

Fall 2022

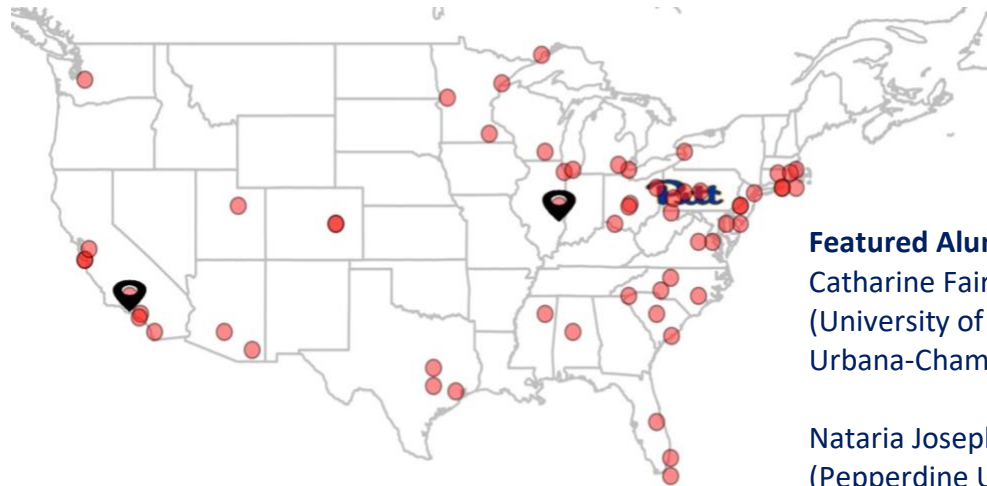


University of Pittsburgh

Biological and Health Psychology Newsletter

Inside this edition:

Welcome!	1
Featured Alumni	3
Current Students	7
Alumni Accomplishments	8
Department Updates	9



Featured Alumni

Catharine Fairbairn
(University of Illinois,
Urbana-Champaign)

Nataria Joseph
(Pepperdine University)

Dear friends of the Biological and Health Psychology Program at Pitt!

It is such an honor to step into the role of Chair of the Biological and Health Psychology Program! I was the first student to graduate from this program in 1997 and never in my wildest dreams imagined that I would serve as its Chair!

First, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our outgoing Chair, Dr. Tom Kamarck. Tom has served as Chair for the past 18 years! He has been a dedicated leader who has shepherded the program through many changes (including a pandemic) to maintain its prominence as one of the top programs in our field. His kindness, thoughtfulness, honesty, and wisdom have been appreciated by generations of trainees and the faculty he has humbly served. As I pick up the baton, I only hope I can follow in his footsteps. Thank-you Tom!

**A letter from
our new
Program Chair,
Anna Marsland**



**And thank you
to our
outgoing
Program Chair,
Tom Kamarck**



At this junction, I thought it would be worth spending a few moments reflecting on the history of our program. The Health Psychology program at Pitt was established in 1996 and drew together one of the largest groups of senior scientists in health psychology of any institution in the world. It quickly became recognized as a center for training in health psychology and attracted exceptional pre- and post-doctoral trainees – It is said that most people in our field attend Pitt at some point during their training! The program was founded by Dr. Steve Manuck with core faculty from the Psychology Department (Drs Caggiula, Fowler, Kamarck, Manuck, Sayette and Shiffman) and the School of Medicine (Drs Allen, Baum, Jennings, Kusnecov, Marcus, Matthews, McAlister, Perkins, and Wing). The name of the program was changed from the Health Psychology Program to the Biological and Health Psychology Program in 2002 to better reflect our strength in biological mechanisms. Steve served as Chair of the program from its inception until 2004 when Tom took over and has served as our steadfast Chair until now. The program continued to evolve under Tom’s exceptional leadership and continues to be a productive collaboration with core faculty in both psychology and medicine. Current faculty include Drs Gianaros, Lindsay, Manuck, Marsland, Reed, Roecklein, and Sayette from the Psychology Department and Drs. Bovbjerg, Hall, Hasler, Levine, Perkins and Thurston from the School of Medicine. In addition, we continue to benefit from our emeritus members, Drs. Jennings, Matthews and Shiffman. I am honored to be among the 64 graduate trainees and 59 fellows who have graduated from our program since 1996. Our prominence in the field is reflected in this talented list of individuals that includes top-tier senior scientists, clinicians, and prominent leaders.

This is a critical and exciting time for the field of health psychology. During my career, the field has evolved from being “a field that was too new and risky to join (my undergraduate professors, University College London, 1988)” to being well established (glad that I ignored their advice). We have made numerous contributions to current understanding of factors that contribute to physical health risk. In the context of a major pandemic that has raised general awareness about factors that contribute to health vulnerability, our science is particularly salient. There is growing awareness of the physical health significance of the psychosocial, environmental, cultural, and behavioral factors we study. It is our job to continue this understanding and promote our knowledge to contribute to the health span of our nation.

I am honored to serve the program and our field by continuing this history of training excellence. Please join me in spreading the word, Tweet up a storm @biohealth412, and send us your stories and updates.

You are an honored member of the Pitt Bio-Health family,
With best wishes,
Anna Marsland PhD
Professor and Chair, Biological and Health Psychology Program
University of Pittsburgh
(marsland@pitt.edu)



ALUMNI INTERVIEWS

Our program is proud to have trained some of the leading biological and health psychology researchers in the field. In each newsletter, we are featuring a previous graduate student and post-doctoral associate to highlight their current work and accomplishments. In this edition, please enjoy brief interviews of Catharine Fairbairn PhD, former graduate student, and Nataria Joseph PhD, former post-doc.



Catharine Fairbairn, Ph.D.

Previous Position at Pitt: Joint Clinical-Health Psychology Graduate Student

When: 2009- 2015

Advisor: Michael Sayette, Ph.D.

Background & Trajectory:

What do I do?

I am currently Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where I also run the Alcohol Research Laboratory. I graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 2015 from the joint clinical-health program. Thanks to help from some terrific mentors, I was able to transition directly to a faculty position from graduate school and have been here at Illinois ever since. My current job is mainly a research-oriented position. So I'm expected to run a lab, get funding (where needed), and publish and present on results of original scientific research. I also teach and provide service to my university and discipline as part of my job.

Pearls of Wisdom:

What is your favorite aspect of your job?

The people are my favorite. Through my job, I get to work with and learn from brilliant and generous people at all levels. In my laboratory, I have the privilege of working with some of the sharpest Ph.D. students out there, and through their learning I find I learn so much myself. At my university and beyond, I have the opportunity to work with colleagues across a range of disciplines, merging insights across our various fields to create something new.

Science isn't done by individuals but by groups. It's fostered through strong human relationships. And fostering those strong and joyful (and stressful!) relationships has been one of my favorite parts of what I do. The love of collaboration was modeled to me early on my



career, through my work at Pitt, and I've found that it is one of the best tools I have to sharpen and strengthen my science.

What has surprised you most about your career?

Many years ago, before I began graduate school, I thought I most likely would end up as a clinician. In retrospect, I would have found that career quite draining. But my 20-year-old self would certainly be surprised to see me now in the role of scientist.

Most days, I think I have the best job in the world. I get to dig into questions about human beings and what makes them behave the way they do. I get to study things that matter. I can wake up any day of the week and conduct research that piques my curiosity and, if I do a good enough job convincing others it's important, I might even get funding to do it. And most important of all, through some of this work I get to contribute, just a tiny bit, to knowledge that might ease human suffering. What could possibly be better than that? Some days I think I'll be crushed under the weight of my to-do list, and the responsibility of caring for all the folks who now rely on me. But most days I feel like the luckiest person out there. All of this surprises me.

What are your words of wisdom for those who are interested in pursuing a career in behavioral medicine or health psychology?

Advice I received early on that has been important in guiding my career: good researchers read journals in their own discipline, whereas great researchers read journals in other disciplines. Now, to be clear, I think there are many different ways to do research that makes a difference. And one of those ways is in occupying the role of a specialist in a more narrowly defined area of study. At the same time, there is so much to be learned by venturing outside of the boundaries of our circumscribed sub-fields. Subfields can become musty if we don't till the soil from time to time. If you're a psychosocially-oriented health psychologist, try reading some neuroscience or molecular genetics. If you're a hardcore fMRI researcher, see what the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology might have to offer you. Read economics and sociology and medical journals. Heck, you can even try reading a novel and you might find a bit of inspiration for your research questions, if not your methodology. I find there is no better way than such broad reading to challenge my assumptions, inspire me with new methodological tools, and push me to do better and think bigger.





Nataria Joseph Ph.D.

Previous Position at Pitt: Post-Doctoral Fellow on T32 Cardiovascular Behavioral Medicine Training Grant

When: 2011- 2013

Faculty Mentor: Tom Kamarck Ph.D., Karen Matthews Ph.D.

Background & Trajectory:

What do I do?

I am a tenured associate professor of psychology. I have an endowed professorship within this title as well and am the Blanche E. Seaver Professor of Social Science. Within my position, I teach, conduct research, and serve in various ways. I teach research methods, health psychology, and adult development and aging. I conduct research using ecological momentary assessment (EMA) and ambulatory blood pressure (ABP or AmBP) to investigate real-time momentary associations between social adversities, resilience, and blood pressure. Socioeconomic conditions are a major theme within my research, and I hope to contribute to more fully conceptualizing the biopsychosocial dimensions of socioeconomic status. One of the primary ways in which I serve is by supporting first generation college students (i.e., students whose parents did not graduate from a 4-year college or university). I myself was a first generation college student. I am passionate about mentoring first generation college students, involving them in research, and otherwise supporting them.

What trajectory brought me here?

My own trajectory from a first generation college student to a professor has been very fun and full of great mentors all the way. I became interested very early on in the combination of clinical psychology and health psychology because my family members have a lot of chronic physical health problems. I always observed the psychological implications of managing these physical health problems and wanted to contribute to understanding and preventing both physical and mental health issues. I was a research assistant during my entire undergraduate career before applying to graduate school. At UCLA, my graduate program trajectory involved clinical psychology with a specialty/minor in health psychology. I worked with a dynamic and special mentor Dr. Hector Myers. From there, I completed the Cardiovascular Behavioral Medicine postdoctoral program there at the University of Pittsburgh to focus my research on cardiovascular outcomes and specific biomarkers. Working with brilliant and special mentors Dr. Thomas Kamarck and Dr. Karen Matthews helped me gain expertise in EMA, ABP, socioeconomic status, and cardiovascular reactivity experimental approaches, all of which continue to guide me today.



Pearls of Wisdom:

What is your favorite aspect of your job?

I love people and numbers, so my favorite parts are mentoring trainees and looking at the data that I've worked so hard to collect. In some ways, data can feel a little reductionistic but, to me, data tells a biopsychosocial story or narrative, especially EMA data. Momentary data gives me a glimpse into a person's experience in a given moment - how were they feeling and perhaps even why were they feeling that way? Who were they surrounded by and how were they navigating that social environment? Were they experiencing adversity and were they facing that adversity from a place of resilience? This is the story that my data tells me. As mentioned, mentoring trainees is one of my favorite ways to pass the time as well. In fact, I often literally lose track of time and am fully present in the moment when I am dialoguing with an engaged, curious trainee. Nothing compares to seeing a trainee grow in terms of their critical thinking and confidence. I often find myself inadvertently "channeling" the great mentors I've had when I'm mentoring my trainees.

What has surprised you the most about your career?

I've been most surprised by the great research tools that exist out there to help with our research and by the fact that these tools are not often created by researchers or by those in behavioral medicine. At this very moment, there are scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs working on projects and equipment that can be used to make EMA, ABP, and other biopsychosocial data collection more efficient and reliable.

What are your words of wisdom for those who are interested in pursuing a career in behavioral medicine or health psychology?

Experience. Experience. Experience. Gaining experience wherever you can find it will allow you to refine your interests even if that experience isn't exactly on target with exactly what you want to do. Listen to yourself as you gain that experience. What methods, concepts, or thinking processes generalize to your passions inside and outside of behavioral medicine or health psychology? Your career should align well with your overall life goals, so pick something that aligns with your values and something that you can't stop thinking about!



NEW STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Our program is proud to be training the next generation of health psychologists working on a variety of research topics. In each newsletter, we plan to feature this next generation and share with readers their work and accomplishments. In this edition, please enjoy short interviews with our first year biological and health graduate students.



Abby Shell

Year: 1st year

Program: Clinical and Biological and Health Joint program

Advisor: Anna Marsland Ph.D. RN, Pete Gianaros Ph.D.

I am working with Dr.'s Anna Marsland and Pete Gianaros. Broadly, I am interested in researching how stress and the environment impact cognitive aging/healthy aging and how this relationship is mediated by the immune system. I want to answer research questions related to this using biomarkers and neuroimaging techniques. I am coming from the Mindset Lab at Ohio State University.



Maya Martinko

Year: 1st year

Program: Clinical and Biological and Health Joint program

Advisor: Anna Marsland Ph.D. RN, Pete Gianaros Ph.D.

I am working with Dr. Anna Marsland and Dr. Pete Gianaros. Broadly, I'm interested in the psychosocial aspects of aging and cognition. I am coming from the University of Colorado Boulder where I was involved in several labs over the years, and most recently from Washington University in St. Louis where I briefly held a position in an Alzheimer's research lab.





Maddie Taylor

Year: 1st year

Program: Clinical and Biological and Health Joint program

Faculty Mentor: Kathryn Roecklein Ph.D.

I am working with Kathryn Roecklein and my interests are in identifying how genetic/environmental factors contribute to circadian misalignment and how that increases risk for mood disruption. I am coming to Pitt from the Baltimore VA Mental Health Research, Education, and Clinical Center where I worked as a study therapist and assessor.

.....

RECENT ALUMNI ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Caitlin Dupont was selected as the first recipient of the *Martica Hall Biological and Health Psychology Student Achievement Award*.



This annual award was inaugurated this year by the Biological and Health program, in order to recognize outstanding student achievement in the program and promise for future accomplishments. Selection criteria are based upon quantity and quality of scholarship contributions; evidence of exceptional accomplishments, such as attainment of fellowships, grants, awards, and other recognitions; and outstanding citizenship and service to the program and to the larger scientific community. Eligible nominees for this award are considered by program faculty from among the graduating class (those who have completed all course requirements for their doctoral degree and have also completed

their dissertation proposal).

Caitlin Dupont was selected for this award this year, based upon the creativity, ambition, and impact of her research (for example, she published an important meta-analysis in Health



Psychology based upon her comprehensive exam paper, and she developed a novel intervention as part of her dissertation project); the breadth of her thinking (her training and facility in neuroscience and nonhuman research has been brought to bear on her work); her resourcefulness under stress (she developed new methods of measuring stress reactivity remotely for use during the pandemic); her commitment to high quality and rigorous research (she has shown a particular commitment to the use of pre-registration in all of her research); and her service to the program (as a student representative to the program along with other roles).

Caitlin has recently started as a post-doc in the Behavioral Medicine Research Laboratory at Johns Hopkins University (<https://www.hopkinsbmrl.com/>) She is interested in understanding the various physiological, social, and behavioral pathways by which reducing stress and enhancing positive emotions may decrease risk for chronic pain conditions.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

See below for a list of the faculty accepting new students to begin Fall 2023. Please feel forward this information to anyone you think might be interested. Applications are due by December 1. Learn more about our program here: <http://psychology.pitt.edu/biological-health-program>

Brant P. Hasler

I am a clinical psychologist with a research program on the role of sleep and circadian rhythms in regulating affect and motivation, particularly with respect to affective disorders and substance use, but also relevant more transdiagnostically. My NIH-funded research studies employ a variety of methods including ecological momentary assessment, objective measurement of sleep (e.g., actigraphy) and circadian rhythms (e.g., salivary melatonin), and neuroimaging (fMRI), as well as experimental manipulations of sleep and circadian rhythms.

Rebecca Reed

I direct the Psychoneuroimmunology Research Lab. Our work broadly focuses on connections among biopsychosocial factors, biological aging, and health in midlife and older adults. We are currently working on two funded projects. One is focused on the effects of momentary and life stressors on immune aging and the potential protective role of emotion regulation in attenuating stress-health associations. The second focuses on links between accelerated biological aging and age-related conditions including cognitive decline. More information can be found on our lab webpage: www.pniresearchlab.com



Tom Kamarck

Dr. Kamarck examines the role of stress and social relationships in cardiovascular disease risk, using mobile technology and ambulatory assessment to help us understand more about these processes in real time, in the context of correlational and intervention research.

Tica Hall

My primary faculty appointment is in Psychiatry, although I have a long history of mentoring students in the Bio-Health Program and the dual Clinical-Health Program. I direct the Mechanisms and Moderators of Sleep Health lab (MMoSH Pitt), which is focused on the predictors of sleep in vulnerable populations and the pathways through which disrupted sleep affects long term health and functioning. Our current work is focused on accelerated biological aging pathways and their influence on diseases of aging including cardiovascular disease and cognitive decline. We have a large cache of archival data that can be used for secondary data analysis by graduate and medical students and post-doctoral scholars. This work is carried out in the context of my lab as well as broader opportunities in our rich and diverse Center for Sleep and Circadian Science (CSCS, www.sleep.pitt.edu) including our training grant, which I co-direct with Daniel J. Buysse, MD.

Kathryn Roecklein

Dr. Roecklein studies the role of environmental light levels in entraining circadian rhythms and the influence of this mechanism on sleep and mood disorders. More information can be found at: www.roecklein.pitt.edu

Rebecca Thurston

Dr. Thurston is an expert in women's health and investigates both the biological and psychosocial determinants of cardiovascular disease and brain aging in midlife women. For example, she considers biological exposures, such as the menopause and its symptoms, as well as psychosocial exposures, such as trauma and sexual violence, in women's cardiovascular and brain health as they age. She is Principal Investigator of the MsHeart and MsBrain studies that leverage wearable technologies to investigate the menopause, cardiovascular health, and brain aging in women. Dr. Thurston is also a Principal Investigator of the Study of Women's Health Across the Nation, the seminal 25-year longitudinal cohort study of the menopause transition. <https://www.thurstonlab.pitt.edu/>
<https://www.cvbm.pitt.edu/>

Michael Sayette

Dr. Sayette conducts research on psychological theories of alcohol use and abuse and cigarette craving, including fMRI studies on the impact of olfactory cues on cigarette craving.



Enjoy some photos from recent Biological Health program events and the Academy of Behavioral Medicine Research conference in Woodstock, VT this summer.

Photo from ABMR conference:

Karen Matthews receives the Outstanding Mentorship Award presented by Martica Hall.

*Left to Right:
Martica Hall
Karen Matthews*



Photo from ABMR conference:

Steve Manuck receives the Outstanding Lifetime Achievement Award.

*Left to Right:
Shari Waldstein
Steve Manuck
Anna Marsland*

Photo from ABMR conference:

Anna Marsland, who served as president of ABMR (2021-2022), with post-doc Emily Jones, and graduate student Brianna Natale who helped to organize this year's annual conference.

*Left to Right:
Brianna Natale
Anna Marsland
Emily Jones*



Photo from Bio-health summer skateboarding event:

Pete Gianaros organized a skateboarding event for bio-health graduate students

*Left to Right:
Jermon Drake
Kristina Dickman
Pete Gianaros
Delainey Wescott
Alina Lesnovskaya*



SUBMIT YOUR NEWS HERE!

Submit your recent accomplishments or other recent alumni accomplishments [here](#).

Contact the Biological and Health Psychology Communications Sub-Committee at:
bhpsych@pitt.edu



Follow the program on twitter! @biohealth412

Brought to you by the Biological and Health Psychology Communications Sub-Committee:

Will Eckerle
Abby Hillmann
Tom Kamarck
Steve Manuck
Rebecca Reed
Hayley Ripperger
Chrystal Spencer

