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Visit the ACE Website at
www.acepidemiology.org for
COVID-19 updates & resources

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The American College of Epidemiology was incorporated in 1979 to develop criteria for professional recognition of epidemiologists and to address their professional concerns.

ACE serves the interests of its members through sponsorship of scientific meetings, publications, and educational activities, recognizing outstanding contributions to the field and advocating for issues pertinent to epidemiology.



ACE | AMERICAN
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Message from the American College of Epidemiology President, CAPT Diana Bensyl, MA, PhD, FACE



Hello ACE Members! I hope you are settling nicely into the new year. We are busy working on new initiatives with committees, planning the annual meeting, finalizing a new strategic plan, and looking out to at least 2022 for our way forward in serving the field of epidemiology. We would love to hear from you and to have you get involved wherever you feel like your skillset could serve the College. On that note, I want to highlight three areas of work in my message to members.

- 1. Call for new members: Serving ACE in a volunteer role is a great way to provide service to the field and to make your membership in ACE more personal and worthwhile.** We currently have a few committees in need of members. The Education Committee, where I started out, is revamping itself. The new chair, Eyal Oren, and vice chair, Takeda Ferguson, are engaged and active members with great ideas. They need a few more committee members to help them reach their goals. The Finance Committee also needs new members. Jareen Meinzen-Derr is the new chair and she promises that the committee is fun (and acknowledges that may sound unusual, but it is accurate) and it offers a good learning experience. Career Mentoring, led by Angela Liese, could also use more members to help make connections for mentees and to continue to offer high quality events at the annual meeting. Please contact office@acepidemiology.org if you are interested in working with these committees or any others.
- 2. Admissions and Membership taskforce:** An ongoing concern that we are working diligently to resolve is how to onboard members quickly and effectively, with placement in the correct membership category. We have four levels of membership starting with Associate Members who are typically still in training or very early career. Associate Members are expected to seek regular Member status as soon as they qualify. Regular Members form the core of ACE and are often early to mid-career epidemiologists. As epidemiologists advance in their career, they can apply for promotion to Fellow. This shows a level of achievement in the field, as well as contributions to the College through mentoring. The category of Emeritus is reserved for those who served the field and have retired. Many Emeriti members remain active with ACE and we value their input, their historical knowledge, and experience. Please consider the membership category you are in and if it aligns with your skills and experience. You can reach out to the Membership Chair, Maurizio Macaluso or the Admissions Chair, James Torner, with questions.
- 3. Strategic plan:** The ACE Executive Committee has been working on mapping out a new strategic plan and the corresponding implementation plan. We expect it to be ready soon and ready for vote by the board at our March meeting. It includes components of increasing diversity, strengthening finances, focusing on member recruitment and retention through broadened opportunities with leadership and mentoring. We're

Message from the American College of Epidemiology President, *continued*

excited for the way forward and how we can serve the field of epidemiology for a long time to come.

As always, I hope you have marked your calendar to attend the 2020 ACE Annual Meeting. It will be in College Park, MD from September 21-24, 2020. The program committee has some great sessions planned and has invited some interesting and compelling speakers for the keynote. Please clear your calendar and plan to join us! The call for abstracts will be out soon so be on the lookout for it.

One last thing to mention, I found out that a spammer was sending emails that seem to be from me and asking for gift cards for ACE. ACE does not operate this way. We would not request tangible items such as gift cards and no individual ACE member would ever reach out to ask for financial assistance for the organization. Please know that only our 401c3 approved ACE Epidemiology Foundation (<https://www.myacefoundation.org/>) would seek donations and they would do so via our secure website or through our management company using an address ending in @aceepidemiology.org. Please let us know at office@aceepidemiology.org if you receive any unusual requests and we will verify their authenticity.

Thank you for your membership and commitment to ACE!



ANNUAL MEETING KEYNOTE HIGHLIGHT

The American College of Epidemiology is proud to announce that Dr. Eliseo Pérez-Stable, MD, Director of NIH’s National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) has agreed to serve as the keynote speaker for our 2020 conference to be held in College Park, MD on September 21st – 24th.

Dr. Pérez-Stable has authored seminal works on improving the health of racial and ethnic minorities, as well as underserved populations. He is also a world-renowned authority on tobacco control and aging among minorities. Dr. Pérez-Stable is a leading U.S. expert on advancing patient-centered care, improving cross-cultural communication skills among health care professionals, and promoting diversity in the biomedical research workforce. Under Dr. Perez-Stable’s stewardship, NIMHD conducts and supports research, training, research capacity and infrastructure development, public education, and information dissemination programs to improve minority health and reduce health disparities.

The theme of this year’s conference is Advancing Health Equity – Epidemiologic Research, Education, Policy and Practice. We are organizing an informative program covering the latest developments in the science and practice of alleviating health disparities and look forward to seeing you there.

On behalf of ACE Planning Committee,
Edmond D. Shenassa, Sc.D., FACE

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS & SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

It is more important now than ever for our communities to learn from one another and stay connected. We know the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on every one of us. Among the uncertainty, it is important to maintain as many of the positive aspects of our lives as possible. For that reason, ACE invites the submission of abstracts to be considered for poster and selected oral presentations at our Annual Meeting, which is scheduled to be held in College Park, MD from September 21-24, 2020. This year’s meeting theme is Advancing Health Equity - Epidemiologic Research, Education, Policy and Practice.

Abstracts from all areas of epidemiology are welcome. Abstracts addressing the meeting’s theme are particularly encouraged. Accepted abstracts will be published in the program and the Annals of Epidemiology. Deadline for submissions is May 1st.

Important Dates

February 24, 2020	Abstract submission site opens
May 1, 2020	Submission deadline for “Regular round” abstracts
Early June 2020	Abstract decisions sent out
June 2020	Withdrawal deadline for “Regular Round” abstracts
July 15, 2020	Submission deadline for “Late-Breaker round” abstracts
Mid-August 2020	Abstract decisions sent out
August 26, 2020	Withdrawal deadline for “Late-Breaker” abstracts
September 21-24, 2020	ACE Annual Meeting in College Park, MD



INTERVIEW WITH SAZID KHAN, PHD, MPH
ACE ASSOCIATE MEMBER COMMITTEE CHAIR

Dr. Sazid Khan, PhD, MPH is a State Epidemiologist with the South Carolina Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS) and the ACE Associate Member Committee Chair

Interview with Dr. Sazid Khan by Dr. Julie Smith-Gagen MPH, PhD, F.A.C.E Chair, Communications Committee, American College of Epidemiology

Question: Many ACE committees are considering ways to improve communication with early-stage career members who are adept at social media and twitter. Can you comment on ways the Associate Committee is being asked to address this issue?

Answer: The associate member committee definitely recognizes the need to stay in touch with early-stage career members and tries to do so through email correspondence, utilizing doodle polls to schedule our quarterly conference calls to give the members options and flexibility, and other avenues that we are exploring to streamline the communication channels. We definitely recognize the need to expand our digital platform for reach-ability and organizational purposes. We are also working with other committees and the management team to better meet the needs of its early career members. Stay tuned for what we've got in the works!

Question: What are the issues that are most important to the Associate members?

Answer: The most important issues for associate members in my opinion revolve around jobs (where to find them, is the job the right fit, how to be an attractive candidate/applicant for a job, etc.) and professional development as associate members are just either wrapping up school or starting work and definitely want to develop their skill-set and broaden their professional portfolio.

Question: How can ACE serve Associate members?

Answer: ACE can definitely serve its associate members through mentorship, helping with career development, and being a central resource for the associate members. We are currently working with the management team and other committees to come up with resources that can aid the associate members with their professional/academic development. There are so many things going on for an associate member at that this time in their life that it can definitely be overwhelming, so having an avenue to go to for answers or guidance can absolutely be a way for ACE to support and serve its associate members.

Question: How do Associate members want to serve ACE? Do they want to serve?

Answer: The associate members are very willing to serve ACE and have done so in the past as committee liaisons and would like to be even more involved in the future. We are working with other committees such as the publication, membership, and communication committees to provide the associate members more outlets to get involved with ACE, as well as the Annals of Epidemiology!

Question: What do Associate members think are challenges to the future of epidemiology?

Answer: As the chair of the associate member committee and as a member of ACE in general, I believe the guidelines around properly utilizing and tackling big data, the ethical ramifications/responsibilities in interpreting/sharing information, battling/discrediting fake news, and safeguarding against improper use of data (to improperly shape or make the data dance however someone wants it to, as they say) are definitely challenges that as epidemiologists across the board. We must keep constant vigilance and focus so that credible information is being disseminated out to those who need it.

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS & SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

FOR THE 2020 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF EPIDEMIOLOGY
 ABSTRACT SUBMISSION DEADLINE: MAY 1, 2020.



READING A BOOK CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE:

**HOW THE MEDICAL
DETECTIVES
INFLUENCED
DR. ZUBER D. MULLA.**

Zuber D. Mulla, Ph.D., C.P.H., F.A.C.E., Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology & Assistant Dean for Faculty Development in the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso was a recent college graduate when he picked up *The Medical Detectives* by Berton Roueche and was enthralled with the descriptions of epidemiologists in action. After pursuing his degree in biology at the University of Arizona in Tucson, AZ and a master's degree in epidemiology from the University of South Florida College of Public Health in Tampa, Florida, he got a job as an epidemiologist with the Florida Association of Pediatric Tumor Programs based at the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute at the University of South Florida. This evolved into him becoming the Regional Epidemiologist for Central Florida in the Florida Department of Health working on the front lines of public health. During this time, Zuber was also pursuing his doctorate and worked with Dr. Paul Leaverton - a charismatic educator, leader, and a superb scholar and the founding chair of the Dept. of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the USF College of Public Health. It was Zuber's enrollment into Paul's intro biostats class which convinced him to switch from being a health education major to epidemiology instead.

[Editor's note: Dr. Paul Leaverton will be the ACE Endowed Speaker at this year's Annual Meeting in College Park, MD.]

After graduation, Dr. Mulla moved closer to his Southwestern desert roots and started a faculty position at University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston in El Paso, TX. He's stayed in the area ever since and is now at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso.

Below is a lightly edited conversation we had with Dr. Mulla and reflections on his career in epidemiology.

ACE Newsletter: What sparked your curiosity to foray into Epidemiology? When was the first time you heard the word "epidemiologist" and when was it that you decided you would become one?

Dr. Mulla: My first exposure to what an epidemiologist was occurred in my high school bio class. After completing my undergrad studies, I read the book *The Medical Detectives* by Berton Roueche. It really got me hooked.

ACE Newsletter: Who do you consider your greatest influence in Epidemiology?

Dr. Mulla: Dr. Paul Leaverton. I completed both of my graduate degrees in Epi at the University of South Florida (USF) College of Public Health (COPH) in Tampa, FL. The founding chair of the Dept. of EPB at USF COPH was Dr. Leaverton. He is a great person, a charismatic educator

and leader, and a superb scholar. I was interested in epidemiology as I started my graduate career in public health, but my first semester of public health school I was actually a health education major. During that first semester as a master's degree student, I took Paul's intro biostats class and thoroughly enjoyed it so much that I decided to apply for a transfer to Paul's department. Coincidentally, Paul will be the ACE Endowed Speaker at this year's Annual Meeting so I hope you'll be able to attend to hear him speak.

ACE Newsletter: Please tell us about your own research. How have your own ideas evolved since your PhD?

Dr. Mulla: It really has evolved over time. In my younger days, I had a lone ranger mentality (myself and maybe one collaborator) as opposed to a team approach. Now, I see the benefits of working with social scientists and qualitative research, which adds a new dimension to our understanding.

ACE Newsletter: How would you describe an ideal mentor-mentee relationship? How important do you think is ACE membership in forging such relationships?

Dr. Mulla: There must be mutual respect between a mentor and a mentee. Both parties need to make it a priority and devote time to the relationship. My advice when developing this relationship is to have quantifiable outcomes and document it with quarterly progress reports. ACE has a Career Mentoring Committee for those who are interested in professional development. If you can't find a mentor within your department or unit, utilize the resources of the ACE Career Mentoring Committee to look elsewhere and broaden your horizons.

ACE Newsletter: What advice would you give to epidemiologists fresh out of their PhDs?

Dr. Mulla: Data science and artificial intelligence are hot fields at the moment, and I suspect that they are attracting the attention of recent graduates of doctoral programs. The field of epidemiology does intersect with data science/predictive analytics, but I would encourage those newly minted epidemiologists not to be intimidated by data scientists and statisticians. Collaboration is the key to success these days. Unlike the computer engineers and data scientists, we are the experts on causal inference, and the assessment of confounding and bias, such as collider stratification bias. In this regard, I would urge my new colleagues to read a lucid paper by Miguel Hernan and colleagues that was published last year titled, "A Second Chance to Get Causal Inference Right: A Classification of Data Science Tasks."

ACE Newsletter: How has your membership to ACE impacted your career?

Dr. Mulla: ACE has had a positive impact on my career. I joined in 2001 soon after completing my doctorate. Several years ago I was interested in learning about budgeting and finance so I joined the ACE Finance Committee. Also, I have had the honor of publishing in our journal, the *Annals of Epidemiology*, and have always gotten fair reviews. It is a win-win situation: I get to serve ACE and also expand my set of skills.

UPDATE FROM THE TREASURY

**LARRY SEGARS, PHARMD, DRPH, FCCP, FACE, BCPS
ACE TREASURER**

In recent years, there has been a focused strategic goal to reduce the monthly expenditures related to general operational activities of the College, where possible, without having an impact on functionality and services provided. Most items targeted in recent years were for service fees or fees for account support that did not directly translate into a benefit for the College. With the new collaborative partnership with Capitol Hill Management Services (CHMS) to manage ACE's national operations, ACE was able to move our bank account to a different bank near CHMS's Albany, New York location and one that had a successful relationship with CHMS. This move immediately and dramatically reduced our high, and yearly-increasing, monthly bank service fees. Additionally, with the recommendation and guidance of CHMS, ACE also began utilizing alternative modes and venues for communication, including web-based and free teleconferencing services. Since these types of activities are vital for the operational success of ACE, the overly expansive fees and expenditures were detrimental to ACE's financial success. From this operational change, ACE has also dramatically reduced the high monthly expenditures and service fees associated with these activities. The most recent change enacted as part of the strategic goal of expenditure reduction was the move of ACE's

investment portfolio to a new company. For years, ACE had utilized a company that did not charge a fee for trades/buys/sales of investment assets, but had increasingly altered their service fees. The Board of Directors charged the Finance Committee to evaluate options and to make a recommendation to the Board for an alternative company that would continue not charging trading fees, but would result in low-to-no fees for account maintenance. The Finance Committee worked for several months diligently evaluating a multitude of viable options that would offer an equal/near-equal return on investment and significantly reduce service fees. The Finance Committee also took this opportunity to re-assess ACE's investment strategy and policy. Historically, ACE had trended in investing in individual entity stocks. After many months of focused evaluation and discussions, the Finance Committee formally recommended Vanguard Investments and proposed a modified investment strategy move to a more diversified mutual-fund style strategy and policy. Following review and discussions, the Board voted to approve the recommended changes. After a couple of months of document collection and new account application and approval by Vanguard, ACE's complete portfolio was electronically transferred to Vanguard Investments and invested in the Finance Committee's recommended diversified funds and allocations. I offer a hearty and personal thanks to the Finance Committee and the ACE Board of Directors for their significant guidance and support in enabling ACE to take new and ongoing steps to financial stability while limiting unnecessary fees and charges.

PUBLICATION UPDATES

Dr. Kimberly Glazer and colleagues have recently published important new data on the role of overweight and obesity in racial and ethnic disparities in cesarean delivery risk (*Annals of Epidemiology February, 2020*). The authors utilized data from 2008-2013 from two population-based databases to describe the relationships among overweight and obesity, race/ethnicity and cesarean section. They found that the population attributable fraction (PAF) of BMI for cesarean section risk varied by race, from 6.8% for Asian mothers to 14.6% for Hispanic mothers and 17.4% for Black mothers. The higher PAF for Hispanic and Black mothers was related to the higher prevalence of overweight and obesity among these mothers. The authors recommended both preconception weight management and attention to clinical approaches in low-risk pregnancies to reduce cesarean sections and to mitigate racial and ethnic perinatal disparities. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annepidem.2019.12.012>

Patrick Sullivan, DVM PhD,
Editor-in-Chief, *Annals of Epidemiology*

PUBLICATION UPDATES

In a new report, Dr. Coughlin (*ACE and Ethics Committee member*) and colleagues justify inclusiveness and diversity in the epidemiological workforce and community partnerships. Coughlin provides a unique insight, as both an epidemiologist and affected population member, and illuminates the role of community partnerships in ethical and sound science, equity and social justice. Their case study demonstrates how inclusiveness and diversity mitigate flaws in the design of early HIV/AIDS interventions and to eliminate ethical issues in the design of a randomized clinical trial by engaging the affected community. The report, *A Gay Epidemiologist and the DC Commission of Public Health AIDS Advisory Committee*, authored by Steven S. Coughlin, Paul Mann and Bruce Jennings, will be published in *Narrative Inquiry in Bioethics*, a Johns Hopkins University Press journal.

Julie Smith-Gagen MPH, PhD, F.A.C.E

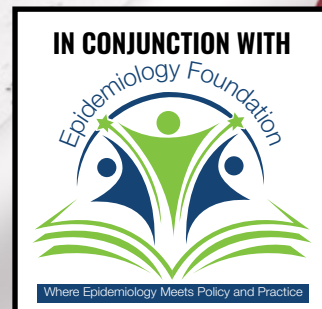
ACE 2020 Annual Meeting

21 – 24 SEPTEMBER

The Hotel at the University of Maryland
College Park, MD



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