

# YOUR PUBLIC HEALTH CONNECTION

CNY MPH

CENTRAL NEW YORK  
MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH

A Publication of the CEPH-accredited CNYMPH Program, a joint program of SUNY Upstate Medical University & Syracuse University

## AMANDA GHANIE AT COMMENCEMENT: WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Amanda Ghanie was chosen by her fellow 2017 CNYMPH graduates as student speaker at commencement. Here are excerpts from remarks at the Crouse Hinds Theater May 21.

If someone had told me, just a few years ago when I was living and working in Manhattan, that I would be standing here today, giving a speech at Upstate Medical University's Commencement, I wouldn't have believed them...

I am extremely happy with my decision to become part of the Upstate Medical community and to obtain a Master's in Public Health. I'm also super excited to answer a question that's probably on many of your minds right now—what exactly is public health? ...

Public health calls for preventive actions as well as actions focused on the social determinants of health—socioeconomic status, education, the physical environment, employment, and social support networks—that can cause many health problems. Because, while understanding disease processes



certainly revolutionizes treatment, understanding the exterior influences of a patient's life also improves health outcomes.

The field of public health is enormous, inclusive and encompassing; hence, it confronts many facets of healthcare beyond prevention, such as barriers to care, safety, and healthy living—all which aim to improve and sustain health and quality of life.

As MPH graduates we understand that healthcare disparities exist, and we will strive to reduce them by enhancing the distribution of care. This is achieved not by insurance coverage alone, but also by increasing the affordability and access to

care. We also understand that by improving clinicians' competence or humility of a patient's culture and customs enables these practitioners to be better, and more empathetic caretakers.

We value research and interventions that combat infectious disease, here at home and globally. We also value and emphasize workplace safety, clean water, and fresh air; and we promote, among other things, healthy behaviors such as exercise and nutrition.

Despite having diverse backgrounds, interests and endless career possibilities, my fellow MPH graduates and I now share a knowledge base and perspective that will allow us to see the bigger healthcare picture, to improve the health and well-being of our patients, families, and communities—as health educators, researchers, nutritionists, community planners, physicians, refugee health workers, epidemiologists, policymakers, and much more. I can personally attest to the great value of the MPH perspective

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## CNYMPH CONTACT INFORMATION

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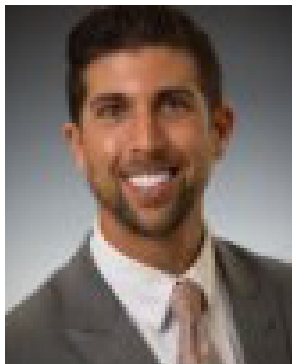
# CERTIFICATE OF ADVANCED STUDY VALUABLE TO HEALTHCARE EXECUTIVE

BY JOHN RABBIA

After 10 years working with patients one-on-one as a physical therapist, I knew I wanted to transition from a clinician to a leader of healthcare organizations.

Clinical education and experience trains you to think about one patient at a time, so I knew that one of my biggest opportunities for development was in thinking about populations and organizations as opposed to individuals.

The Certificate of Advanced Study in Public Health through the CNYMPH program (in 2012) provided me with



many of the tools I needed to understand how to lead organizations and advocate for healthcare policy in ways that positively impact the community in which I live.

After earning the Certificate of Advanced Study in Public Health, I

earned an MBA (from Western Governors University) and found that each program provided unique and valuable information that I use daily in my role as a Healthcare Executive.

The Master of Public Health program's advanced training in social and behavioral determinants of health, epidemiology, and the inner workings

of health care policy provided me with actionable knowledge and has made me a more effective healthcare leader.

As Associate Executive Director of NYC Health and Hospital's Home Care agency, I am constantly fostering strategic partnerships and program development with the City and State Department of Health as well as NYC's safety net hospitals and Federally Qualified Health Centers. The goal is to connect NYC's most vulnerable residents to managed care programs, primary care services and housing resources.

The Certificate of Advanced Study in Public Health has certainly prepared me to meet the complicated challenges I encounter in my organization and my community.



## LOVE CANAL ACTIVIST VISITS

CNYMPH students Taylor Kuzel and Emily Kratz met environmental activist and author Lois Gibbs during her Earth Week appearance at Onondaga Community College.

Ms. Gibbs has written several books about Love Canal, the toxic waste dump that her neighborhood in Western New York was built on. For more than a decade, Hooker Chemical Co. dumped 21,000 tons of chemicals into a canal along the Niagara River.

After the land was developed into a residential area, toxic chemicals began seeping into backyards, basements and school grounds in the 1970s. Abnormally high rates of miscarriages, birth defects and illness began to occur.

Ms. Gibbs organized her neighbors to stand up to the local, state and federal governments for corrective action and legislation to prevent similar public health disasters. Love Canal led to the formation of the Superfund program in 1980 to pay for cleanup of toxic sites.

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

## LINDSAY TAROLLI, MPH



*CNYMPH graduate Lindsay Tarolli, MPH, manages the electronic health record (EHR) software for a large physician medical group, Lifeline Medical Associates, in northern New Jersey. With the ever-changing healthcare environment it is Lindsay's job to assess how new regulations will impact her company.*

*She is responsible for implementing changes to ensure the company is ready to participate in new programs, like MACRA and MIPS. Additionally, the data from the EMR will be used to develop clinical quality measures and analyze behaviors at a patient population level.*

*Here's a dispatch from Lindsay about her position and how the CNYMPH program helped her prepare for it.*

I manage the electronic health record (EHR) software for a large physician medical group in Northern New Jersey.

Recently, I have been digesting The Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA) and Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) program that went into action at the start of 2017. Specifically, I assessed how it will impact our company and our best way to participate in the program.

I'm thankful I took the Changing American Health Systems and Public Health Policy courses when I realized I had the skills to absorb and understand over 2,000 pages of regulatory requirements. Understanding how ACOs, PCMHs and other entities operate within the healthcare industry prior to tackling this project gave me the edge I needed to succeed within my position.

A new wave of change is going on throughout the healthcare industry

as we try to manage all of the data that our EHRs gather. Right now, most health care systems, hospitals and large groups are isolated when it comes to their patients' data and typically rely on claims data and internal analysis only for any kind of patient population analysis.

We are starting to see a lot of interoperability projects begin. Health Information Exchanges (HIEs) are gaining traction, particularly through the implementation of the MIPS program, to exchange patient data among various healthcare entities in the hopes of always maintaining an up-to-date patient chart. The hope is not only to prevent repeated tests and radiology studies to reduce the cost of care, but also to improve the quality of care and outcomes for each patient.

I find myself relying on the Health Services Outcome/Research course as we try to harness massive amounts of data. We anticipate a transition away from fee-for-service to pay-for-

performance payment models as the insurance industry traditionally follows payment models formed by CMS.

Each healthcare entity will have to understand, monitor and improve upon clinical quality measures to be successful. The analysis of patient data at the population level will allow us to improve patient outcomes and hold ourselves at an even higher standard, ensuring that, collectively, we are providing the highest quality care possible.

I may not have chosen the most traditional career after earning my MPH, but as technology further integrates itself within the healthcare industry, I find myself using the skills and knowledge from the Masters in Public Health program every single day.

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

## KEEPING AN EYE ON DISEASE FACTORS

### PAULA ROSENBAUM, PHD

Defining public health can be a tricky exercise.

Paula Rosenbaum, PhD, defines it this way: "Public health is a way to maximize the public's well-being in multiple ways," she said.

Public health is an essential part of our society, and encompasses trends in diseases, ensuring access to health care, healthy food and health education, to disease, injury and accident prevention, to vehicle safety, disaster management and infrastructure issues.

Dr. Rosenbaum, associate professor of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, shares her extensive knowledge and experience in epidemiology with the students in the CNYMPH program and the medical school. Epidemiology is the study of the etiology, distribution and control of disease in populations and is an essential part of public health.

After spending time in the private sector, Dr. Rosenbaum started at Upstate as a Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation in 1998. In 2001 she joined the Center for Research and Evaluation in the Department of Medicine as an epidemiologist. Dr. Rosenbaum then started teaching

Principles of Epidemiology in the CNYMPH Program in 2010 when a colleague was on maternity leave.

She then was asked to develop a Research Methods in Public Health course for the program, which is one of the required courses in the MPH degree program.

"The students find it scary, but they often come to like it," Dr. Rosenbaum said of Research Methods. "They choose a public health topic that is of interest to them and find a publicly available data set to analyze their hypothesis. They describe their findings in a research paper and also are required to do a presentation. The students also learn about survey development. It's a hands-on, applied course."

Dr. Rosenbaum also developed the elective, Chronic Disease Epidemiology, which taps into her professional passion. "I'm very interested in environmental exposures and their effects, especially on the endocrine and immune systems," she said.



In teaching Chronic Disease Epidemiology, there are two approaches. If you are looking at a disease, such as diabetes for example, one needs to look at all the factors that contribute to it. Another way to teach chronic disease epidemiology is

to look at a variety of general risk factors to see how they relate to multiple diseases such as diabetes or heart disease. General risk factors would include diet, exercise, smoking, alcohol use and the built environment. She uses both approaches in her course.

In the chronic disease course, Dr. Rosenbaum wants students to hone their critical thinking skills, so "they consider all of the possible disease factors, and the relationship of those factors to the disease, and to each other," she said.

Along with personal habits like diet and exercise, one needs to consider factors out of one's control such as weather patterns, nearby traffic patterns, and even the availability to fresh foods. "Chronic disease epidemiology puts all

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# MPH PRESIDENTIAL AMBASSADORS

Recent CNYMPH graduates Michael Ioerger and Caleb Consenstein served as Upstate Presidential Ambassadors for the 2016-17 academic year.

Michael and Caleb joined 21 other Upstate students who served as

representatives of the university before a variety of important constituent groups as requested by President Danielle Laraque-Arena, MD.

Student ambassadors attend events and share the student perspective

(academics, research, clinical experiences, social life) with alumni, donors, civic and cultural leaders, and friends of the University.

## LIST OF 2017 GRADUATES

Name	Degree
<b>Alvarado, Maritza</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Barnes, Samantha</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Bilsky, Meredith</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Capria, Brianna</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Cavanaugh, Shaelyn</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Christeler, Rachel</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Consenstein, Caleb</b>	<b>MD/MPH</b>
<b>French-Lawyer, Jeremy</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Ghanie, Amanda</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Haggerty, Alana</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Ioerger, Michael</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Iuppa, Aaron</b>	<b>MD/MPH</b>
<b>Lyons, Kirstin</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Malik, Ahmed</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Marks, Tia</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>McIntosh, Elizabeth</b>	<b>MD/MPH</b>
<b>Michel, Samuel</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Munezero, Jean Fidele</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Napierkowski, Melissa</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Philips, Allison</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Pizarro, Desirree</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Smilnak, Timothy</b>	<b>MD/MPH</b>
<b>Stroughton, Kia</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Vence, Tomas</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Vitale, Melissa</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Whittaker, Vaughn</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Wood, Katie</b>	<b>MPH</b>
<b>Yosuf, Nadia</b>	<b>MPH</b>

## PAULA ROSENBAUM

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of those things together and looks at long-term changes in health,” she said.

Dr. Rosenbaum is co-investigator of a long-term study of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contamination in Anniston, Alabama. The study examines the association between PCB exposure and health problems.

PCBs are man-made chemicals manufactured by Monsanto in Anniston, AL from the 1930s until 1971; they were banned in 1979 because of adverse health effects in laboratory animals and suspected effects in humans. PCBs were used in insulation, cooling and fire-resistance products. PCBs contain 209 different chemicals and are environmentally persistent,” she said. They have been linked to adverse health effects, including diabetes and metabolic syndrome.

In discussing the CNYMPH program, Dr. Rosenbaum commented that many of the public health students gravitate toward research, while others lean toward policy. Those with health care degrees, and the MD/MPH students will combine their public health skills with clinical practice.

No matter the area of public health the CNYMPH graduates pursue, Dr. Rosenbaum enjoys being a key part of that journey. “The students get a lot of one-on-one in our program, so we really get to know them. The most rewarding part of teaching is watching the growth of the students’ skills over the two years,” she said.

# UPSTATE STUDENTS MARK PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK

For National Public Health Week, Upstate students volunteered at a Syracuse Community Connection health fair organized by our Center for Civic Engagement. The “Healthy Heroes Training” included healthy snacking guidance and mask-making fun!



## JOB TITLES OF SOME OF OUR GRADUATES

External Affairs Associate  
Disease Specialist  
Environmental Specialist  
Health Educator  
Population Health Analyst  
Project Coordinator  
Community Educator  
Senior Program Analyst for  
Disaster Preparedness  
Social Science Research Analyst  
Quality Coordinator  
Director, Bureau of Health Promotion  
& Disease Prevention  
EHR (Electronic Health Record)  
Implementation Specialist  
National Security Analyst  
Compliance Officer  
Program Director  
System Process Data Analyst  
Community & Social Services Specialist  
Nutrition Coordinator  
Care Ambassador  
Senior Research Specialist

## CAPSTONE PRESENTATIONS



*Above, Allison Philips (MPH) and Tim Smilnak (MD/MPH) present their research to faculty, fellow students and invited guests.*

About two dozen CNYMPH 2017 graduates presented their capstone presentations this spring in half-hour sessions in the Setnor Academic Building. The capstone presentation is a required component of the Culminating Experience, which integrates each student's proficiency in required public health competencies.

# CLINICIANS AND 'SELF-OTHER OVERLAP' WITH PATIENTS

Recent CNYMPH graduate Michael loerger, MPH, and his mentor are using his research into “self-other overlap” and creating educational modules to help physicians provide better care to patients with disabilities.

Michael and his mentor, Margaret Turk, MD, are working with the New York State Department of Health to develop continuing medical education modules for the CDC designed, in part, to increase physicians’ sense of self-other overlap with their patients with disability.

The modules continue the work Michael presented at a SUNY research conference in March and at his CNYMPH capstone presentation in May. The concept of “self-other overlap” may predict a health care provider’s willingness to work with people with disabilities.

Other researchers’ data, Michael said, support the idea that a sense of overlap between the self and others is a key predictor of the groups you want to work with.

“My work is unique in that it’s focusing on a group of people (those with disabilities) that are in many ways ‘part of our group,’ but that are often thought of as ‘not part of our group,’” Michael said.

He intentionally does not distinguish between physical or mental disabilities when he surveys providers and medical students. “I’ve done it to keep the definition open,” he said. “In this



2017 CNYMPH graduate  
Michael loerger

context, I don’t know if there’s value in distinguishing between disabilities.”

As it is, the word ‘disability’ implies “different and less abled.”

Connecting with patients is about more than just having empathy, Michael said.

“My area of research is in interpersonal relationships of all kinds,” he said. “You’ll hear physicians talk about ‘their’ patients. My work suggests developing this sense of connection with patients has benefits.”

The “self-other overlap” concept has two parts -- feeling close and being close, he said. In addition to empathy, life experiences and interactions with “the other” are crucial.

“If we’re trying to get physicians to be more willing to work with patients with disability,” Michael said, “caring for patients with disability has to be a more integrated part of medical training.”

That integrative approach includes an emphasis on the interpersonal aspects of practicing medicine. Michael believes his data supports the importance of these factors in helping patients meet their goals.

“Interpersonal factors have historically been neglected in medical care,” he said. “It’s hard to measure their impact. However, if we’re really interested in prevention and maintaining health – not just treating illness – more attention needs to be given to understanding these factors.”

“In the U.S. we demand evidence, and rightly so, to see if it works. Research like this allows us to start to put science behind the recommendations we make for improving clinical practice.”

Michael graduated with his MPH degree in May, and is working toward a PhD in social psychology at Syracuse University. His plan is to enroll in the College of Medicine in 2019, with an eye on becoming a family physician.

That’s the career his mother chose as well.

“I grew up around her practice,” Michael said. “That has been the basis for my research -- putting science behind the art of practicing medicine.”



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## AMANDA GHANIE AT COMMENCEMENT: *continued from cover*

I've gained (here at Upstate); my belief and hope is that it will positively influence the type of physician I aspire to become, and the care I'll provide to my future patients and community.

As MDs and public health professionals let's make a promise to work together, as a cohesive unit, helping the people of our communities live healthier and safer lives. We can all utilize the skills Upstate Medical University has taught us including leadership, initiative, critical thinking, adaptability, and clinical intervention, to understand and reduce the risks of disease, disability,

and death in individuals and populations.

To all the graduates I wish you the best of luck, and happiness in the future.

On behalf of the MPH class of 2017, I would like to thank the amazing and talented MPH faculty and staff who, through sharing their experiences, expertise, and insights, have taught us how to be professional, thoughtful, smart, and hardworking public health advocates. The truly great experience you have given us has been nothing short of adventurous, enlightening, and fulfilling. We are all extremely grateful for your dedication to the

field of public health, and we thank you for your service.

I'd like to close with a quote from Mother Teresa which my friend and fellow MPH graduate, Melissa Vitale, used during her capstone presentation- Mother Teresa said, "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." Graduates, faculty and administrators, parents, friends and families, any graduation crashers out there—although changing the world on our own is pretty impossible, perhaps as a group, through little actions every day, we can make this world a better place. Thank you.