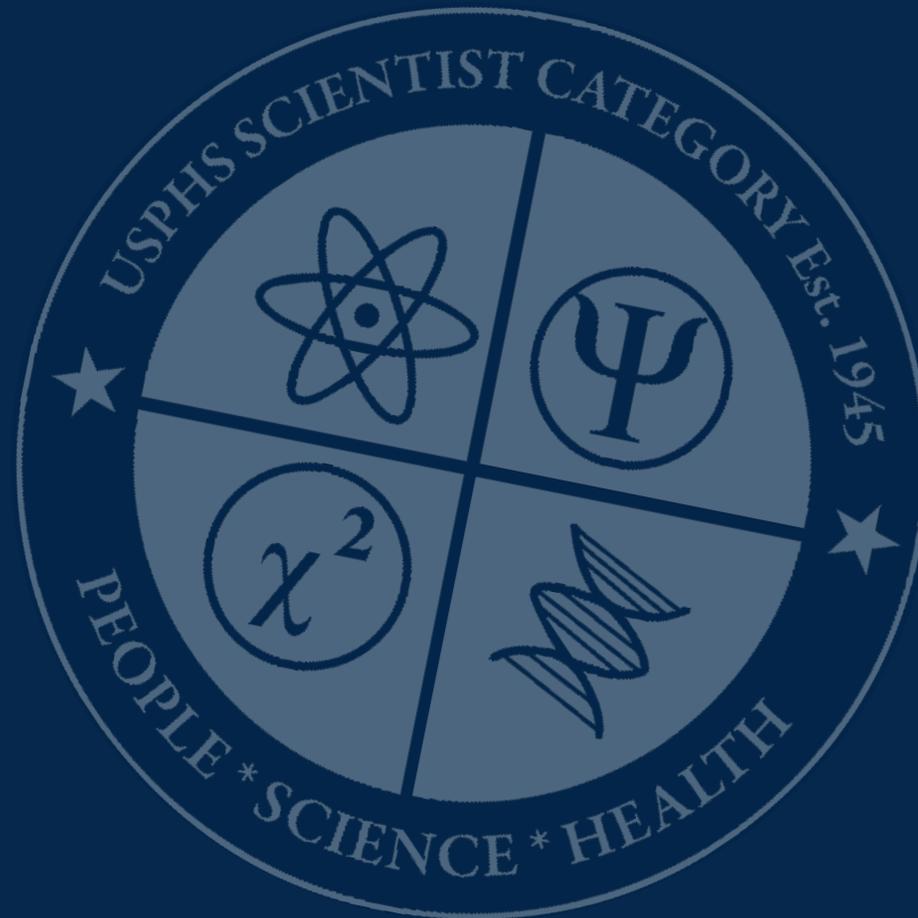


# *The Scientist Officer*



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# SciPAC Twitter Team: Going Strong in 2022!

LCDR Elaine Knipes and LT Ian Kracalik

**Intro:** Since the official launch in April 2019 of SciPAC's very own Twitter handle, @PHS\_Scientist, the SciPAC Visibility Subcommittee's Twitter team has steadily grown the @PHS\_Scientist presence on Twitter in number of followers, profile visits, and impacts!

The SciPAC Twitter Team was formed in November 2017 and spent a year and a half developing operating procedures and ensuring compliance with the Office of the Surgeon General's communications policy, including approval of Third-party Websites and Applications (TWPA) Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA). It was a difficult process, but the Twitter Team persisted and ultimately received approval from the Office of the Secretary, Privacy & Data Protection Division in the Office of the Chief Information Officer at Health and Human Services (HHS/OS/OCIO) to start Tweeting in April 2019. At that time, @PHS\_Scientist became the first, category-specific Twitter handle approved by the Deputy Surgeon General!



CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

# SciPAC Twitter Team: Going Strong in 2022!

LCDR Alaine Knipes and LT Ian Kracalik

The aim of Twitter Team is to harness the power of Twitter – a public-facing and timely platform – to promote Scientist Officers' accomplishments and share public health news. We foster comradery and collaboration among USPHS Scientists and other public health professionals by amplifying the work of USPHS Officers and highlighting timely public health news. We create new content to increase the visibility of USPHS Scientist Officers and highlight our impactful scientific accomplishments. We aim to inspire comradery through building visibility around shared interests and exciting topics.

**The Twitter Team** includes 2 co-leads (LCDR Alaine Knipes and LT Ian Kracalik – both at CDC) and 4 members (LCDR Sharoda Dasgupta - CDC, LT Angela Coulliette-Salmond - CDC, and LT Eric Mooring – Alaska CDC/Alaska DPH, and LT Brett Dodd – DHS/ICE). We meet monthly to review the prior month's accomplishments, to brainstorm new content, and to discuss collaboration opportunities across SciPAC, including Fist Bump Team, Publications Team, and Facebook Team. Every month our team writes 10 or more original tweets with photos. Team leads and members share duty days each month during which time they are responsible for tweeting original content or retweets, with a focus on public health-related content from the Twitter accounts of our Surgeon General and other public health figures or agencies to keep our followers up to date and informed.

**Accomplishments/Impacts/Most popular Tweets:** Twitter Team quantifies our impact using Twitter Analytics including the number of profile visits, impressions (views by users on Twitter), and engagements (clicks, retweets, replies, and follows) and likes. To date, we have tweeted/retweeted 1,145 times to reach 198,228 impressions, 7,588 engagements, 86,099 profile visits, and 4,906 likes, thereby amplifying timely and accurate scientific information to help confront and overcome health misinformation to the public. Among our most popular Tweets so far are ones (pictured) featuring LCDR Rebecca Levine (August 16, 2021) and CDR Joanna Gaines (April 20, 2020). These and other popular @PHS\_Scientist Tweets and Retweets help us expand outreach by garnering high-profile followers including public health figures, government institutions, non-profit organizations, and social media influencers – multiplying our impact across their combined 165k Twitter followers.



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# SciPAC Twitter Team: Going Strong in 2022!

LCDR Alaine Knipes and LT Ian Kracalik



PHS\_Scientist @PHS\_Scientist · Apr 20, 2020  
CDR Joanna Gaines is one of many Scientist Officers serving in @CDCGov's Center for Global Health @CDCGlobal. She trains #DiseaseDetectives to stop the spread of disease as part of Saudi Arabia's Field Epidemiology Training Program #FETP [tinyurl.com/y2urdyuz](https://tinyurl.com/y2urdyuz) @Surgeon\_General



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## × Tweet Analytics



PHS\_Scientist @PHS\_Scientist · Apr 20, 2020



CDR Joanna Gaines is one of many Scientist Officers serving in @CDCGov's Center for Global Health @CDCGlobal. She trains #DiseaseDetectives to stop the spread of disease as part of Saudi Arabia's Field Epidemiology Training Program #FETP [tinyurl.com/y2urdy...](https://tinyurl.com/y2urdyuz)



7



3



0

Impressions ⓘ

1,526

New followers ⓘ

0

Profile visits ⓘ

0

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

# Human Diseases Transmitted by Hematophagous Anthropods

By CDR Jorge M. Ruano-Rossil

## Introduction

Of the nearly 953,434 animal species that have been described and cataloged, 80% are arthropods (Phylum: Arthropoda) and, from this group, more than 90% are insects (Class: Insecta). Out of this large number of insect species there are quite a few considered to be of medical interest due to their ability to transmit diseases to humans. Flies, mosquitoes, kissing bugs, bed bugs, fleas, lice, and ticks include most of the Arthropods known to either parasitize or vector viruses, bacteria, protozoans, and nematodes to humans. From this group however, ticks are the only ones that are not insects, but arachnids (Class: Arachnida). Many of the Arthropods of medical importance are hematophagous, meaning that they need to feed on the blood of their hosts to complete their biological lifecycle. In some of these hematophagous species (e.g., Horseflies), the males feed on other types of substrates and only the females feed on blood.

Historically, certain insects are notorious for their prevalence and ability to transmit pathogens that have caused devastating illnesses in many parts of the world. One classic example is the role of mosquitoes in transmitting the protozoan parasite that causes malaria. Other examples of important pathogens transmitted by mosquitoes include the viruses that cause yellow fever, dengue, West Nile fever, and Chikungunya. Examples of pathogenic bacteria transmitted to humans by arthropods include the bubonic plague by fleas, and Borreliosis or Lyme disease by tabanid flies and ticks. Sleeping sickness or African trypanosomiasis, Chagas disease or American trypanosomiasis, leishmaniasis, and filariasis are among the common insect-vector diseases caused by protozoan and nematode parasites. A summary of some of the most significant species of mosquitoes that vector human diseases will be detailed below.

## Hematophagous Mosquitoes

The term “mosquitoes” designates several families of blood-sucking nematoceran dipterans. The nematoceran classification refers to flies exhibiting long and narrow wings, long antennae, and thin bodies and legs. However, the term “mosquito” generally refers to members of the Culicidae family (Order Diptera) also called “Culicids.” Culicids include the *Anopheles*, *Aedes*, and *Culex* genera. Approximately 3,500 species of mosquitoes exist worldwide comprising 41 genera. The Culicidae family includes blood-sucking mosquitoes, active at different times of day with different types of biting behavior. The habitats for their aquatic larvae include places where stagnant water accumulates in ponds, wells, lakes, nature reserves, holes in trees, artificial receptacles (e.g., drinking troughs for domesticated animals or plastic containers where drinking water is stored), and any location where rainwater accumulates (e.g., scrap tires).

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# Human Diseases Transmitted by Hematophagous Anthropods

By CDR Jorge M. Ruano-Rossil

## **Anopheles Mosquito**

This is the main culicid genus that transmits malaria, and it prefers to feed on humans and other large animals. *Anopheles* lays eggs in stagnant water, overflowing sewers and septic tanks, and other locations where water accumulates. Once the mosquito feeds on an infected host, the parasitic protozoans that cause malaria will complete half of their life cycle within the insect body (invertebrate host). When the mosquito feeds on humans, the protozoan parasite gets inoculated into the new host (vertebrate host), and then completes the other half of its biological cycle in the new host. Human malaria is transmitted only by *Anopheles* females, which bites aggressively at dawn and dusk. Of the approximately 430 *Anopheles* species, only 30-40 of them are known to vector diseases. The remaining species only bite humans sporadically and/or cannot biologically sustain the development of parasitic protozoans.



*Anopheles* Mosquito sucking blood from human host  
Credit: CDC/James Gathany

## **Aedes Mosquito**

*Aedes* genus feeds aggressively during the day. One example, *Aedes aegypti* (Linnaeus), indiscriminately lays eggs in clean or dirty water in coastal areas, irrigated pastures, containers, and tree holes. *Aedes* is the main vector of the dengue, Zika, and Chikungunya viruses. *Aedes* is also an important vector of the microscopic nematode that causes lymphatic filariasis, the yellow fever virus, and the Rift Valley fever virus.



Tiger Mosquito, *Aedes albopictus* (Skuse)  
Credit: CDC/James Gathany

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

# Human Diseases Transmitted by Hematophagous Anthropods

By CDR Jorge M. Ruano-Rossil

## **Culex Mosquito**

*Culex* genus larvae thrive in natural and artificial sources of water (e.g., underground sumps, dirty pools, drains, containers). Between 5 and 7 days after their eggs hatch, *Culex* mosquitoes develop into an adult and are immediately ready to feed on blood. *Culex* commonly attack birds and humans and are an important vector of West Nile virus, St. Louis encephalitis virus, Japanese encephalitis virus, and the western equine encephalomyelitis virus.



*West Nile Virus vector  
Culex quinquefasciatus (Say)  
Credit: CDC/ James Gathany*

In future newsletter publications, we will discuss the importance of some other hematophagous insects such as flies (Diptera), true bugs (Hemiptera), lice (Phthiraptera), and fleas (Siphonaptera) in the transmission of human diseases, as well as some hematophagous ticks (Ixodida) of the Arachnida class.

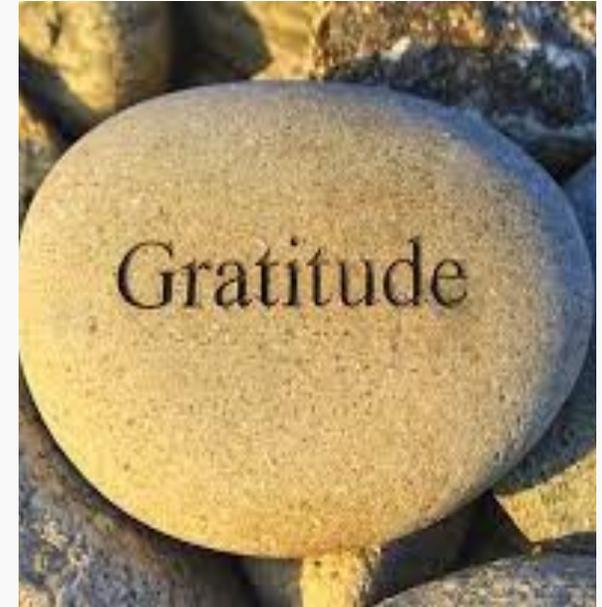
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# Changing the Brain with Gratitude: It's Science

By LT Gina Masessa

"Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others." -Marcus Tullius Cicero

I remember sitting in a Jimmy John's sandwich shop with a friend while on internship. As we were both big NY Giants fans, we had decided to drive to Indianapolis, Indiana, to watch the Super Bowl from Super Bowl City (spoiler alert: we won that year). We stopped to eat and as I was savagely devouring my sandwich, I glanced up on the wall to see a story titled, "The Mexican Fisherman." It's a simple story; allow me to summarize. An investment banker happens upon a fisherman in a coastal village and convinces him that he needs to capitalize on his business, open a cannery, control the distribution, and move to NYC to run his expanding enterprise. When the fisherman asks what he will do after he retires, the businessman responds that he will be a millionaire and able to retire in a small coastal village where he can sleep late, fish, play with his kids, spend time with his wife and take strolls into the village at night. All of the things he was already doing!



This story struck a chord with me because at the heart of it is a message about being grateful for what you have rather than jumping through all the hoops to get what you believe you need. Thus began my research into gratitude, happiness, and how to live a peaceful existence. Too often we hear someone described in terms of "she's a happy person," or "he's more of an Eeyore," but can we change that, increase our baseline, and become happier and more grateful people? Science says, "Yes we can!" Studies have been conducted for over a decade regarding brain changes and gratitude and they have consistently shown positive results. Cultivating and expressing gratitude is associated with benefits of increased resilience to trauma, fewer symptoms of physical illness and health complaints, and better sleep at night. Research involving functional MRIs have shown activation of the brain in regions of moral reasoning, empathy, decision-making, and well-being when the subject expresses or experiences gratitude. The kids today might say this is an example of your brain being "lit" when it's "on gratitude."

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# Changing the Brain with Gratitude: It's Science

By LT Gina Masessa



So what is gratitude, exactly? We tend to focus on it around Thanksgiving or if we are seeing a therapist who provides this to us as a treatment assignment, but what IS it? At the core, gratitude is an affirmation of goodness. It's simply recognizing goodness in ourselves, others, and the world around us. It's not easy to accomplish though, is it? The brain has a historic and evolutionary negativity bias, which means these negative pathways are well utilized. It may be the case this bias is not lost on you because likely in your profession and role in life, the negative is retained more than the positive. The comments your boss made to you, what your kids said at dinner time, the ever-impending doom of society telling us to do more; it all sticks. However, the brain is not a static unchanging piece of plastic. It is alive and in a constant state of change. In fact, when we experience gratitude, neurochemicals such as dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin are released into the brain and bloodstream, cultivating positive and optimistic emotions while also inhibiting the stress hormone, cortisol. You are probably already hip to the fact that dopamine and serotonin are the "feel good" brain chemicals. When the brain releases them (after that kick of gratitude) we feel positive, optimistic, and prosocial. We feel...happy. Did you know that when you are in a happy, positive state you are more productive and creative? Dopamine is linked to our intrinsic motivation.

Now that we know all of this, what does it mean? In the context of neural pathways, those that we use more often become deeper, more ingrained, and part of our baseline. Therefore, the more we can activate these gratitude circuits, the stronger the neural pathways become and the more likely we are to default to them when things are not going as well as we had hoped. Many years ago, scientists believed that the brain stops growing at a certain point. We now know that the brain has neuroplasticity, which is a fancy way of saying we can continue to form new neural connections every day throughout our lifespan. Every day you wake up is another chance to build a new pathway and weaken an existing one. Realistically, is this something we will excel at on a daily basis? Probably not. But little by little, we can forge those positive paths in our brain and increase our baseline to a more pleasant, happy, and peaceful place. Now, after hearing all of this research you may want to know how to get started today. Here are some ideas to start on the path of gratitude and brain enhancement. Do them all, do only one, do them with your children or your family/friends for fun. However you can work them into your life DO IT - your brain will thank you.

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# Changing the Brain with Gratitude: It's Science

By LT Gina Masessa



*Gratitude Journal* – Each day over a 30-day period, write down 3 things for which you are grateful. You cannot repeat entries so each day must be a new set of gratitude.

*Gratitude Jar* – Set up a gratitude jar in the office or at home. Institute a challenge for people to write one thing for which they are grateful a day on a piece of paper and put it in the jar. At the end of the challenge, gather the paper and put them on a board for all to see.

*Grateful Affirmations* – Teach the art of gratitude to the next generation. If you have young children (or not so young children) write a list each morning of things you are grateful for that have to do with them. Review them with your child and have them do the same. This will increase gratitude and bonding in the family, which makes for a pleasant household.

*Gratitude Reframe* – Life sometimes gets the best of us and we find ourselves in a funk. During these times, for each negative you say to yourself, enact a challenge to reframe and find something positive about it. I once had a yoga teacher tell me, “When I woke up this morning the pain in my back was so bad it was difficult to walk and I thought ‘well, at least this means I can still feel my back.’”

*30-Day Gratitude Challenge* – Hop onto Google and type in “gratitude challenge.” There are so many out there and one will suit your needs. Most involve a theme of the day and ask you to take a photo of something that meets that theme to post on social media.

# Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director visits New York City

By LT Beth Rubenstein and LT Nang Thu Thu Kyaw

On December 14, 2021, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky made a whirlwind visit to New York City, making several media appearances to discuss the Omicron variant and meeting with public health officials and CDC staff based in NYC. The visit coincided with the one-year anniversary of the first COVID-19 vaccines administered in NYC. Dr. Walensky expressed her appreciation for all of the hard work being done at the local level throughout the pandemic.

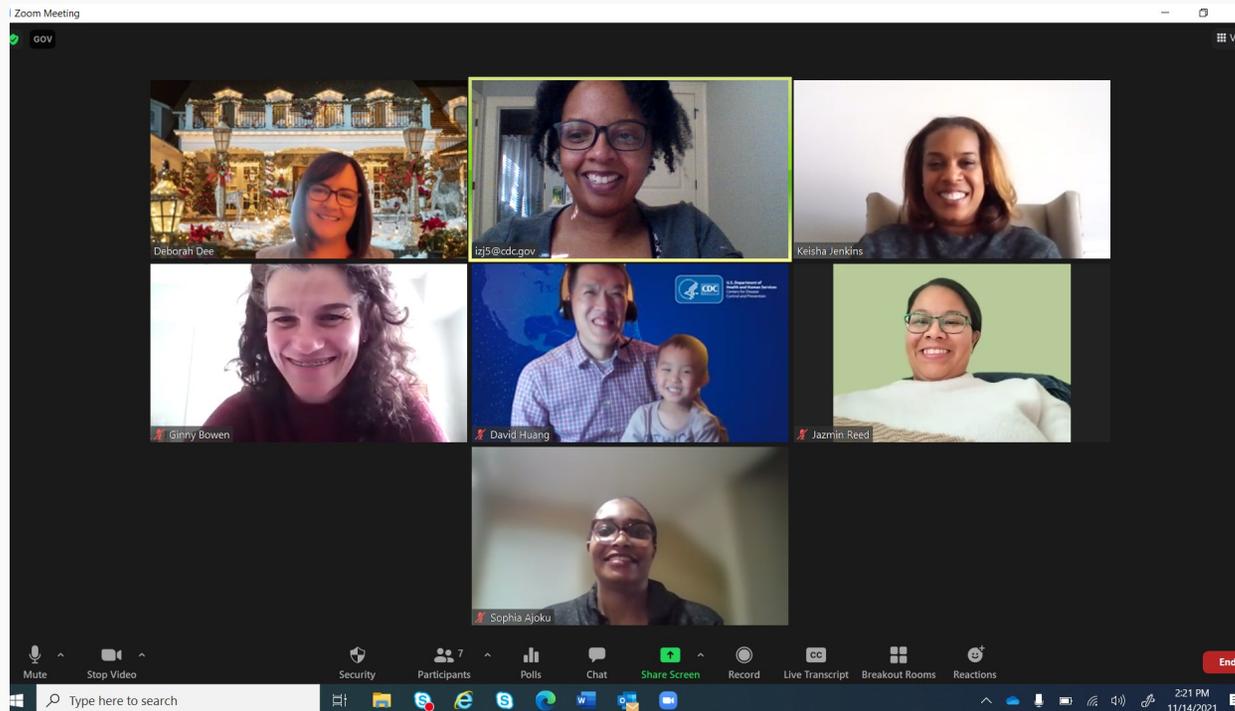


*Pictured from left to right: Erik Kopping (non-PHS Training Fellow), CDR Celia Quinn (Medical Officer), Stacey Konkle (non-PHS Training Fellow), CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky, Kathryn Peebles (non-PHS Training Fellow), LT Beth Rubenstein (Scientist Officer), LT Nang Thu Thu Kyaw (Scientist Officer), CAPT Timothy Styles (Medical Officer)*

# A Scientist Family Feud: Visibility Subcommittee's November 2021 Social

By CDR Zewditu Demissie and LCDR Keisha Jenkins

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, SciPAC's Visibility Subcommittee continues to support Officer networking and comraderie through virtual gatherings. In November 2021, the Subcommittee hosted a Family Feud event. If you are unfamiliar with this popular game show, contestants are tasked with providing the most popular (not necessarily most correct or logical) answers to a variety of survey questions asked of the public. Family Feud is usually a competition between two teams of five people, but we modified the game, USPHS Scientist Officer style. For this event, five officers joined the Feud co-hosts in toe-to-toe action to try to get the top answers on the board. The group was able to complete two full games, each game consisting of 10 rounds of questions. The winner of the first game was LT Jazmin Reed, one of our newest calls to active duty who was attending her first SciPAC social. The winner of the second game was CDR David Huang. Laughter ensued throughout the event as officers pondered odd and funny answers and developed insight into one another through their guesses. Do you think you know the top five answers for the following question?: "Name someone famous, real or fictional, named 'Mother.'" See answers below.



Answers: Mother Goose, Mother Teresa, Mother Love, Mother Hubbard, Mother Nature

Attendees included (top row) CDR Deborah Dee, CDR Zewditu Demissie, LCDR Keisha Jenkins; (middle row) LCDR Ginny Bowen, CDR David Huang (with son), LT Jazmin Reed; and (bottom row) LT Sophia Ajoku.

# Officer Spotlight: USPHS Psychologists

By LCDR Nazia Rahman

In an effort to spotlight USPHS Psychologists, the Outreach and Education Team of the Psychologists Integration Subcommittee will be spotlighting psychologists in the next several issues of the “The Scientist Officer.”

## CAPT Christopher L. Hunter

- **Agency:** Defense Health Agency
- **Education:** Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) - Clinical Psychology
- **Current Position:** Primary Care Behavioral Health Program Director
- **Interests/Hobbies:** Gardening, hiking, and kayaking
- **Favorite piece of advice to share with fellow officers or a favorite quote:**  
“Being responsible sometimes means pissing people off.”



## LT Carl Gauthier

- **Agency:** Bureau of Prisons
- **Education:** Doctor of Psychology (PsyD)
- **Current Position:** Drug Abuse Program Coordinator
- **Interests/Hobbies:** Preparing to be a first-time dad consumes all my time
- **Favorite piece of advice to share with fellow officers or a favorite quote:**  
“There is a crack, a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in.”  
~Leonard Cohen

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# Officer Spotlight: USPHS Psychologists

By LCDR Nazia Rahman

## LT Anthony T. Powell, Jr.

- **Agency:** Bureau of Prisons
- **Education:** Doctor of Psychology (PsyD)
- **Current Position:** Clinical Psychologist-Specialty Program Coordinator, United States Penitentiary, Allenwood, Pennsylvania
- **Interests/Hobbies:** Weightlifting, movies (horror and gangster), reading, and spending time with family and friends
- **Favorite piece of advice to share with fellow officers or a favorite quote:**
  - “The worst part of having a mental illness is people expect you to behave as if you don’t.” ~ The Joker
  - “Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.” ~Mike Tyson
  - “Don’t be in a hurry to condemn because he doesn’t do what you do or think as you think or as fast. There was a time when you didn’t know what you know today.” ~Malcolm X



LT Anthony T. Powell, Jr.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

# Officer Spotlight: USPHS Psychologists

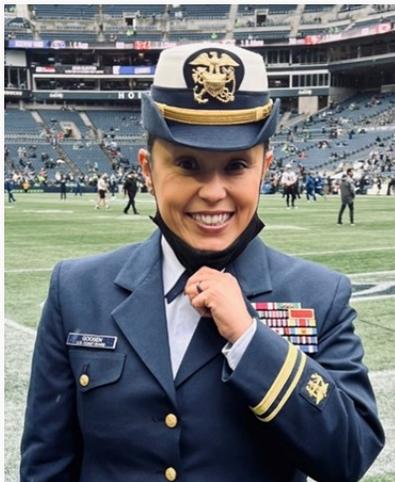
By LCDR Nazia Rahman



CAPT Robin L. Toblin

## CAPT Robin L. Toblin

- **Agency:** U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Beltsville, Maryland
- **Education:** Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) - Clinical Psychology/Epidemiology
- **Current Position:** Deputy Director, Division of Population Health, Center for Tobacco Products
- **Interests/Hobbies:** Travel, running, baking, and playing with my daughter
- **Favorite piece of advice to share with fellow officers or a favorite quote:** Holding onto anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die.



LCDR Vanessa Goosen

## LCDR Vanessa Goosen

- **Agency:** United States Coast Guard, Seattle, Washington
- **Education:** Doctor of Psychology (PsyD)
- **Current Position:** Regional Behavioral Health Coordinator—USCG District 13 Pacific Northwest
- **Interests/Hobbies:** Reading, hiking, air streaming, swimming, boating, kayaking, puppies
- **Favorite piece of advice to share with fellow officers or a favorite quote:** Love where you work, work where you love.



Darth & Anakin

# SciPAC Fist Bump

Recognizing SciPAC Deployment Preparedness Team and its co-chairs, CDR John Pesce, LCDR Jason Caballero, LCDR Jorge Muñiz-Ortiz, and LT Adelaida Rosario, for their outstanding service and resiliency during the COVID-19 response.

**CDR Pesce:** Contributed to rollout of the COVID-19 pediatric and adult booster vaccines during a deployment to CDC's Vaccine Coordination Cell for Vaccine Distribution, Awardee, and Partner Support (55 days).

**LCDR Caballero:** Selected by the Assistant Commissioner of Office of Regulatory Affairs/Management Operations to be an FDA COVID-19 contact tracer. Protected 5,000 federal employees worldwide and served 6 COVID-19 deployments (>241 days).

**LCDR Muñiz-Ortiz:** Served 2 COVID-19 deployments at the Secretary's Operations Center (SOC) and CCHQ Command Cell, coordinating communications and rostering officers for all PHS COVID-19 missions (54 days).

**LT Rosario:** Awarded the MSM with valor for identifying U.S. citizens from the Diamond Princess cruise ship with severe COVID-19 as candidates for Remdesivir treatment.



CDR John Pesce



LCDR Jason Caballero



LCDR Jorge Muñiz-Ortiz



LT Adelaida Rosario

# SciPAC Fist Bump

Congratulations to CDR Leigh Ann Miller on transitioning into a new, exciting role as the first Career Epidemiology Field Officer (CEFO) for Louisiana, based in New Orleans. CDR Miller serves as the first CDC Epidemiologist permanently assigned to the Louisiana Department of Health. CDR Miller's duties will include exploring potential correlations between Louisiana's climate and public health, investigating infectious disease outbreaks, and working to enhance public health. As the former Associate Director for Science at CDC Namibia, CDR Miller brings a strong history of leadership in unique outbreak responses (e.g., anthrax in hippos and Hepatitis E) from the Kalahari Desert to this new role in the bayou. CDR Miller encourages Scientists and other officers to reach out if they are in New Orleans for conferences or other reasons!  
Congrats again, CDR Miller, we wish you the best of luck with your new endeavor!



*CDR Leigh Ann Miller*

# SciPAC Fist Bump

Congratulations to LCDR Kate Morris on completing the 12-month Executive Leaders Program (ELP) at the Naval Postgraduate School, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, in November 2021. ELP brings together homeland security officials from across the nation to collaborate on current policy, strategy, and organizational design challenges.

LCDR Morris is a licensed psychologist with the Federal Bureau of Prisons. She currently serves as a National Psychology Treatment Coordinator and is responsible for the supervision of residential, mental health, and treatment programs at high and medium security facilities throughout the Eastern U.S. She earned her Master's and Doctorate in clinical psychology from Loyola University in Maryland, received board certification from the American Board of Professional Psychology, and is currently pursuing an Advanced Certificate in Trauma and Disaster Mental Health from the State University of New York at New Paltz.

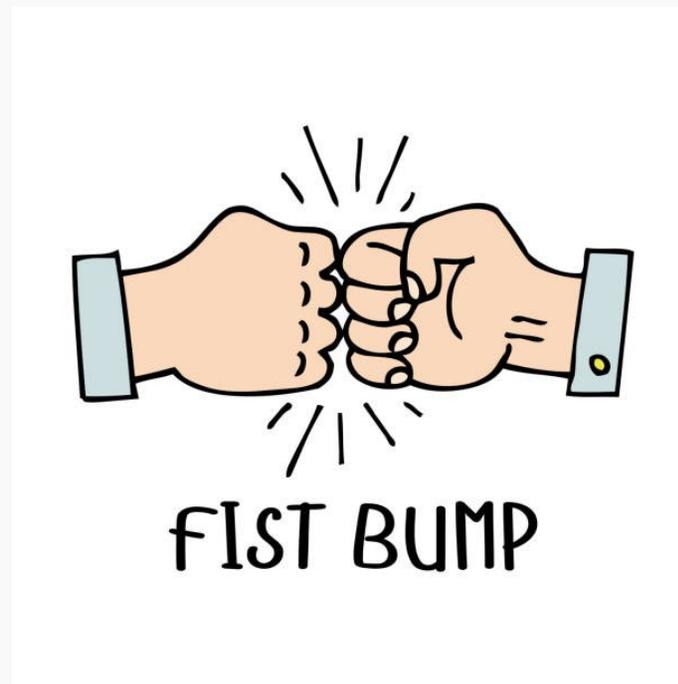
Congrats again, LCDR Morris, on advancing your leadership skills through this executive program!



*LCDR Kate Morris*

# SciPAC Fist Bump

Don't forget to nominate yourself or another Scientist officer for a SciPAC Fist Bump!  
Whether you welcomed a new family member, delivered a noteworthy talk or service, or completed a deployment, we want to hear about it!



[You can find the Fist Bump Submission Form here.](#)

# *The Scientist Officer Editorial Team*

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Check out past issues of *The Scientist Officer* at <https://dcp.psc.gov/osg/scientist/newsletter.aspx>