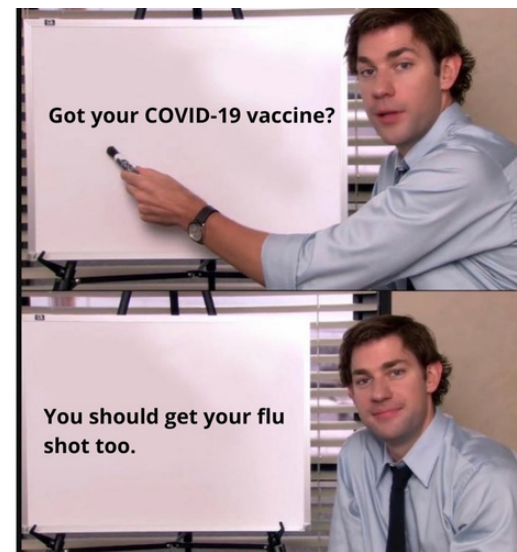
What's a meme you ask?

- a humorous image, video, piece of text, etc., that is copied (often with slight variations) and spread rapidly by internet users (Google.com).

Did you know? (excerpt taken from Merriam-Webster.com)

"In his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*, British scientist Richard Dawkins defended his newly coined word meme, which he defined as "a unit of cultural transmission." Having first considered, then rejected, *mimeme*, he wrote: "Mimeme comes from a suitable Greek root, but I want a monosyllable that sounds a bit like *gene*." (The suitable Greek root was *mim-*, meaning "mime" or "mimic." The English suffix *-eme* indicates a distinctive unit of language structure, as in *grapheme*, *lexeme*, and *phoneme*.) Like any good meme, meme caught on and evolved, eventually developing the meaning known to anyone who spends time online, where it's most often used to refer to any one of those silly captioned photos that the Internet can't seem to get enough of."

Your immune system once you're fully vaccinated:



Memes created by Ashley Woods, Department of Public Health Graduate Assistant

Give us a follow!



@SCSU_PH



@SCSUPublicHealth



@SCSUPublicHealth



linkedin.com/company/
scsupublichealth

American Public Health Association 2021 Denver, Colorado

Dr. Anuli Njoku

Presentation

Balasuriya, L., Santilli, A., Ainooson, J., Morone, J., Macklin, B., Duffany, K., & **Njoku, A.** (10/25/21). Rewriting the narrative: Understanding COVID-19 vaccine access and acceptance in brown and black communities. Oral presentation, American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting & Expo, October 24-27, 2021, Virtual.

Session Moderator

Moderator, "Addressing Social Determinants of Health and Health Inequalities", APHA 2021 Annual Meeting. Denver, CO, 10/26/21.

Moderator, "Environmental Justice and Health Equity - Environment - Roundtable", APHA 2021 Annual Meeting. Denver, CO, 10/26/21.

Dr. Jean Breny

Presentations

Breny, J., De Leon, B., Mahama, F., Welfare, M. & Raymond, A. Using Photovoice to Develop Student Leaders. Poster Presentation at APHA Annual Meeting, October 2021.

Breny, J., De Leon, B., & Welfare, M. Using Community-Based Photovoice to Explore Health Inequities Exacerbated by COVID-19. Oral Presentation at APHA Annual Meeting, October, 2021.

The 2022
APHA conference
will be held in
Boston,
Massachusetts on
November 6-9

Connecticut Public Health Association 2021 Virtual Conference

Kelly Meier (MPH Alum) presented on a panel titled Employer Lactation Accommodation Policies: A Tool to Ensure Access to Support

Trent Joseph (BS and MPH Alum) presented on a panel titled The Impact of the State Improvement plan

John Brannelly (current MPH student) and **Dr. William Faraclas** (Faculty) presented COVID-19 Vaccination Rates in Connecticut: A Study of Rural vs. Non-Rural Towns

Rochelle Felix (MPH student) and **Dr. Anuli Njoku** (Faculty) presented a poster titled Addressing Inequities in COVID-19 Vaccination among Black and Latinx Communities

Marcelin Joseph (MPH Students) and **Dr. Anuli Njoku** (Faculty) presented a poster titled Environmental Racism and Its Role in The Burden of Asthma in New Haven, Connecticut Residents

Congratulations to our December 2021 MPH Graduates!



Dr. Anuli Njoku

Articles

Balasuriya, B., Santilli, A., Morone, J., Ainooson, J., Roy, B., **Njoku, A.**,...& Venkatesh, A. (2021). COVID-19 vaccine acceptance and access among Black and Latinx communities. *JAMA Network Open*, 4(10): e2128575. doi: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.28575

[Click here for news cove](#)

Njoku, A. (2021). COVID-19 and environmental racism: Challenges and recommendations. *European Journal of Environment and Public Health*, 5(2): em0079. <https://doi.org/10.21601/ejeph/10999>

Njoku, A. (2022). COVID-19 and health disparities: Opportunities for public health curriculum enhancement. In R. Ammigan, R. Y. Chan, & K. Bista (Eds.), *COVID-19 and higher education in the global context: Exploring contemporary issues and challenges* (pp. 139-153). STAR Scholars. ISBN: 978-1-7364699-7-2. <https://ojed.org/index.php/gsm/article/view/2835>

Njoku, A., Joseph, M., & Felix, R. (2021). Changing the Narrative: Structural Barriers and Racial and Ethnic Inequities in COVID-19 Vaccination. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(18), 9904. MDPI AG. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18189904>

Betty Jung, MPH

Book Chapter Published

Completing Your Thesis or Dissertation. Professors Share Their Techniques and Strategies. Contribution 33: Betty C. Jung.

Book Reviews – World Medical and Health Policy Journal

Sullivan, LM & Galeo S. Teaching Public Health.

Sharon, Friel. Climate Change and the People's Health.

Kelman, I. Disaster by choice. How our actions turn natural hazards into catastrophes.

COVID-19 web resources pages on my Web site


<https://www.bettyjung.net/COVID-19.htm> that was accepted by the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing (NCHEC) for continuing education credits and recognized as a professional development activity in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. These webpages have been accessed over 1,200 times from visitors from 43 countries.

Tamara Rissman, MPH

Articles

Logan C Ray, Jennifer P Collins, Patricia M Griffin, Hazel J Shah, Michelle M Boyle, Paul R Cieslak, John Dunn, Sarah Lathrop, Suzanne McGuire, **Tamara Rissman**, Elaine J Scallan Walter, Kirk Smith, Melissa Tobin-D'Angelo, Katie Wymore, Joanna Zablotzky Kufel, Beverly J Wolpert, Robert Tauxe, Daniel C Payne. "Decreased Incidence of Infections Caused by Pathogens Transmitted Commonly Through Food During the COVID-19 Pandemic – Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network, 10 U.S. Sites, 2017-2020" *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 2021 Sept 24;70(38):1332-1336

Burke RM, Calderwood L, Killerby ME, Ashworth CE, Berns AL, Brennan S, Bressler JM, Morano LH, Lewis NM, Markus TM, Newton SM, Read JS, **Rissman T**, Taylor J, Tate JE, Midgley CM; COVID-19 Case Investigation Form Working Group. "Patterns of Virus Exposure and Presumed Household Transmission among Persons with Coronavirus Disease, United States, January-April 2020," *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, 27(9), 2323-2332.



Dr. Michele Griswold, PhD, MPH, RN, IBCLC was invited by the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) to participate in a World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) event. The #AskMeAnything social media panel included global breastfeeding/chestfeeding experts to convene on social media and answer questions from audience members all over the world. "World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) is an annual celebration and awareness campaign highlighting and recognizing the benefits of breastfeeding in communities across the globe. As the greatest outreach vehicle for the breastfeeding movement, WBW aims to bring breastfeeding to the forefront of community agendas so everyone can be part of the dialogue!" (WABA). View more [click here](#) or visit the WABA's facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/WABA.WBW>



How can we motivate families to get involved & learn about the benefits of breastfeeding, while surrounded by marketing & media constantly telling women they aren't enough? I hope I get to listen to you all. I'm an advocate for breastfeeding in my country and hopefully I can keep learning.

This is a great question! Advocacy is one of the topics that I am most passionate about! Advocates are critically important at the regional and local level so I am excited to know that you are doing this work in your country. To answer your question, one of the ways that advocates can support families is to educate interested families about the harmful effects of marketing. Education can help families understand their rights but what is also needed is collective advocacy efforts that target governments to adopt laws and policies that prevent harmful marketing strategies. One way to think about it is that parents have rights but governments have responsibilities. You can find more information about the status of laws in your country. You can also do an internet search for more information about specific advocacy efforts in your own country. One of the most effective advocacy strategies is to find others who are passionate and working on the same issue and then join together! Thank you for all you do!

Resource: National Implementation of the International Code: Status Report 2020

Michele Griswold
Southern Connecticut State University



COVID Anxiety is Very Real by Dr. Jean Breny

I am not going to lie, for the past several years now, there has been a lot going on in our world that I feel anxious about. But, no matter the trigger, ways to manage anxiety are similar:

- getting out in to nature and exercising
- engaging in stress-reducing activities like yoga and meditation
- seeing those friends and family members who support you and help you to feel better
- taking a nap
- And my personal favorite, taking 10 very deep breaths.



To read the entire article published on the Southern Website, [click here](#) or visit <https://news.southernct.edu/2021/10/22/covid-anxiety-is-very-real/>

Faculty News

Faculty member **Dr. Anuli Njoku** received a 2021–2022 Special Faculty Creative Activity Research Grants (FCARG).

Dr. Deb Risisky was interviewed by New Haven Register reporter Ben Lambert in September for an articles titled "New Haven Grapples with Causes of Youth Violence". To read the article, [click here](#).

On September 22, 2021 **Dr. Marian Evans** attended the Yankee Conference on Environmental Health at Foxwoods. The conference theme was "The Herculean Effort of Environmental Health". She had the pleasure of catching up with many Southern public health alumni and friends.



Happy Holidays!

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Ellen Clinesmith, UA, Public Health Connections Editor

