The Healthy Brain Research Network (HBRN), a thematic network of the CDC, addresses a pair of growing public health challenges: promoting cognitive health and addressing the needs of increasing numbers of older Americans living with cognitive impairment. The HBRN Scholars Program focuses on training pre- and post-graduate interdisciplinary researchers who are committed to improving brain health.

Jingyi Li, MN
PhD candidate in Nursing Science in the School of Nursing
University of Washington
HBRN Scholar – Spring 2019
Mentor: Basia Belza, PhD, RN, FAAN

Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field? Born and raised in Inner Mongolia, China, I came to the U.S. in 2008 to study English. In a Seattle Pacific University English as a Second Language program, I worked with an English tutor who was also a nursing student. She shared her experiences in nursing school and in her work as a nursing assistant in a nursing home. Never before had I considered the impact a nurse could make in the lives of their patients. I subsequently enrolled in a nursing program, and four years later, became a charge nurse caring for older adults in a Seattle assisted living facility. I encountered many older adults with diagnoses of mild cognitive impairment, Alzheimer’s disease, and other types of dementia—as well as family caregivers in need of support in taking care of their loved ones.

My experience caring for these residents truly helped me to develop a deeper understanding of dementia-related disease processes, their impacts, and the many daily challenges individuals and families must face. With a desire to gain skills in developing non-pharmacological interventions that could improve care for residents with dementia and in implementing evidence-based training programs for care staff in assisted living facilities and community settings, I decided to pursue a doctoral degree in nursing science with that focus.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about? I attended the 2019 Western Institute of Nursing conference and presented a concept analysis paper titled, “Compassion Fatigue in Family Caregivers of People with Dementia.” With audience feedback I received during the presentation, I plan to refine the paper and submit for publication during summer break.

What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other HBRN Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work? The local HBRN team meetings have been helpful and informative. I had the opportunity to present my project, a program evaluation of a community-based, participant-driven activity program called Momentia Mondays. By sharing progress and issues encountered during the evaluation process, I received valuable suggestions from other HBRN Scholars. I was also inspired by other scholars’ presentation of their work.
Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field? The project that I am working on truly highlights the importance of collaboration between academia and community in providing resources to support people with dementia and their caregivers. I still remember the first time that I presented my evaluation plan to the social worker at the Seattle Southeast Senior Center; she told me that “that’s exactly what we want to do for evaluating our program. However, we did not know how to do it. Now, I think we got a sound plan.”

To prepare, I took a class on health program evaluation to learn more about evaluation processes and methods and best practices for disseminating results. I also took a qualitative research class, as the majority of the data was to be collected through focus groups and individual interviews. I am glad I was able to apply what I learned, from designing the evaluation to collecting and analyzing the data through scientific methods.

How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals? As an HBRN scholar, I had the opportunity to apply what I learned from classes to community settings and contribute to improving the quality of life for people with dementia who are living independently within their communities. As part of my research project, I was supported in first-time experiences including: applying to an Institutional Review Board, conducting my first focus group and individual interviews, and analyzing qualitative data.

I am thankful for the support that I received from my HBRN research mentor, Basia Belza, the Healthy Brain Research Network and other HBRN scholars who gave me feedback. I also appreciate the resources and network opportunities that are available through the HBRN. All contribute to the development of my future research.

What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two? I would like to engage in work related to the translation of evidence-based interventions designed to support people with dementia and their care partners into community settings. I am also interested in projects that focus this work on those who are from racial and ethnic minority groups.

What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do? Currently working as an MDS (Minimum Data Set) nurse in a skilled nursing home, I am in charge of conducting assessments for the residents regarding their overall physical health, medical care needs, and psychological and mental status. Interacting with the residents always reminds me of why I became a nurse; conducting assessments for residents diagnosed with dementia or mild cognitive impairment reminds me of the importance of the research I am doing. I get inspiration and motivation from clinical practice, and in using research as a tool for improving the care for people with dementia and the supports for their families.

What do you like to do for fun? I like hiking and jogging on a sunny day in Seattle! I also enjoy cooking with my families, especially when we prepare food for holidays – like Chinese New Year – together.
Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field? Though born in Los Angeles, California, I grew up in a small town in Sonora, Mexico. When my family and I moved back to the United States, we struggled to adapt to our new lives. However, my parents always encouraged and supported me in pursuing a higher education. I attended the University of Arizona for my undergraduate career and I am now completing my Master in Public Health (MPH). When he was only 68 years old, my grandfather suffered a brain aneurysm and his life has not been the same since. Before, he was a strong, independent and happy individual. After, his cognitive function declined, his behavior changed, and, unable to care for himself, he now lives in a long-term care facility. I am aware of the struggles my grandfather and our family go through because of his health issues. Therefore, I want to better understand brain health among older adults and create innovative strategies to improve their quality of life.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about? Being part of this team has given me the opportunity to submit my first abstracts to the Gerontological Society of America Annual Scientific Meeting, which is a milestone in my professional career. Before I started my MPH last year, I was a high school teacher in an underserved community. I care a lot about my students, and decided to stay on as a substitute teacher. Last year the students named me “Substitute Teacher of the Year”, which is one of my dearest awards.

Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field? I would like to investigate the rate at which delirium occurs based on the Confusion Assessment Method (CAM) and assess how effective the novel and validated Upper-Extremity Function (UEF) is at detecting cognitive and physical declines associated with delirium onset.

How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals? As an HBRN scholar, I have had the opportunity to interact with research participants undergoing abdominal surgery, and I have been exposed to data management and data analysis, strengthening my research skills.

What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two? I would like to work for a non-profit organization working with datasets and statistical analyses to help develop innovative strategies to improve the overall health and quality of life of vulnerable populations.

What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do? My greatest motivation is my family. My parents’ unconditional love and support has given me the strength to get to where I am right now. I want to help create better opportunities for them to live healthier and productive lives.

What do you like to do for fun? I love taking my dog to the park; he is full of life and makes my day a little better. I also like to spend time with my friends and family, watch and play soccer, and read suspense fiction books.
Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field?

I worked on an intervention study focused on improving the well-being of informal caregivers of persons with dementia during my time as a statistician at the University of California, San Francisco’s Center for Health and Community. As the project proceeded, I developed an interest in studying determinants of cognitive impairment, how it affects families, and how its prevalence would change in response to population aging. These interests have since evolved into my dissertation which focuses on the development and application of a dynamic model to forecast the future burden of dementia in the United States in terms of health care costs to patients and welfare costs of caregivers.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about? I was recently awarded a grant from the Alzheimer’s Association to present my work on determinants of current trends in dementia incidence and prevalence at the 2019 Alzheimer’s Association International Conference in Los Angeles.

What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other HBRN Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work? I work closely with my HBRN mentor at the University of Pennsylvania, Jason Karlawish, on several research projects. I also enjoy working alongside my HBRN colleagues who have similar research interests and different training backgrounds.

Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field? As a demographer with a background in economics and interests that include studying health disparities, I hope to contribute to the field in three key areas. First, in understanding how changes in the age structure of the US population will combine with trends in risk factors to shape the future incidence, prevalence, and life expectancy with dementia. Second, by modeling the supply and demand for informal care of persons with dementia which will be critical for understanding and addressing unmet need for care and long-term health services. Third, by elucidating pathways through which disparities in brain health emerge and understanding determinants of undetected cognitive impairment in the population.

How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals? As a scientist, it’s my job to tell stories with data. But sometimes it is necessary to go beyond the data to understand the story that it’s telling. Interacting with HBRN colleagues has exposed me to numerous opportunities and experiences that have helped shape my understanding of neurodegenerative processes and allowed me to better grasp the qualitative aspects of Alzheimer’s disease and dementia that may not appear in the data.

What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two? I would like to continue working on projects related to biopsychosocial determinants of brain health and aging, understanding how demographic and epidemiologic forces will shape the future landscape of dementia prevalence and care, and studying disparities in undetected cognitive decline which can be assessed using population-based survey data linked to medical claims records.

Jordan Weiss, MA
PhD candidate in Demography and Sociology in the School of Arts & Sciences
University of Pennsylvania
HBRN Scholar
Spring 2019 – present
Mentor: Jason Karlawish, MD
What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do? The size of the aging population is growing rapidly around the world and it’s important to ensure that the needs of older adults are being met. In the absence of a cure for dementia, it is necessary to identify ways to improve the health and wellbeing of this population and to promote global healthcare policies and practices that may be more effective for improving patient and caregiver outcomes.

What do you like to do for fun? I enjoy long runs, exploring natural areas, visiting museums, and painting with watercolors.

Jenny Wool, BA
Master of Public Health student in the School of Public Health
University of Washington
HBRN Scholar
April 2019 – present
Mentors: Basia Belza, PhD, RN, FAAN and Brenna Renn, PhD

Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field? My time as an undergraduate Psychology major fostered an interest in cognitive and brain functioning as well as emotional health and well-being, but I had never explored these interests in relation to older adults specifically until the first year of my Master of Public Health program. During a Health Promotion course, I had the opportunity to work as part of a team of four students to create an intervention on a topic of our choosing. Over the course of two months, we designed a hypothetical intervention to reduce perceived social isolation in low-income older adults. Through this project, I gained exposure to much of the literature on social isolation and began to comprehend what an important topic healthy aging is, as well as the how many gaps exist in the literature. I am excited to contribute to research that will fill in some of these gaps.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about? One of the HBRN projects I am currently working on is a qualitative research study focused on better understanding the lives of older adults with mild cognitive impairment. I’ve been spearheading recruitment efforts for the past two months, but this population is small and difficult to reach. I’m happy to say some of our recruitment efforts paid off, as we were able to more than double participant enrollment.

Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field? One way I hope to contribute to the field is by being an advocate. While most people know about dementia and severe forms of cognitive impairment, many are not as familiar with mild cognitive impairment and what this diagnosis means or how it presents. I hope to promote awareness of this condition both within the field of healthy aging and beyond.

How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals? I hope to pursue a career in applied social science research, and the experiences I have gained thus far with participant recruitment and with qualitative research methods have provided invaluable learning...
opportunities. Additionally, I am learning about how to develop and maintain relationships with community partners, as well as how to conduct community-based research. I feel very fortunate to be working with HBRN researchers who are true models in conducting this type of research.

**What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two?** One of my research interests is sleep, and I am interested in exploring connections between sleep and cognitive impairment. I am also interested in food systems and access, and I hope to be able to conduct research in this area in my next year of graduate school.

**What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do?** I firmly believe in the importance of the projects I am (or will be!) involved in with the HBRN. The qualitative research project I am currently working on can contribute to a better understanding of what daily life with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) looks like, as well as promote awareness for MCI as a condition by highlighting participant stories and perspectives. I am also assisting with a summer piloting of a screener for social isolation. Social isolation is a significant public health issue, and finding effective tools to screen for social isolation has the potential to improve public health impacts.

**What do you like to do for fun?** I love running around Seattle’s many parks, especially Green Lake, and I’m an avid reader who enjoys recruiting friends and family to discuss both fiction and non-fiction with me. My other hobbies include hiking, backpacking, and ambling through art museums.

**The Healthy Brain Research Network:**

- University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center (Coordinating Center)
- Oregon Health and Science University Center for Healthy Communities
- University of Arizona Prevention Research Center
- University of Pennsylvania Prevention Research Center
- University of South Carolina Prevention Research Center
- University of Illinois at Chicago Prevention Research Center
- University of Houston (Affiliate Center)
- University of Pittsburgh (Affiliate Center)

Visit [https://depts.washington.edu/hprc/research/thematic-networks/hbrn/](https://depts.washington.edu/hprc/research/thematic-networks/hbrn/) or contact HBRN@uw.edu for more information.
The Healthy Brain Research Network (HBRN), a thematic network of the CDC, addresses a pair of growing public health challenges: promoting cognitive health and addressing the needs of increasing numbers of older Americans living with cognitive impairment. The HBRN Scholars Program focuses on training pre- and post-graduate interdisciplinary researchers who are committed to improving brain health.

Patrice Fuller, BS
Oregon Health & Science University HBRN Scholar
Spring 2018 – present
Mentor: Raina Croff, PhD

Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field? I was born and raised in Oregon. I studied psychology during my undergrad career, and after taking a few courses in neuroscience, discovered my interests in psychopharmacology and other health interventions. I disliked seeing some of the unwanted side effects that psychiatric medication could have on one’s psyche and I knew I wanted a hand in identifying new non-pharmacological interventions that could provide similar results. After joining Sharing History through Active Reminiscence and Photo-Imagery, or SHARP study, as an intern in 2018, I found my second calling in working with my community’s elderly population. My grandmother is one of my pillars. And, being able to work on a research project that focuses on using our cultural history within a health intervention has given me insight as to how we can gain strength from past adversities and slow the progression of memory loss.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about? My abstract on gentrification and aging in place has been accepted for oral presentation at this year’s Alzheimer’s Association International Conference. I have never presented at an international conference, and I look forward to testing my current presentation skills to learn how I can improve and to see what else I might gain from this experience.

What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other HBRN Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work? I’ve had multiple opportunities to collaborate with our HBRN Scholars at Oregon & Health Science University on our preventive messaging for learning sessions and presentations. I’ve also received valuable feedback from the broader HBRN in the selection of resources to help advance SHARP’s learning website.

Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field? My work with HBRN has given me insight into the lack of cultural fluency in some of our research methodologies and standard clinical practices. This can lead to negative experiences within minority communities. I’ve also acquired analytical and critical thinking skills that will support the expansion of our work with dementia in underrepresented communities, and facilitate our
ability to address disparities in practice.

**How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals?** HBRN has given me access to incredible networks within different universities across the nation, provided mentorship and webinars that support my career development, and facilitates my participation in a collaborative effort to expand dementia research and improve clinical practices.

**What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two?** I want to focus more on the neuropsychological aspect of dementia research and on reevaluating neurological assessments for cultural translation.

**What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do?** SHARP research participants and my family support system. Both inform my outlook on research. Understanding the history of the Black community within research continues to fuel my passion for providing accurate results and clinical practices built on integrity.

**What do you like to do for fun?** My dream fun day would consist of enjoying a nice moderate nature walk within the Columbia Gorge, adventuring to a new local dive bar for great food and a nice hard cider, and finishing a few chapters in a new book.

---

**Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field?** I was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, though my family is originally from Ecuador. My interests have always been in the health field, specifically how to provide accessible healthcare to immigrant populations. I received an undergraduate degree from the University of Rochester with a major in Public Health. After graduation, I spent a year managing a small Latino construction company and then decided to continue pursuing my education at University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) School of Public Health, with a focus on Latino studies. Meeting UIC's Dr. Marquez inspired me to learn more about Latino aging, a field that is not talked about within our community.

**What's a recent accomplishment you'd like to brag about?** I am currently on the planning committee for the UIC 10th Annual Minority Health Conference. I am also proud to be completing my first year in the Master of Public Health (MPH) Community Health Science program.

**What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other Healthy Brain Research Network (HBRN) Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work?** During my short time with the HBRN, I have learned about Alzheimer’s disease and the cost it will have to the health system in the future. I have participated on the monthly general HBRN calls, HBRN Scholar calls and HBRN Scholar webinars. I have had the opportunity to communicate and learn about different projects being conducted across the network. Collaborating on our UIC-HBRN messaging manuscript with my mentors, I have been supported in brainstorming and analyzing data from our Latino memory messaging project.

**Jonathan Lopez, BA**

University of Illinois at Chicago
HBRN Scholar
June 2018 – present

Mentors: David Marquez, PhD and Guilherme “Gui” Balbim, PhD Candidate
Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field? As an HBRN Scholar, I have developed a better understanding of research, and recognize how collaboration with different schools can add value to the research we conduct. I have solidified my interests in addressing Latino aging issues, including how this community receives access to healthcare providers.

How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals? Since joining the HBRN, I have expanded my focus areas to include healthy aging for older Latino adults and health messaging. Working with the HBRN has made me aware of a vulnerable population and the disconnect that can exist between research and practice within the community. HBRN has heavily influenced my decision to take classes on Health & Aging and Communication Health Media during the second year of my MPH program.

What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two? I hope to graduate with my MPH and get involved in more community health practice and intervention development and management. I also seek opportunities to address issues of precarious work in order to change work place settings for vulnerable populations, and to create awareness of employment as an important determinant for health.

What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do? I am inspired by my parents and the sacrifices they made that allow me to be in this position. This is my number one motivator to continue my work with immigrant and Latino populations to address health disparities and create awareness of public health in my community, and find solutions for a more equitable society.

What do you like to do for fun? I am an avid fútbol fan and spend my free time watching, playing, or attending soccer matches when possible. I am also a big sneakerhead and enjoy the thrill of searching for rare sneakers for my collection.

Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field? While growing up in Florida, I experienced at an early age how negative health behaviors – such as smoking – can lead to exponential decline in physical and mental health. From that personal experience, I knew I wanted to focus my career in the health field. It wasn’t until my junior year as an undergraduate – when I took a course in epidemiology – that I realized I could impact the health of populations and not just individuals. With this realization, I got involved in research and quickly discovered my love of the field of epidemiology. From there I found my own passion for aging and Alzheimer’s disease, including early life factors associated with the decline in health and cognition in later life.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about? Most recently, I was the lead and coordinator of a scoping review focused on instruments evaluating dementia caregiver knowledge in dementia educational interventions and programs. This project started with over 8,000 abstracts that were critically evaluated, narrowed to 211 full text reviews, and ended with the inclusion of 35 studies. Spanning just over a year, this project resulted in a manuscript recently submitted for publication.

Nicholas V. Resciniti, MPH
Doctoral student in the School of Public Health
University of South Carolina
HBRN Scholar
August 2018 – present
Mentors: Matthew Lohman, PhD; Suzanne McDermott, PhD; Daniela Friedman, PhD
What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other HBRN Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work? My work has allowed me to collaborate with HBRN Scholars on the above-mentioned scoping review manuscript and as part of a resulting conference symposium abstract submitted to the 2019 Gerontological Society of America Annual Scientific Meeting.

Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field? HBRN has afforded me the opportunity to gain more knowledge and appreciation of the current state of research related to dementia and dementia caregivers. I see myself contributing to the understanding of factors associated with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia (ADRD) (i.e., the microbiome’s influence on ADRD) and developing interventions to increase caregivers’ knowledge in order to improve both the psychosocial outcomes of the caregivers and to increase their ability to provide care.

How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals? The Healthy Brain Research Network facilitates opportunities for me to connect and network with other individuals with similar research and career interests. In doing so, I have a better understanding of ongoing HBRN research, and I will be better able to collaborate with others in the field. Further, HBRN provides information and webinars related to professional development which will set me up successfully for a career in academia.

What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two? I would like to be involved in work related to identifying modifiable risk factors associated with ADRD. I am very interested in risk factors related to the microbiome and Alzheimer’s disease, and ways to intervene or ‘heal’ the microbiome. I am also interested in focusing on better understanding the psychosocial effects of providing care to individuals with dementia. I would like to conduct a focus group with informal dementia caregivers (e.g., family members) to understand psychosocial outcomes of providing care, assess knowledge of dementia care, and identify what additional aspects of knowledge could improve negative psychosocial outcomes. With this information, I want to develop an educational intervention for informal caregivers to improve their dementia knowledge and psychosocial outcomes, while developing and validating an instrument to evaluate the intervention – as there is a lack of instruments designed specifically for informal dementia caregivers.

What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do? My motivation stems from my passion for improving the health and wellbeing of the aging population. The ability to identify possible pathways to intervene and improve health drives me. The fact that I love what I do motivates me every day.

What do you like to do for fun? My hobbies include: watching TV (Game of Thrones for the win!), playing and watching any sport, reading for fun, and going to the dog park with my dog Sir Buzzington!
Genevieve Wahlert  
Bachelor of Science student in the School of Engineering  
University of Arizona HBRN Scholar  
June 2018 – present  
Mentor: Jane Mohler, NP-C, MSN, MPH, PhD

Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field? I was a military child and grew up travelling the world. Witnessing many health disparities through these travels drew me to the medical field. I have always had an interest in biomechanics, but it wasn’t until I worked with the Arizona Center on Aging that I realized the important interaction of motor control and cognition and its relevance to healthy aging and lifespan. This led me to the HBRN program, where I fostered my interests in aging and cognitive science research, including through my work on a study measuring the physical and cognitive function of older adult patients undergoing emergent abdominal surgery in order to identify those at highest risk of poor outcomes.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about? I recently accepted an offer from Rice University to the Professional Masters of Bioengineering in Global Medical Innovation. This prestigious program emphasizes entrepreneurship and the incubation of novel medical devices that relieve global health disparities in low-resource communities. I plan to utilize the program’s strong support for start-ups and research in pursuing my interests in cognition and mobility.

What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other HBRN Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work? The monthly HBRN conference calls foster strong collaboration and encourage young researchers to not only learn from experts in their field, but to voice their ideas and work closely with others to publish abstracts at national conferences. I have cherished the opportunity to observe and listen, but have also been supported every step of the way to engage, ask questions, and share my thoughts. As an HBRN Scholar, I have gained critical content knowledge and research skills, while focusing on my career development.

Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field? As part of workgroup efforts to develop the HBRN Scholar webinar series, I saw firsthand the amount of collaboration utilized from universities across the country. I loved seeing that a group of like-minded individuals with passion and experience could share ideas and research that would have otherwise been in competition with or in isolation from others. That collaborative spirit is something I seek in school projects and professional endeavors. I would love to be part of a think tank or expert panel as I continue my work.

How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals? I have gained valuable skills from working with such an extraordinary group of researchers. Learning about research being conducted across HBRN universities has encouraged me to continue investigating the brain and its involvement in neuromuscular degenerative diseases – one of my main interests in biomechanics. I plan to focus in this area and to enter the medical device world with designs that aid Brain-Computer-Interface prosthetic development.

What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two? The master’s program I have selected has very strong industry and hospital relationships with extensive networks for research sharing and innovation. I am most excited to work internationally this summer in an internship with a large medical institution. I want to soak up learning from some of the best minds at Texas Medical Center, before I branch out on my own with either a startup or in work.
(Wahlert, cont’d)

with an NGO, post-graduation. I will continue in medical device biomechanics, but I also have a very strong research interest in cognition that I would like to explore further.

**What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do?** Every time I read an article about a new cutting-edge technology or a remarkable discovery about the human body, I feel more validated about my chosen path. The idea that a small concept I might have has the potential to be applied and change even a single life for the better is motivation enough for me. Medicine has an endless boundary for discovery that excites me.

**What do you like to do for fun?** I absolutely love to travel! I'm always on the hunt for a new adventure. I love flying and exploring new cities – and more specifically – all the food!

---

The Healthy Brain Research Network:

- University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center (Coordinating Center)
- Oregon Health and Science University Center for Healthy Communities
- University of Arizona Prevention Research Center
- University of Pennsylvania Prevention Research Center
- University of South Carolina Prevention Research Center
- University of Illinois at Chicago Prevention Research Center
- University of Houston (Affiliate Center)
- University of Pittsburgh (Affiliate Center)

Visit [https://depts.washington.edu/hprc/research/thematic-networks/hbrn/](https://depts.washington.edu/hprc/research/thematic-networks/hbrn/) or contact HBRN@uw.edu for more information.

---

The HBRN Scholar Program is supported in part by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC’s) Alzheimer’s Disease and Healthy Aging Program and through cooperative agreements as part of the CDC’s Prevention Research Centers Program: U48 DP 005006, 005002, 005010, 005053, 005000, and 005013. Funding to the HBRN Scholar Program is also provided by the Alzheimer’s Foundation of America.
The Healthy Brain Research Network (HBRN), a thematic network of the CDC, addresses a pair of growing public health challenges: promoting cognitive health and addressing the needs of increasing numbers of older Americans living with cognitive impairment. The HBRN Scholars Program focuses on training pre- and post-graduate interdisciplinary researchers who are committed to improving brain health.

Edline Francois, BA

Master’s student in the School of Public Health
Oregon Health & Science University HBRN Scholar
Summer 2016 – present
Mentor: Raina Croff, PhD

Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field? Born to Haitian immigrants, I grew up in Delray Beach, Florida in a mixed, but majority Haitian neighborhood. I didn’t have much growing up, but my parents emphasized the importance of education early in my childhood. After graduating high school and community college, I wanted a change in scenery and rigor in coursework, so I sought a school that could fulfill both and attended New College of Florida (also known as Florida’s honors college) in Sarasota, Florida. After taking a few courses, I knew I wanted to work in public health to understand health disparities. I interned at the local health department for a year and learned about different sectors within health promotion. In 2016, I applied to be a Summer Equity Intern with the SHARP project, Sharing History through Active Reminiscence and Photo-Imagery, and was selected through a competitive nationwide selection process. I wanted to use SHARP to expand my public health experience by working in gerontology – specifically dementia.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about? The department of Neurology at Oregon Health & Science University hosted a research day celebrating scientists and their work in the field of neurology. Those who presented were doctoral students, medical students, and junior faculty. I was part of a two-person SHARP team (myself and an undergraduate) that took second place and a cash prize. It’s a big accomplishment for both of us as we work towards attaining our credentials and gaining recognition along the way.

Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field? I’m looking to understand how we can create an engaging health program for Black men in dementia research. I am hoping this informs how we recruit men for this work.

How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals? I see HBRN as a platform to help me connect with others who are working on similar projects or have connections that can help me further my research interests.
What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two? My dream job is to own or manage a think tank. In the next year or two I’d like to be involved in a managerial position that is preparing me for my dream job.

What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do? The people. Literally, I feel blessed everyday knowing I am working for an awesome purpose and I am helping people. Seeing the smiles on our participants’ faces when they express how proud they are of our team is priceless and very motivating.

What do you like to do for fun? The holy trinity: eat, sleep, and shop.

Boeun Kim, MSN
Doctoral student in the School of Nursing
University of Washington HBRN -de Tornyay Center for Healthy Aging Scholar
June 2018 – present
Mentors: Anita Souza, PhD and Basia Belza, PhD. RN. FAAN

Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field? I was born in South Korea, where I’ve spent most of my life. Working as a registered nurse for six years led to my interest in health disparities and older adults. I completed a master’s in Nursing, served as a research assistant for healthy aging projects, and after working as a part-time instructor, came to the U.S. to study in a doctoral program. Currently I am a third-year doctoral student in Nursing. My research interests are focused on brain health and community environments for older adults.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about? Recently I passed written and oral general exams and became a PhD candidate. In addition, I received the Western Institute of Nursing (WIN) Gerontology Special Interest Group abstract award in the theory category for ‘Walkable Neighborhoods and Cognition in Older Adults: A Conceptual Framework.’ I had two abstracts accepted to the 52nd Annual Communicating Nursing Research Conference hosted by the WIN, and presented my research in April 2019.

What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other Healthy Brain Research Network (HBRN) Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work? As part of a multi-disciplinary HBRN research team, I learned how to conduct a systematic review and co-author a scientific manuscript. Our research team has been able to consult with UW HBRN for opinions from diverse perspectives. Moreover, I have been able to join the HBRN national meetings to learn more about the current state of the science and priorities with respect to brain health.

Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field? Our HBRN research team focuses on interventions for individuals with early-stage dementia, particularly outcome measurement challenges in this population. Our team’s work will contribute to updating knowledge on the interventions for individuals with early-stage dementia and developing an evidence-informed intervention. My individual research focuses on brain health-friendly community environments, which can...
contribute to maintaining and improving brain health in community settings.

**How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals?**

HBRN has offered me great opportunities to expand my knowledge and research experiences within my areas of interest. I have made connections with scholars in my field from different disciplines and from across the U.S. The ongoing guidance I receive from HBRN mentors, Dr. Basia Belza and Dr. Anita Souza, is not only critical to conducting my research project, but also for my career development.

**What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two?**

I will continue research related to brain health-friendly community environments. I would like to be involved in research projects focused on early detection of dementia as well as interventions for individuals with early-stage dementia. I am interested in projects that contribute to increasing public knowledge and reducing stigma associated with dementias.

**What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do?**

My wish is that my research can contribute to making the world a little bit better. Meeting and working with others doing critical and innovative work in this field is very interesting to me and keeps me motivated.

**What do you like to do for fun?**

When I have free time, I like to walk and ride a bicycle. I also like to travel. Recent destinations have included Mexico City and Cancun, and I'd love to visit Alaska and Yellowstone National Park next.

---

**The Healthy Brain Research Network:**

- University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center (Coordinating Center)
- Oregon Health and Science University Center for Healthy Communities
- University of Arizona Prevention Research Center
- University of Pennsylvania Prevention Research Center
- University of South Carolina Prevention Research Center
- University of Illinois at Chicago Prevention Research Center
- University of Houston (Affiliate Center)
- University of Pittsburgh (Affiliate Center)

Visit [https://depts.washington.edu/hprc/research/thematic-networks/hbrn/] or contact HBRN@uw.edu for more information.

---

The HBRN Scholar Program is supported in part by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC’s) Alzheimer’s Disease and Healthy Aging Program and through cooperative agreements as part of the CDC’s Prevention Research Centers Program: U48 DP 005006, 005002, 005010, 005053, 005000, and 005013. Funding to the HBRN Scholar Program is also provided by the Alzheimer’s Foundation of America.
The Healthy Brain Research Network (HBRN), a thematic network of the CDC, addresses a pair of growing public health challenges: promoting cognitive health and addressing the needs of increasing numbers of older Americans living with cognitive impairment. The HBRN Scholars Program focuses on training pre- and post-graduate interdisciplinary researchers who are committed to improving brain health.

Tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field. My first exposure to research on cognitive impairment was in South Korea as a student in the Masters of Science in Nursing and certificate for gerontological nurse practitioner programs. Part of my focus during that time was on older adults’ cognitive health, with particular emphasis on Alzheimer’s disease (AD) and mild cognitive impairment (MCI). As a graduate student researcher at the University of Pittsburgh since 2016, I have participated in various research projects which support my personal interest in older adults with cognitive decline, and provide me with knowledge and skills for conducting research.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about? Our research team’s qualitative manuscript, "Amyloid PET Candidate May Focus More on Benefits than Risks of Result Disclosure," was recently published in Alzheimer’s & Dementia Diagnosis, Assessment & Disease Monitoring. Another big accomplishment—my dissertation proposal, Illness perceptions among persons with type 2 diabetes and those with mild cognitive impairment—was selected for research funding from the University of Pittsburgh (UPitt) School of Nursing.

What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other Healthy Brain Research Network (HBRN) Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work? I work closely with my UPitt-HBRN mentor, Dr. Steven Albert, for my dissertation project. Meeting with other HBRN Scholars and mentors at the annual in-person meeting was another great opportunity and brought forward diverse perspectives of pride for our network.

How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals? As an HBRN Scholar, I have a better understanding of cognitive health in older adults from public health perspectives. Sharing research experiences with other interdisciplinary researchers, scholars and mentors and attending the HBRN Scholar state-of-the-science webinar series helps to keep me current with trends in cognitive health. The HBRN allows me to build competencies to conduct future research that promotes cognitive health and healthy aging, and to make contributions in nursing, public health, and other health sciences.
What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two? After graduating with a PhD in 2019, I would like to conduct research on early detection of cognitive impairment and the appropriate use of clinical and supportive services in primary care and public health settings. Addressing the importance of cognitive health in older adults, my future research will provide strategies to raise public awareness about Alzheimer’s disease and related disorders (ADRD).

What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do? I recognize the great need for raising public awareness of ADRD and MCI in older adults and the need for more support for care partners. This is my motivation for pursuing a career in the field of cognitive health. Working with great people, including my mentor, colleagues, and HBRN scholars and mentors also motivates me keep pushing forward.

What do you like to do for fun? I love nothing more than doing yoga. Yoga not only helps me cope better with stress by relaxing my muscles, but also teaches me to cultivate mindfulness by focusing on the sensations in the body as I move, and to completely feel the experience in the moment without judgment or expectations.

Tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field. I am a clinical social worker and have been working in this field for over 18 years. My area of expertise is in the psychological impact of trauma, depression, anxiety, issues of aging, identity development for LGBTQI2-S, and working with people who have been marginalized. I started as a community-based case manager working with people living with HIV/AIDS in the late 80’s/early 90’s. During that period I had some experience working with people living with AIDS-related dementia. This piqued my early interest around dementia and other cognitive impairments. Participating in a more recent research practicum, I recruited participants and conducted several brain health and caregiving focus groups with older Black/African Americans.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about? I am now leading the African American Dementia & Aging Project at Oregon Health and Science University, a longitudinal study that began in 2000. I have also developed a training curriculum to facilitate healing from trauma for African American males, which has been presented in Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington.

What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other Healthy Brain Research Network (HBRN) Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work? I had a wonderful opportunity to collaborate in the network’s memory messaging project and to assist in writing a manuscript with other outstanding researchers. Several amazing discussions with HBRN researchers about their projects allowed me to increase the depth of my own work and accomplishment.

Andre Pruitt, MSW

Doctoral student in the School of Social Work
Oregon Health & Science University-Portland State University | June 2015–present
Mentor: Raina Croff, PhD
Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field? I am bringing culturally relevant methodologies that impact the success of Black/African Americans' participation in research and in training other Black/African American researchers. My work also contributes by highlighting the cultural nuances that influence meaning around memory loss and aims to stretch the way we conceptualize, conduct, and analyze research.

How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals? The Healthy Brain Research Network has provided me with access to a prodigious and skillful set of researchers, information on a variety of ways to research cognitive health issues, and opportunities to deepen my skills around true collaboration.

What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two? I am interested in research around bio-markers pertaining to Alzheimer’s disease that involves Black/African Americans and in exploring the ways in which Black/African Americans define Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. I want to be involved in work that utilizes methodologies that support ethnic culture to enhance and broaden our understanding of phenomena, and employs culturally relevant approaches to develop interventions, cures, and effective prevention messages as well as decreasing barriers to services.

What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do? Laughter, and seeing people succeed through difficult times. Hope in people and an amazing research team.

What do you like to do for fun? In the spare moments I like to ride my motorcycle and camp. I also spend time walking, hiking, and meeting friends for coffee. Exploring waterfalls or Powell's Books and reading a good book are enjoyable times.

The Healthy Brain Research Network:

- University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center (Coordinating Center)
- Oregon Health and Science University Center for Healthy Communities
- University of Arizona Prevention Research Center
- University of Pennsylvania Prevention Research Center
- University of South Carolina Prevention Research Center
- University of Illinois at Chicago Prevention Research Center
- University of Houston (Affiliate Center)
- University of Pittsburgh (Affiliate Center)

Visit https://depts.washington.edu/hprc/research/thematic-networks/hbrn/ or contact HBRN@uw.edu for more information.
Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field?
I’ve always been interested in how the mind works and how that knowledge could be applied to improve health and well-being. My grandfather developed Alzheimer’s disease quite young, and I was struck by the way the disease drastically changed so many things for everyone in the family. From our daily lives to finances, family relationships, social engagement, and emotional well-being, nothing remained the same. When I finished my undergraduate work in psychology, my family’s experience stuck with me, and Alzheimer’s disease and cognitive impairment seemed to me an area with a lot of opportunity to make a difference. As the field increased its focus on prevention and public health, I followed the trend and pursued a Master of Public Health degree.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about?
Completing my MPH certainly felt like a big accomplishment! On the personal side, I recently learned how to make ricotta cheese.

What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other HBRN Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work?
I have been working with the Healthy Brain Research Network messaging working group. We’ve been analyzing and writing up the data from cross-site focus groups across the nation. Working across sites has allowed us to target and reach diverse populations and include a broad range of unique perspectives.

Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field?
I am passionate about reducing stigma around cognitive impairment – you can’t improve a situation that you can’t talk about – and I think the HBRN work on messaging is a great step in this direction. I want to contribute to better understanding of the reasons that stigma occurs and, therefore, what can be done to address it.
Harkins (cont’d)

How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals?
The HBRN brings together an inspiring team, and I’ve appreciated seeing the range of paths other team members have taken. My next big goal is to pursue a PhD, and the skills, knowledge, and connections I’ve gained through the HBRN have made me confident in my future success.

What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two?
I want to continue exploring the experiences of people with preclinical Alzheimer’s disease or at risk for Alzheimer’s disease dementia. This is a growing population, and it will be important to understand their needs as well as the needs of their families and loved ones.

What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do?
Knowing that this work can make a real difference is a huge motivator. One of my favorite things about the Penn Memory Center and the HBRN is the focus on dissemination to the community — by proactively seeking to turn research results into programs and policies that can positively impact the lives of individuals with cognitive impairment and their loved ones.

What do you like to do for fun?
I keep my mind active with a lot of reading and my body active with distance running, bike riding, and CrossFit.

Juell Towns
Bachelor of Science student in Community Health Education at Oregon Health & Science University-Portland State University School of Public Health
Oregon Health & Science University HBRN Scholar September 2015 – present
Mentors: Raina Croff, PhD; Lisa Marriott, PhD

Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field?
I am from Waxhaw, North Carolina, a relatively small country town on the outskirts of Charlotte. My interest in brain health and healthy aging is a result of witnessing the ways in which trauma negatively impacted my grandmother’s memory. I am interested in studying cultural and psychosocial determinants of brain health and their impact on healthy aging among African Americans and American Indians.
Towns (cont’d)

**What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about?**
I recently presented research on the *Sharing History through Active Reminiscence and Photo-Imagery* (SHARP) study at the Oregon Health & Science University-Portland State University School of Public Health 2nd Annual Conference, where I won the award for the best undergraduate poster presentation and scored highest overall out of all degree programs.

**What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other HBRN Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work?**
I have had many opportunities to collaborate with other Healthy Brain Research Network scholars at Oregon Health & Science University, all of whom are involved with research related to aging, Alzheimer’s disease and/or other dementias.

**Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field?**
My interests exist where brain health research, public health necessity, and community priorities intersect. I intend to contribute to the field in many ways and have already begun to do so. For example, I am currently working on a research project that highlights the power of implementing culturally relevant approaches to cognitive health research in order to sustain engagement and retain participation rates among older African Americans.

**How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals?**
I have found the Healthy Brain Research Network to be a persistent source of research collaboration and opportunity. Not only have I grown as an undergraduate research intern, but the scope and breadth of my research interests have developed and expanded as a result of multi-site collaboration supported through HBRN. The HBRN has provided me with an array of research opportunities and transferable skills, for which I am ever grateful.

**What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two?**
I will be graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Community Health Education from Portland State University in 2019 and will attend graduate school in order to obtain a degree in Epidemiology or Public Health. My hope is that within the next two years I will involve myself in research that relates to brain health, psychosocial determinants of brain health, and their impact on healthy aging among African Americans and American Indians.

**What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do?**
I am endlessly motivated by the SHARP research team at the OHSU Layton Aging & Alzheimer’s Disease Center, all of whom I am so grateful to collaborate, learn, and work with. My mother is also a constant source of empowerment and motivation for me, as she has sacrificed her career and scholarly aspirations to provide a life full of opportunity for my brothers and me.
What do you like to do for fun?
Reading is one of my favorite activities. I’m most interested in literature regarding critical theory, history, and social and restorative justice. In addition to reading, I spend my free time writing music and painting with acrylics.

The Healthy Brain Research Network (HBRN) was created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2014 to address a pair of growing public health challenges: promoting cognitive health and addressing the needs of increasing numbers of older Americans living with cognitive impairment. The HBRN Coordinating Center is located at the University of Washington. For more information, visit https://depts.washington.edu/hprc/research/thematic-networks/hbrn/ or contact HBRN@uw.edu.
Guilherme Moraes Balbim, MS
Doctoral student in the College of Applied Health Sciences
University of Illinois at Chicago HBRN Scholar
May 2017 – present
Mentor: David X. Marquez, PhD

Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field?
I am from Brazil, where I earned my Bachelor of Science and Master’s degree in Kinesiology. There, I held a temporary faculty position and was the instructor for five classes at a public university for two years. This time spent teaching provided a pivotal experience that opened my mind to broader issues related to aging and physical activity. In 2015 I was sure that a PhD would be my next challenge. In the past, my grandfather was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease and mild cognitive impairment, and physical activity was the treatment that provided the most positive impact for him. Putting together my experiences as faculty and those with my grandfather, I decided to follow the research area of aging, physical activity, and health disparities. After talking to a colleague who was a PhD student in this area, I contacted my current advisor, Dr. David X. Marquez. Our research interests matched and I came to Chicago as his PhD student in August 2016. Since then I have been diving into how physical activity can influence the health of older Latinos.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about?
On November 2017 I participated as a presenter in a Symposium at the Annual Meeting of the American College of Sports Medicine - Midwest Chapter. That was my first oral presentation in a conference as a graduate student in the U.S.

What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other HBRN Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work?
I have been working with the HBRN memory messaging study. The study involved 4 HBRN centers. With the quantitative and qualitative data analysis now complete, we are writing up manuscripts. My mentor and I are specifically working on the Introduction of a manuscript in collaboration with the Oregon Health & Science University HBRN center.
Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field?
Being an HBRN Scholar has provided me with the notion of how important is to have a multidisciplinary team to promote cognitive health and healthy aging. I can see myself as a part of a big engine seeking to educate and empower the aging population on how one might achieve a better quality of life, by changing behavior. In the future as researcher and faculty (I hope!), I intend to put into action all the experiences I have been living with the HBRN.

How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals?
The HBRN has helped me build a strong network with experts on cognitive health and aging. Also, HBRN is providing research and collaborative skills which make clear the importance of partnerships and collaboration in the development of evidence-based science to apply to community-based approaches.

What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two?
I would like to be involved in understanding how physical activity can impact cognitive function, and brain structure and function, ultimately contributing to healthy aging and better quality of life.

What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do?
My motivation is to somehow contribute to healthy aging and help older adults become more physically active and aware of the importance of being active in their lives. I believe that we can make a difference in many lives with evidence-based research in physical activity promotion.

What do you like to do for fun?
In my free time I like to run, watch basketball and Brazilian Soccer, spend time with my wife, cook, and watch TV shows.

Caroline Mills
Bachelor of Science student in the Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health and Bachelor of Arts student in Economics in the Eller College of Management
University of Arizona HBRN Scholar
May 2017 – present
Mentor: Jane Mohler, NP-C, MSN, MPH, PhD

Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field?
I grew up in the beautiful city of Denver, Colorado and I am passionate about aging research. I’m interested in helping to develop screening tools for frailty and cognitive impairment, which is connected
to my personal experience with my aging grandmother. I’m hoping to pursue a master’s degree in epidemiology and continue research and elder advocacy through work with non-profits.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about?
An abstract I co-authored was accepted to the American Geriatrics Society Conference.

What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other HBRN Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work?
During my year with the Healthy Brain Research Network, I’ve had the chance to collaborate with other University of Arizona HBRN Scholars while working on a HBRN grant funded pilot study. The collaboration aspect has been great and I enjoy learning from other HBRN Scholars’ expertise and experience. Learning from HBRN engineers and epidemiologists alike at the University of Arizona has been extremely helpful.

Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field?
I’m looking forward to contributing to projects in cognitive aging and looking at the effects of dual tasking in older adults. There is still much to learn about how dual tasking relates to fall risk, frailty, and longevity and this information can help inform clinical practice.

How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals?
The Healthy Brain Research Network has provided a wonderful opportunity to learn from experts in the cognitive aging field. My career goal is to continue aging research and the Healthy Brain Research Network has provided that opportunity by funding the research I participate in for my internship at the Arizona Center on Aging. My experiences have influenced my decision to apply to graduate programs with HBRN affiliation.

What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two?
I hope to be in graduate school pursuing research on cognitive aging. I would like to work more on screening tools for mild cognitive impairment that are also cost effective.

What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do?
My colleges are wonderful and I’m so thankful to work every day with curious and smart people. I believe the research we do is important and thinking about how much I’ve learned motivates me to keep pushing forward. I also have a personal connection to the research we conduct and with the growing population of older adults; there is a growing need for research-backed health practices.

What do you like to do for fun?
I love reading and I am currently going through the Foundation series by Isaac Asimov.
Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field?
I was born and raised in Tucson, Arizona. I had an unusual upbringing as a child of Filipino immigrants, who opened an adult assisted living home. Early on, I was exposed to the stark realities of the social determinants of health, and the cultural and economic health disparities facing the older adults seeking long-term care in my family’s assisted living home. It felt unfair to see how families with frail older loved ones struggled to find financial resources to help provide care. Through my many experiences at the care home, I realized the importance and the limitations of Medicare and the Arizona Long Term Care programs. I am aware that there are many vulnerable populations that encounter limitations in accessing healthcare every day, from veterans denied ready access to care and adequate behavioral health services; families undergoing bankruptcy after prolonged hospitalization; undocumented and homeless without access to care; and rural Arizonans without access. As a result, I have developed strong feelings of responsibility and commitment to advocate and serve these vulnerable populations in order to provide them the necessary healthcare that they deserve. I am currently volunteering at two clinics catering to the underserved and conducting research at the Arizona Center on Aging with the hopes of pursing medical school and continuing to serve my community.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about?
I am very excited to have been accepted to present at the Cognitive Aging Conference 2018 that will be held at the Georgia Institute of Technology. This will be my first experience presenting my research at a conference, representing the Arizona Center on Aging.

What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other HBRN Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work?
Within the Healthy Brain Research Network, I have had the opportunity to work with Hossein Ehsani and Caroline Mills, who are both HBRN Scholars. Through our collaboration, we hope to uncover the neural correlates involved in cognitive-motor dual-task challenges for those with and without cognitive impairment. I hope to collaborate with the HBRN network more broadly in the future, so we can combine our knowledge and discover ways we can prevent and/or slow the cognitive aging process.

Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field?
As an HBRN Scholar, I see myself contributing to the field through our research on cognitive impairment and dual-task challenges. We are using functional magnetic resonance imaging, cognitive-motor dual-task
challenges (i.e., walking and talking on the phone simultaneously), and neuropsychology assessments to discover the underlying correlates involved with dual-task challenge difficulty and how it relates to attentional limitations in cognitive aging and cognitive impairment.

**How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals?**
Since joining the Healthy Brain Research Network, I have been able to advance my educational and professional career. I have expanded my research interests in cognitive aging, fall risk prevention, frailty, and resilience in later life. In addition to strengthening my research skill sets, I have been privileged to work with many amazing individuals and connect with many research subjects. The Healthy Brain Research Network has tremendously helped me to continue to pursue my career goals of becoming a physician-scientist and solidified my interest and passion in contributing to research and advocating for the geriatric population.

**What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two?**
Over the next year or two, I am interested in continuing our research on cognitive aging and impairment. This research is so vital because the mechanisms of the underlying neural correlates are not well understood and defined. Discovering the neural correlates would help the medical research community create interventions and dictate what should be done for fall risk stratification and prevention. Research has become such an important part of my pre-medical journey and I hope to continue research in this field as a physician-scientist.

**What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do?**
My family, friends, mentors, co-workers, HBRN-collaborators, and our research subjects keep me motivated to do the work that we do. I am honored to be working with such compassionate, intelligent, and humble individuals. They make the work we do so much more fun and meaningful, that in the end it doesn’t really feel like work.

**What do you like to do for fun?**
I love going on photography and food adventures with my friends and family. I am a big foodie and love trying new foods, especially at local restaurants. So, if you ever need food recommendations in Tucson, AZ, I have you covered. I also enjoy photography as a fun hobby because it allows me to be creative, express myself, and capture memories that my friends and I can look back on. But when I am super busy on the work grind, I like to do yoga or go hiking to de-stress and rebalance myself. Practicing self-care is super important, and I am trying to do it more often as well as remind those around me to practice it as well.

---

The Healthy Brain Research Network (HBRN) was created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2014 to address a pair of growing public health challenges: promoting cognitive health and addressing the needs of increasing numbers of older Americans living with cognitive impairment. The HBRN Coordinating Center is located at the University of Washington. For more information, visit [https://depts.washington.edu/hprc/research/thematic-networks/hbrn/](https://depts.washington.edu/hprc/research/thematic-networks/hbrn/) or contact [HBRN@uw.edu](mailto:HBRN@uw.edu).
Seul Ki Choi, PhD
Post-doctoral Fellow in the School of Public Health
University of South Carolina HBRN Scholar
April 2016 – present
Mentor: Daniela Friedman, PhD

Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field?
I spent most of my life in Seoul, South Korea until I came to South Carolina. I studied nutrition in my undergrad years and became interested in health disparities, so I did my masters and doctoral programs in public health. During my doctoral program, I met Dr. Friedman and learned about the importance of health communication. At the same time, my grandmother was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and my grandfather was suffering from cognitive impairment, but it seemed that my entire family did not know what to do. So it was natural that I decided to join Dr. Friedman’s team to work on aging issues and health communication.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about?
I was asked to give a research talk at the university where I completed my MPH. It was my first time presenting my research there as a graduate.

What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other HBRN Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work?
I have been collaborating with other SC-HBRN Scholars on aging-related messages in social media. It is great that I could work on messages in various platforms—this wouldn’t be possible if I worked alone.

Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field?
I have just started a research project that focuses on the health information seeking behaviors of caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias. Little is known about how caregivers seek health information for themselves. I hope my research will be helpful in understanding caregivers’ own challenges when they need to take care of themselves and in finding strategies to meet the caregivers’ health information needs.

How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals?
Since I have joined the HBRN, I have expanded my research interests to older adults’ health issues and health communication. I believe that working with HBRN will help me pursue my research interests in health issues in vulnerable populations (including older adults).
What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two?
I am interested in food insecurity issues among older adults. I would like to work on research to understand what makes some older adults food insecure and if food insecurity is related to cognitive decline/dementias.

What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do?
All the great people, including SC-HBRN Scholars and mentors I am working with, are my motivation to do my (our) work. Their positive energy and enthusiasm keep me motivated.

What do you like to do for fun?
I love travel. I love to explore new places, whether a new country or just a new small town I have not yet visited. I try to visit as many places as possible. When I have spare time, but not enough for travel, I enjoy looking at my travel diary and photos.

Weizhou Tang, MSW
Currently enrolled in a Doctoral Program within the College of Social Work
University of South Carolina HBRN Scholar
May 2015 – present
Mentors: Daniela Friedman, PhD and Sue Levkoff, ScD, MSW, SM

Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field?
I was born and raised in a beautiful city – Hangzhou in mainland China. I am interested in studying and helping caregivers for persons with chronic diseases, which is related to my personal experience of being a caregiver of my mother who suffered from cancer 5 years ago. During the time that my father and I took care of my mother, we experienced a lot of challenges, physically and mentally. That experience made me aware of issues related to caregivers and caregiving, and motivated me to pursue a career in this field.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about?
Recently, a paper out of my practicum for the Health Communication Certificate was accepted and published by a journal.

What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other HBRN Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work?
During my two years with the SC-HBRN, I’ve had the opportunity to collaborate with South Carolina scholars to write manuscripts, plan events, and review journal submissions. I’ve also worked with HBRN Scholars from other centers in developing manuscripts and presenting our research at national
conferences. I’ve received a lot of valuable feedback from HBRN Scholars on presentation slides, manuscripts, and target journals for submitting our work. I really like the way we work together as a group!

**Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field?**

As an HBRN Scholar, I have collaborated with other scholars on different research topics. We conducted research on people’s concern about developing Alzheimer’s disease, and the likelihood they agree to be screened or tested. This information will be useful in developing communication strategies to address public concern about the disease. We also examined Alzheimer’s disease messages disseminated through social media. The findings will be useful to government agencies, researchers, and NGOs that promote information about the disease and in providing useful and accurate health messages for the public.

**How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals?**

The HBRN has provided me with great opportunities to get to know and learn from experts in the cognitive health and aging fields. My career goal is to do research in an NGO or a research institute, and HBRN has helped me build my research skills. This great network also teaches me the value of teamwork and collaboration.

**What areas of work would you like to be involved in over the next year or two?**

Over the next few years after graduation, I want to be involved in research related to Asian family caregivers for persons with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, and in work to help them address their needs in order to improve both their well-being and that of their loved one/care recipient. I also would like to conduct research on Chinese older adults living in the community, including their needs, challenges, and health.

**What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do?**

My motivation for pursuing a career in the field of aging and caregiving is mainly from my parents. I always think about my father who currently lives alone in China, and he reminds me about those elderly who live independently in their homes. In China, the number of people aged 60 or above is growing rapidly. More elders need care while there are fewer caregivers in the family due to the one-child policy. Caring for older adults is an important topic and I hope more research will be focused on it.

**What do you like to do for fun?**

In my spare time, I love to play board games with my friends; games such as Werewolf, The Resistance: Avalon, and 7 Wonders.
Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field?
I was born and raised in western New York. After working in the marketing field for a few years, I returned to school to study kinesiology. I’d always been drawn to physical activity, but was never interested in traditional sports or PT so I hadn’t considered a career in physical activity. After taking my first class related to physical activity in aging, I knew I had found my niche. Here was a whole group of people who were moving for the same reasons that I do—because it makes you feel good, supports quality of life, and it’s fun!

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about?
This summer I completed a practicum with the National Physical Activity Plan Alliance, and as of last week I can officially say that I’ve completed all of the degree requirements for my MPH.

What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other HBRN Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work?
During my year+ with the SC-HBRN, I’ve had the opportunity to collaborate with several other South Carolina scholars, in addition to scholars and advisors at other universities. I’ve worked with others to collect and analyze data, write manuscripts, plan events, and review journal submissions. As part of the terminology project, I’ve been able to participate in group brainstorms and data collection. The biggest learning experience for me was definitely participating in the group writing process; it’s much different than solo writing and really strengthened the way I will approach my own writing now.

Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field?
The experience within the research field as an HRBN Scholar over the last year really solidified my desire to pursue a career in public health practice rather than higher academia or professional research. Working alongside experts in the field really opened my eyes to the type of passion, dedication, and hard work that is required to conduct good research. These experiences also highlight the importance of quality partnerships between research and practice; I hope to become a steward of these partnerships from the practice side as I move forward in my career. (continued on next page)
How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals?

The HBRN has helped me establish professional relationships within the aging field while also building my skill set as a researcher. Working within a partnership network like the HBRN will inform the collaborative work I’ll be asked to do as part of my upcoming ORISE Fellowship. A group may be small and diverse, but it is also mighty!

What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do?

I genuinely love working with older adults and seeing people enjoy life through movement. Recently, I had the opportunity to volunteer at the National Senior Games in Birmingham, AL. That weekend was so inspiring! Seeing adults from all over the country of all ages, shapes, sizes, and experience levels challenge themselves and accomplish their goals filled me with enthusiasm and motivation to keep pushing forward and helping to create a world where all people are active.

What do you like to do for fun?

I spend as much of my free time as possible outdoors. I love to walk, run, bike, swim, kayak, hike, and explore new places and neighborhoods. I also enjoy spending time with a good fiction book on my porch or sitting by the closest body of water.

Jonathan Medina-Beckwith, BSN, CCRN, RN
Currently enrolled in a Doctor of Nursing Practice Program
University of Washington HBRN-de Tornyay Center Scholar
Mentor: Basia Belza, PhD, RN, FAAN

Could you tell us about your background, and what drew you to this field?

I was born in Alaska, but spent most of my life in Eastern Washington. I was originally drawn to the field of nursing in high school, where I spent 6 months shadowing nurses and found a passion for caring for people at the bedside. I briefly pursued a different career in international economics, but after spending a year in rural Brazil working with adolescents on health promotion projects and seeing health disparities first hand, I decided to return to my original passion of nursing. I have worked as an ICU nurse for the past three years and I am currently a Doctor of Nursing Practice student who is specializing in Family Practice. I hope to be a rural primary care provider at a family clinic.

What’s a recent accomplishment you’d like to brag about?

Last year, I travelled through Alaska and was able to hike through Denali National Park and climb a glacier.

What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other HBRN Scholars and with the HBRN more broadly as part of your work?

I recently was in contact with HBRN members at UPenn and University of South Carolina who reviewed my Extraction Criteria for my scoping review. (continued on next page)
Based on your time as an HBRN Scholar, how do you see yourself contributing to the field?
As an HBRN Scholar, I will be completing a scoping review of existing data on how to reduce stigma associated with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias (ADRD) with a particular focus on rural communities. I hope that this work will produce valuable insight into approaches to reduce stigma across communities and have wide-reaching implications for state and local governments.

How has the Healthy Brain Research Network contributed to your career goals?
My future career goal is work in a rural setting as a primary care provider. I think that my project as an HBRN scholar will help me address stigma that persons with ADRD live with. I think this project will strengthen me as an advocate for both persons with ADRD and their careers and help me understand how I can better address the often uncomfortable topic of dementia with my patients.

What keeps you motivated to do the work that you do?
My motivation for pursuing a career in primary care stems from a desire to reduce health disparities in rural communities. I have spent much of my life in smaller towns, and after spending a year in rural Brazil and seeing firsthand the great discrepancies of health systems, I knew I needed to work to make change.

What do you like to do for fun?
In my spare time, you can either catch me reading in a park or out for a hike in the Cascades. I also love to spend time with my nephews.