

The Scientist Officer



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Select High-Impact Publications by Scientist Officers in 2021

By LCDR Tia Rogers, LCDR Marisa Hast, LCDR Francis Annor, LCDR Jayleen Gunn, LCDR Emily Mosites, and CDR Sharyn Parks-Brown

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE. Publishing impactful research to fill important knowledge gaps is one of the many ways Scientist Officers regularly contribute to the missions of agencies to which USPHS Commissioned Corps officers are assigned. Earlier this year, the SciPAC Visibility Subcommittee’s Publications Team collaborated with the Science Subcommittee’s Bibliography Team to identify and systematically compile Scientist Officer publications from calendar year 2021 (January 1–December 31, 2021).

METHODS. In March 2022, the Visibility Subcommittee Publications Team and the Science Subcommittee Bibliography Team put out a call to the 415 rostered Scientist Officers to share their list of publications for 2021. In July 2022, a list of publications authored by Scientist Officers who did not respond to the original call was generated using an R script to automate queries of the PubMed database. This list was systematically verified and deduplicated by both teams to produce the comprehensive list of Scientist Officer publications for 2021. Members of the Publications Team carefully reviewed the full list and voted to highlight 10 high-impact publications with a Scientist Officer first author.

RESULTS. One hundred Scientist Officers responded to the initial call for publications. Between self-report and the web-based query and verification process, a total of 233 Scientist Officers were identified to have published 660 manuscripts during 2021. Of those, 116 were publications with a Scientist Officer first author. These publications span diverse public health topic areas, however COVID-19 was the most common topic among PHS Scientist publications with a total of 192 related manuscripts.

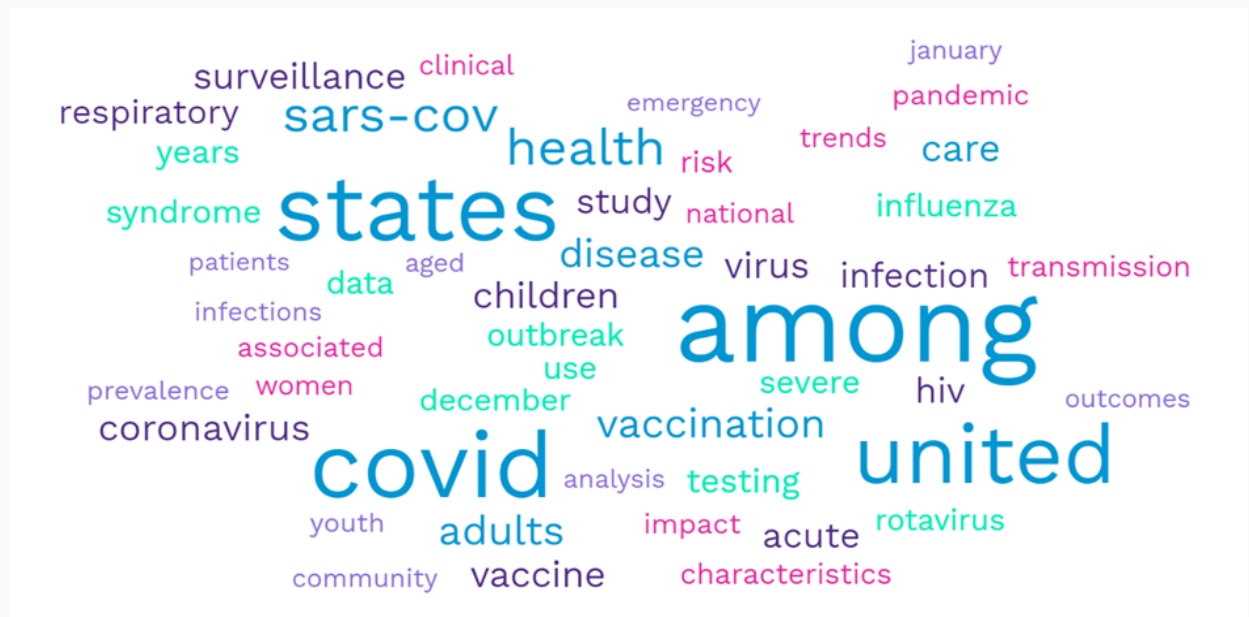


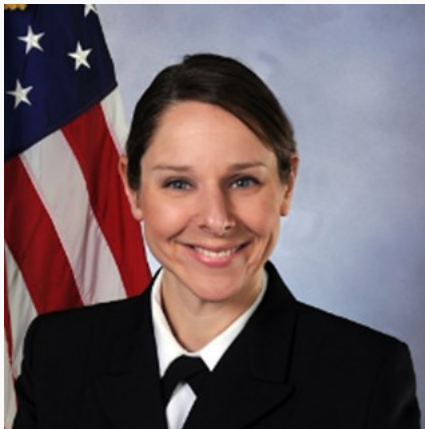
Figure. Word Cloud illustrating the top 50 terms captured from 660 publication titles, as authored by Scientist Officers in 2021. Font sizes are weighted to word frequency.

Select High-Impact Publications by Scientist Officers in 2021

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Top 10 High-Impact Publications by Scientist Officers 2021

Below is a subset of publications from 2021 for which Scientist Officers served as the first author, as evaluated and selected by the Publications Team for their novelty, impact, and significant scientific contributions. These works provide a brief glimpse into how the Scientist Category is at the forefront of conducting and disseminating research of regional, national, and international public health importance. PHS Scientist Officers are bolded for emphasis.



Toblin RL, Hagan LM. COVID-19 Case and Mortality Rates in the Federal Bureau of Prisons. *Am J Prev Med.* 2021;61(1):120-123. DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2021.01.019>

CAPT Toblin (FDA) and colleague compared Federal Bureau of Prison (BOP) inmate testing, case, and mortality rates for COVID-19 to those of the US. They found that BOP tested approximately half of inmates and that COVID-19 case rates and standard mortality ratio among inmates were approximately 5 and 2.5 times those in US adults, respectively. Testing and other mitigation strategies have likely prevented further transmission and mortality in BOP.



Boehmer TK, Kompaniyets L, Lavery AM, Hsu J, **Ko JY**, Yusuf H, Romano SD, Gundlapalli AV, Oster ME, Harris AM. Association Between COVID-19 and Myocarditis Using Hospital-Based Administrative Data - United States, March 2020-January 2021. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2021;70(35):1228-1232. DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7035e5>

CDR Boehmer (CDC) and colleagues demonstrated that patients with COVID-19 had nearly 16 times the risk for myocarditis compared to patients without COVID-19. This study provided valuable context for interpreting myocarditis risk after COVID-19 vaccination and highlighted the importance of COVID-19 prevention strategies, including vaccination, to reduce the public health impact of COVID-19 and its complications.

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Hollis ND, Li W, Van Dyke ME, Njie GJ, **Scobie HM**, **Parker EM**, Penman-Aguilar A, Clarke KEN. Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Incidence of SARS-CoV-2 Infection, 22 US States and DC, January 1-October 1, 2020. *Emerg Infect Dis*. 2021;27(5):1477-1481. DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.3201/eid2705.204523>

CDR Hollis (CDC) and colleagues examined disparities in US SARS-CoV-2 incidence by race/ethnicity, age, and sex, between January 1 to October 1, 2020. Authors found that Hispanic/Latino and non-Hispanic Black, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander persons had a substantially higher incidence of infection than non-Hispanic White persons. Monitoring these disparities is critical for guiding action to reduce health inequities.



Parks SE, Erck Lambert AB, Hauck FR, Cottengim CR, Faulkner M, Shapiro-Mendoza CK. Explaining Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths, 2011-2017. *Pediatrics*. 2021;147(5):e2020035873. DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-035873>

CDR Parks Brown (CDC) and colleagues found that although $\geq 72\%$ of sudden unexplained infant deaths (SUID) occurred in unsafe sleep circumstances, only 18% could be explained as suffocation deaths. Furthermore, 75% of airway obstruction deaths were attributable to soft bedding. Continued analyses and improvements to infant death investigation and documentation can advance our understanding of infants at highest risk of SUID.

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Yard E, Radhakrishnan L, Ballesteros MF, Sheppard M, Gates A, Stein Z, **Hartnett K**, Kite-Powell A, **Rodgers L**, **Adjemian J**, Ehlman DC, Holland K, Idaikkadar N, **Ivey-Stephenson A**, Martinez P, Law R, Stone DM. Emergency Department Visits for Suspected Suicide Attempts Among Persons Aged 12-25 Years Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic - United States, January 2019-May 2021. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2021; 70 (24): 888-894.

DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7024e1>

CDR Yard (CDC) and colleagues analyzed national syndromic surveillance data and determined that emergency visits for attempted suicide among girls aged 12—17 years were 51% higher in early 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to the same period in 2019. The authors recommended a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention that can be adapted during times of disruption to prevent suicide among youth.



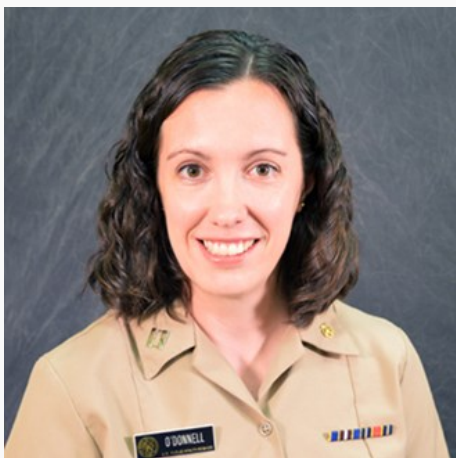
Zapata LB, Pazol K, Curtis KM, Kane DJ, Jatlaoui TC, Folger SG, Okoroh EM, Cox S, Whiteman MK. Need for Contraceptive Services Among Women of Reproductive Age - 45 Jurisdictions, United States, 2017-2019. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2021;70(25):910-915. DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7025a2>

CDR Zapata (CDC) and colleagues examined unintended pregnancy risk and contraceptive service need among women aged 18—49 years, finding 76.2% of women to be at risk for unintended pregnancy. Although 60.7% of women needed contraceptive services, 30.3% were not using any contraception method. These findings inform jurisdictional planning to deliver contraceptive services, reduce unintended pregnancies, and evaluate efforts to increase access to contraception.

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Select High-Impact Publications by Scientist Officers in 2021

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O'Donnell J, Tanz LJ, Gladden RM, Davis NL, Bitting J. Trends in and Characteristics of Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Illicitly Manufactured Fentanyls - United States, 2019-2020. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2021;70(50):1740-1746. DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7050e3>

LCDR O'Donnell (CDC) and colleagues described trends of overdose deaths involving illicitly manufactured fentanyls (IMFs) using data from CDC's State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System. The study found that IMF-involved deaths increased sharply in midwestern, southern, and western jurisdictions of the US during 2019-2020. Authors concluded that adapting and expanding overdose prevention, harm reduction, and response efforts are urgently needed to address the high potency and various routes of use for IMFs.



Razzaghi H, Meghani M, Pingali C, Crane B, Naleway A, Weintraub E, Kenigsberg TA, Lamias MJ, Irving SA, Kauffman TL, Vesco KK, Daley MF, DeSilva M, Donahue J, Getahun D, Glenn S, Hambidge SJ, Jackson L, Lipkind HS, Nelson J, Zerbo O, Oduyebo T, Singleton JA, Patel SA. COVID-19 Vaccination Coverage Among Pregnant Women During Pregnancy - Eight Integrated Health Care Organizations, United States, December 14, 2020-May 8, 2021. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2021; 70 (24): 895-899. DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7024e2>

LCDR Razzaghi (CDC) and colleagues assessed receipt of COVID-19 vaccines among pregnant women and noted that within the first few months of vaccine availability, 16.3% of pregnant women had received ≥ 1 dose of a vaccine. Receipt of ≥ 1 dose was lowest among racial/ethnic minorities. The authors noted "need for improved outreach to and engagement with pregnant women, especially those from racial/ethnic minority groups who might be at higher risk for severe health outcomes because of COVID-19."

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Select High-Impact Publications by Scientist Officers in 2021

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Deputy NP, Lowry R, Clayton HB, **Demissie Z**, Bohm MK, Conklin S. Initiation of Nonmedical Use of Prescription Opioids among High School Students. *Subst Abus.* 2021;42(4):460-465. DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08897077.2021.1892013>

LT Deputy (CDC) and colleagues studied the link between the age when youth start misusing prescription opioids and later misuse. The authors found more than 6% of students first misused prescription opioids at age 14 or younger, and younger age at first misuse increased the likelihood of recent misuse. The authors' results underscore the importance of age-appropriate substance use prevention programs during early adolescence.



Salvatore PP, Dawson P, Wadhwa A, Rabold EM, Buono S, Dietrich EA, Reses HE, Vuong J, Pawloski L, Dasu T, Bhattacharyya S, **Pevzner E**, Hall AJ, **Tate JE**, Kirking HL. Epidemiological Correlates of Polymerase Chain Reaction Cycle Threshold Values in the Detection of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). *Clin Infect Dis.* 2021;72(11):e761-e767. DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciaa1469>

LT Salvatore (CDC) and colleagues examined the relationship between cycle threshold (Ct) values of viral RNA and key epidemiologic characteristics of SARS-CoV-2 infections. Authors found that Ct values were lowest (indicating more viral RNA) within the first 7 days after symptom onset compared with 21 days after onset, and among participants with respiratory symptoms compared to those without respiratory symptoms. Their findings underscored the need for early SARS-CoV-2 testing and isolation among persons with symptoms of respiratory illness when viral shedding is at its highest levels.

Tips for Visiting Walt Disney World, the Most Magical Place on Earth

By CDR David Huang

With many vacations put on hold over the past few years, many of us have recently had the itch to resume vacations involving air travel again. For my family of five, we decided late last year that it was finally time to bring the kids to Walt Disney World, unofficially the “Most Magical Place on Earth.” Our flight from DC to Orlando would mark our first plane ride as a family in almost three years, including the first ever for my nine-month-old son.

If you are not a regular visitor to Disney theme parks, navigating all that goes into planning a Disney trip can be overwhelming. As someone who last visited Disney World in 1998, things had obviously changed significantly since the last time I visited. Here are some of the lessons learned from my trip:

Book early! Flights and hotels are obviously important pieces to finalize when planning a trip, but now that Disney theme parks require reservations for a specific day and park (which can be changed without penalty), it’s also important to consider park availability, particularly during peak times like spring break and major holidays. If you choose to rent a car, lock in a refundable reservation early and check for price drops periodically. Dining at on-site sit-down restaurants at Disney theme parks typically requires advance reservations – although last-minute reservations may be possible due to cancellations.

Check for relevant discounts. Disneyland and Disney World both offer military discounts on many types of tickets through military sales outlets; the Military Salute Tickets offer the best value but do have restricted dates and may not be the best option for visits of one to three days. While there are many travel discounts available to USPHS Officers, I’ll highlight here that Walt Disney World-owned and operated resorts offer rooms and packages at a discount for certain dates. Another good lodging option is Shades of Green, which is an Armed Forces Recreation Center and offers a great overall value for the amenities and location (on Disney property) – assuming you can get a reservation. As a bonus, early theme park entry is a benefit of staying at Shades of Green, Disney resort hotels, and select other hotels.



CDR David Huang and his family enjoy an evening at Magic Kingdom in Walt Disney World

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Tips for Visiting Walt Disney World, the Most Magical Place on Earth

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Plan ahead – but be flexible. There are many travel books and blogs out there to help provide guidance on planning. We relied heavily on the Unofficial Guide series, but even after planning out our days at each park ahead of time, we found that we had to adjust our schedule based on factors like ride availability, ride wait times, meals/snack breaks, and bathroom breaks. Having a flexible mindset will help everyone to manage expectations about the day.

Schedule rest time. Disney parks are large and involve a lot of walking. Time to rest and recharge during the day is key to ensuring you make the most of your experience. For multi-day Disney trips, I would advise scheduling at least one day in the middle of the trip where you do not visit a theme park but visit Disney Springs (an outdoor shopping, dining, and entertainment complex) or another local shopping mall -- or just simply spend the day by the pool.

Buy a power bank. Having the Disney app on your smartphone is invaluable, as it allows you to do things like manage tickets and passes, check ride wait times, estimate walking distances, order and pay for food (at select restaurants), and view Disney PhotoPass photos (which gives you the ability to view and purchase photos taken by Disney photographers). But with heavy usage throughout the day, you will likely need a power bank to ensure your device lasts for an entire day.

Reflect and (re)prioritize. Throughout and at the end of the day, ask yourself and your family what experiences provided lasting, positive memories. If your kids really enjoyed meeting Disney characters rather than going on their eighth ride, prioritize character greets over additional rides in the future. If waiting in line is challenging for your and/or your kids' patience, consider splurging on add-ons that allow you to skip the main ("standby") line like Genie+ or Lightning Lane. If you're exhausted and want to head back to your hotel earlier than closing time, go ahead and skip the fireworks show (and the crowds that accompany it!).

Although planning a vacation to Disney World can be daunting, hopefully, these tips can help ensure that your vacation memories are magical rather than stressful!



CDR David Huang and his family enjoy a day at the pool

Scientist Officers Address Health Equity at the 2022 APHA Annual Meeting & Expo

By CDR Zewditu Demissie, CDR NaTasha Hollis, and CDR David Huang

The American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting and Expo, held from November 6–9, 2022, celebrated the 150th anniversary of the organization. This year’s meeting in Boston, MA, provided a wonderful platform for public health professionals from around the world to come together for the first completely in-person APHA conference since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The theme for this year’s meeting was “150 Years of Creating the Healthiest Nation: Leading the Path Toward Equity.” Three Scientist Officers from CDC’s Office of Minority Health and Health Equity gave presentations across various health equity topics. CDR David Huang, Branch Chief of CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics, provided two presentations as part of a pre-conference learning institute and an additional oral presentation.

Oral Presentations

CDR Zewditu Demissie: Associations Between Lifetime Perceived Racism at School and Past-year Violence Victimization and Suicidality among U.S. High School Students, 2021

CDR Zewditu Demissie: Measuring Disparities in Homicide, National Vital Statistics System – United States, 2020

CDR NaTasha Hollis: Disparities in COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths among People with Disabilities in the United States May 5, 2020, to August 31, 2021

CDR David Huang: Healthy People 2030: Data, Targets, and Disparities

CDR David Huang: Exploring Disparities in the Nation’s Health

CDR David Huang: Target-setting Methods in HP2030

LCDR Rashid Njai: Reimagining Public Health Funder Roles to Monitor Health and Public Health Outcomes through Collaborative Partnerships

APHA’s next annual meeting will be held from November 12–15, 2023, in Atlanta, GA. The theme will be “Creating the Healthiest Nation: Overcoming Social and Ethical Challenges.” With such a large Scientist Officer community in Atlanta, we hope that many of you will consider attending.



CDR Zewditu Demissie presents her findings on homicide disparities

My Recovery from Burnout

By LCDR Sharoda Dasgupta

My name is LCDR Sharoda Dasgupta and I am recovering from severe burnout. Here is my story.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the whole experience of having our two young kids (then, aged 1 and 3 years) home for 5+ months definitely brought us together, but it took a toll on us. My husband was indefinitely deployed through his division at CDC, and I had a responsibility to deploy regularly as a USPHS Commissioned Corps Officer. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I was deployed by my agency a total of six times.

It felt great to give back – at first. I felt like I was contributing to the massive efforts to control the pandemic. And I was. But with each successive deployment, my sense of resilience began to wane. It began taking longer to recharge, and with shorter times between deployments, I often didn't get a chance to get back up to 100% before starting my next stint. Somehow, between my fifth and sixth deployments, my ability to completely disconnect from the response once I was off took a nose dive. Even when I wasn't deployed, I was still contributing to work on the response that I was a part of and was often consulted on my areas of expertise. This had been the norm since the beginning, but it took such a toll that my body finally crashed, burned, and shattered, without the ability to know how to put the pieces back together.

During the fall of 2021, I began experiencing severe insomnia. After weeks of suffering, I finally sought care. I climbed the uphill battle of navigating Tricare to seek care. I am happy to report that I am finally to the point where I can process what caused my burnout and how I can prevent it in the future by rebuilding resiliency.

I am sharing my story because I know I am not alone, but I felt alone. If you are experiencing anything remotely close to this, please, please seek care. We all deserve to get the care we need to maintain good physical, mental, and emotional health. Mental health is health.

I believe COVID and other deployments (e.g., unaccompanied minors at the border, mpox) are depleting our reserves. And even though we should all be doing our part for the greater good, because that is literally what we all signed up for, we have the autonomy—and the right—to take a stand and say we need a break from it all so we can practice good self-care. When the pandemic first started, we had to put many of our self-care priorities aside to work for the greater good. Now, two and a half years in, it's time to prioritize our own health. We are all worth it. And we're better people—and public health workers—for it.

If it is helpful for others, I'd like to share a few lessons I've learned during my journey.

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My Recovery from Burnout

By LCDR Sharoda Dasgupta

Rest is as essential as work.

The value of rest cannot be overstated. No one can put 100% of their efforts into all facets of their life, 100% of the time. This was difficult for me to remember during a time when my husband and I were both deployed (through our agency) to the COVID-19 response and our young, vulnerable toddlers were home with us while we were trying desperately to keep some semblance of normalcy for them and us. No one, and absolutely no one, got rest during that time. Now, looking back, I wonder how we came out on the other side. And now that our “all hands on deck” situation has changed back to readiness to deploy during our on-call months, we have some breathing room to rest and recharge.

I am finding that allowing myself an hour each day to devote to my own needs is essential for daily recharging. That may look different each day. One day, it may be that I go for a 30-minute bike ride and spend another 30 minutes talking to a friend. Another day, it may involve spending 45 minutes reading and another 15 minutes going for a brisk nature walk. But each day, I try to take an hour for myself to do something that brings me joy. On days when I find myself short of time, I spend as much as I can for myself—whether it’s 5 minutes or 15 minutes of quality time for myself.

Times of transition have been important for me, as well. When we were working in the office full time, it was easy to leave work at work and transition to picking up the kids at daycare and spending time with family. Boundaries were more clear cut. That’s certainly not the case now. Even though I continue to work from home on a routine basis, I ritualistically end my work day by slamming my laptop shut, turning off the lights, and declaring, “I’m done!” Whenever possible, I listen to music, exercise, or do something that brings me joy for at least 15 minutes before I head to daycare to start the next part of my day. Similarly, I try to take at least 10 minutes for myself in the morning when eating breakfast before starting my work day. On most days, I start with a nice cup of tea and a big breakfast that I can enjoy while listening to part of a podcast.

Relying on your “village” is essential for your family’s health and well-being.

I am continuing to learn this lesson, but it is an important one. Human beings are inherently social, and we are not meant to be isolated for long periods of time. Social connection is essential for our health and well-being. VADM Vivek Murthy explores this in depth in his recent book titled, [“Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World.”](#)

Our loved ones upon whom we rely during times of joy and sorrow are essential not just for our individual well-being, but for the health and well-being of our community. In this advanced technological age where so much of our social interaction occurs online—particularly on social media—our intimate connection with others can get lost. I am now reconnecting with those who mean the most to me, and it has been an important reminder of what brings me joy.

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My Recovery from Burnout

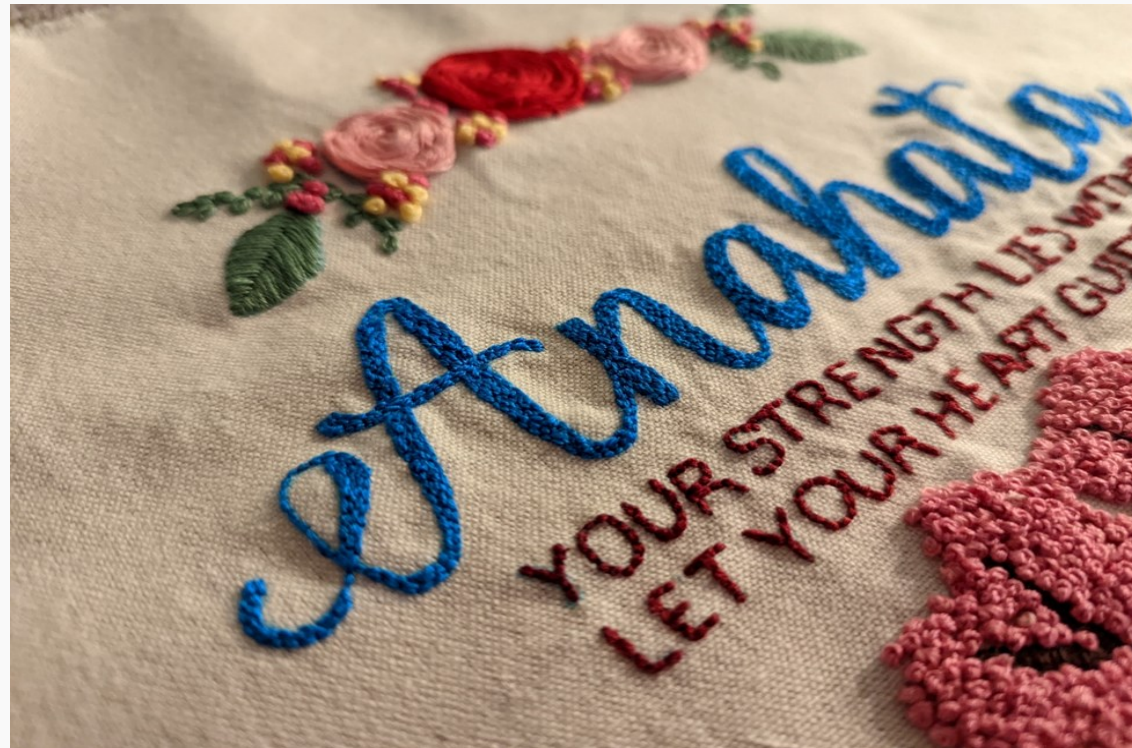
By LCDR Sharoda Dasgupta

Living your life according to your values will naturally help you prioritize what is important to you.

Shortly after my body's acute reaction to burnout, I stumbled upon an [article](#) on the importance of mental health and understanding one's limits in ensuring the state of our health and well-being. The article, written by pediatrician Whitney Casares, applauds Simone Biles for understanding her own physical and emotional limits at the Olympics and taking a stand to put herself first. Similarly, we are all better USPHS Commissioned Corps Officers when we put our own health first. In the words of Dr. Casares, "when we stand up for our mental health, we're better [parents], better employees, partners, friends, and honestly, all-around better humans." I was amazed by this perspective, and eventually read her book, "[The Working Mom Blueprint: Winning at Parenting Without Losing Yourself](#)." This book is endorsed and published by the American Academy of Pediatrics and contains practical advice on reprioritizing your life to maintain more balance.

Reading this book made me realize that reprioritizing different spheres of one's life is merely a start. Perhaps the more important task for me to tackle was to remember what my values are and ensure that the way in which I am living my life is authentic and aligns well with those values. During my acute stage of burnout, I questioned whether being a USPHS Officer aligns well with my life's values, given that much of my work on multiple deployments contributed to what happened.

Figuring out my life's mission did take some time and thought. But once I had that under my belt, the rest of my life started to fall into place quite easily. I could cut what did not resonate with me. I could concentrate on what I valued the most. Setting boundaries based on my priorities felt easier. But most of all, it made me realize that I am not defined by what I do on a daily basis; instead, I am defined by my values. I may identify as a mother, a wife, a friend, an epidemiologist—but none of these roles solely define me.



An embroidery piece that LCDR Dasgupta designed and created for her now 4-year-old daughter. This piece took about 6 weeks to complete, and working on it brought her much joy.

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My Recovery from Burnout

By LCDR Sharoda Dasgupta

For instance, one of the most important tenets of my life is to engage in activities that bring me joy, so I have the opportunity to rest and recharge enough to carry out other integral parts of my life's mission (e.g., directing my strengths and passions towards bettering the world). Six years ago, that meant running long distance and traveling around the world. Now it means swimming, practicing yoga, and creating beautiful embroidery pieces. The minute I start defining myself by these activities—instead of my values—I set myself up for disappointment and failure when circumstances inevitably change.

So, how does being a USPHS Officer align with my life's values? The opportunity to contribute to efforts to protect other Americans from health threats aligns with my life's mission. The opportunity to connect with other USPHS Officers through our PAC on issues important to me, including women's health and mental health, brings me joy and empowers me as an Officer and a person who is passionate about public health. But being a USPHS Officer does not define me. Rather, being an officer is a wonderful way for me to carry out my life's mission, as long as I am able.

Note: This article was originally submitted in July 2022 but was updated in April 2023 for publication.



An embroidery piece that LCDR Dasgupta designed and created for her now 4-year-old daughter. This piece took about 6 weeks to complete, and working on it brought her much joy.

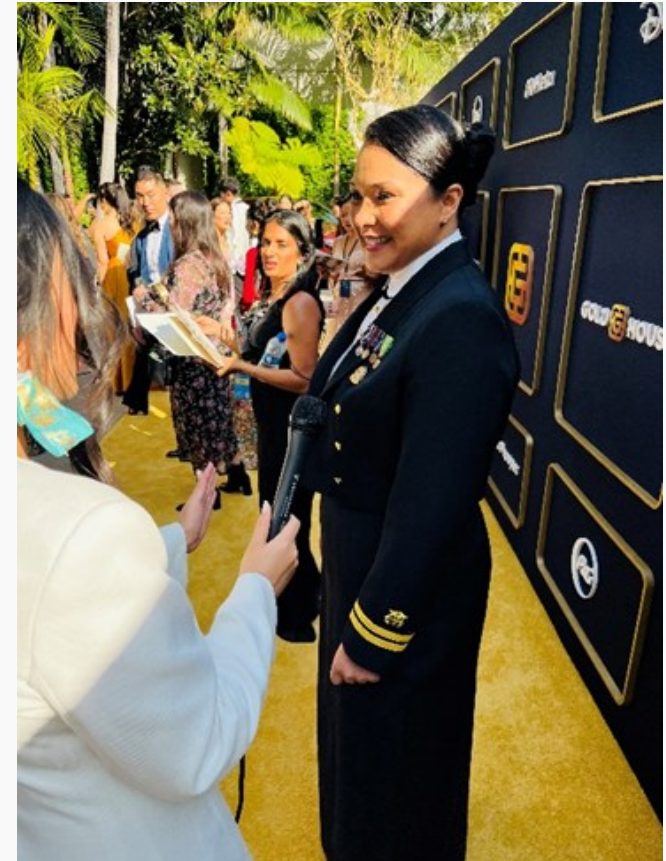
Other Duties as Assigned: Walking a Red Carpet

By LCDR Xinzhi Zhang

LCDR Adi Rosario would have never thought that other duties as assigned would involve walking a red carpet. On May 21, 2022, LCDR Rosario was tasked with representing the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the “*We Can Do This*” campaign at the Gold House Gala in Los Angeles, CA, which honored the most influential Asian and Pacific Islander figures of the past year. She answered media questions eloquently and provided wonderful remarks on stage before an impressive guest list of more than 500 distinguished guests, including Mindy Kaling, Michelle Yeoh, Henry Golding, Daniel Dae Kim, Ashley Park, Chloe Kim, and more.

Since her time at the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), LCDR Adi Rosario has been involved in agency and Department media activities alongside NIMHD’s Director, Dr. Eliseo Perez-Stable. She has participated in numerous educational outreach events and has been featured in the NIH Salud webpage for Spanish speakers in videos encouraging participation in clinical trials and research. Being half Cuban and Chamorro from the island of Guam, she has always enjoyed the opportunity to support her communities.

Since joining the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Health, she has become increasingly acclimated to providing radio and podcast interviews, delivering opening and keynote remarks, and issuing public service announcements in both English and Spanish. Since 2020, her media work has all been in support of the HHS COVID-19 Public Education Campaign, *We Can Do This*. The campaign is driven by health communication science and provides tailored information for at-risk groups. Messages are specially designed to reach diverse populations with the help of a nationwide network of trusted partners that facilitate extending the public health messaging deeper into minority communities.



LCDR Rosario (LT at the time of the event) being interviewed on the gold carpet.

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Other Duties as Assigned: Walking a Red Carpet

By LCDR Xinzhi Zhang

Gold House is a non-profit collective of changemakers aimed at unifying the AANHPI community and championing greater representation and socioeconomic equity. They have been a significant partner in promoting the HHS *We Can Do This* campaign. Gold House hosted its inaugural Gold Gala and requested the attendance of an HHS representative. LCDR Rosario never imagined the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs would have offered her such an opportunity. “Despite all the media activities I had participated in, nothing could have ever prepared me for this. This truly was out of my lane. I’m well versed in presenting to scientists and/or officers. I’ve never had to hold the attention of a room full of celebrities. I was exceptionally nervous and felt the weight of representing [HHS] as well as the Corps, but I accepted, took it all in, and tried to grow from the experience.” LCDR Rosario proudly represented HHS in uniform that night and celebrated this unique and impactful opportunity to support the AANHPI community.



LCDR Rosario (LT at the time of the event) providing remarks on stage on behalf of HHS.



LCDR Rosario (LT at the time of the event) being interviewed on the gold carpet.

Deployment Narratives: LCDR Jorge Muñiz Ortiz

After a delay in soliciting deployment narratives due to an update in process, we are pleased to share two interviews completed before the pause. We encourage officers to submit their narratives to share the many experiences and high-visibility deployments that have taken place in 2021—2023. Complete the fillable form [here](#) and submit to adelaida.rosario@hhs.gov. Details are available on the [SciPAC Deployment Narratives webpage](#).



LCDR Jorge G. Muñiz Ortiz

Investment Oversight Advisor at HRSA

What was the mission of your deployment?

I deployed to the HHS Secretary's Operation Center (SOC) from February 6—19, 2020. I was assigned to the Resource Coordination Section. Our mission was to ensure personnel receiving repatriated American citizens or legal residents being flown from China had the resources necessary to accomplish the mission.

What was your role during this deployment? What skills did you use?

My role was to receive "Request for Resources" sent by field logistics Officers and identify the HHS personnel that could fulfill the requests. Once identified, the requests were forwarded to HHS personnel that could acquire and deliver the resources. I used my communication and organizational skills to fulfill the mission.

Was this your first deployment? How did you prepare for the deployment?

No, this was not my first deployment. I prepared by asking my mentors what I could look forward to and communicating with other Officers who were already deployed to this mission to prepare better for the mission.

Do you have any advice or “pearls of wisdom” for fellow officers who are being deployed or are interested in deploying?

Always be ready for deployment by packing the necessities and being flexible. Follow the chain of command. Do the work without complaining and without thinking of what's in it for you.

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Deployment Narratives: LCDR Jorge Muñiz Ortiz

What was the most important thing you learned during this deployment?

I learned how the SOC is run [differently, with increased staffing] during an emergency response.

What were some of the key challenges that you experienced?

Not having answers to some questions sent from the field. Being the resource for items and personnel for various geographical locations.

What did you enjoy the most (e.g., favorite memory) about this deployment?

The relationships I formed with other PHS Officers, SOC personnel, and Officers from other uniformed services.

What would you consider to be your major accomplishment stemming from this deployment?

My major accomplishment from this deployment was that I was able to fulfill the needs of federal personnel in the field by making sure they received the necessary supplies for them to complete their mission.

Were there any classes or trainings that helped you in your deployment?

No, there were no classes or trainings that helped besides what we learned at OBC. I was trained to do this job during the actual deployment by the Officer I was back filling for, other logistics Officers, and the section chief.

How was your post deployment/reintegration experience? Was it a smooth transition back to your daily activities?

I took two days of leave after ending my deployment and reintegrated smoothly.

Please feel free to share anything else regarding your deployment to highlight your experiences or to increase the readiness of fellow officers.

For this kind of deployment (working in the Resource Coordination Branch at the SOC) I would try to identify a standard operating procedure (SOP) as quickly as possible, or draft one if there's not one, so that the process is clear. This will allow the mission to proceed at a somewhat normal pace. Also, I would recommend being ready and open to change the processes as the deployment moves along. I learned some of the processes as time went along, but it's better to learn everything [early].

Deployment Narratives: CDR Wei Guo



CDR Wei Guo

Deputy Section Chief at FDA

What was the mission of your deployment?

The mission was to set up the Incident Management Team (IMT) site at Dobbins Air Reserve Base in Marietta, Georgia. My deployment was from March 9 to March 23, 2020. This site hosted about 400 passengers from The Grand Princess cruise ship in California. Some of them tested positive during the quarantine and transferred to medical facilities, and others were released after two weeks of stay.

What was your role during this deployment? What skills did you use?

I participated and worked with others to set up the local IMT Command Center on the Base. I was the Deputy Section Chief of Admin/Finance, and my many years of training in PHS and emergency response paid off. It also put my response management skills, communication skills, and expertise of working on data and information to the test.

Was this your first deployment? How did you prepare for the deployment?

No, I have been deployed many times, as Admin/Finance Officer and in many other roles. Keeping up with PHS and FEMA trainings helped to prepare for this deployment, but in general, the best trainings I have gotten have always been during deployments themselves.

Do you have any advice or “pearls of wisdom” for fellow officers who are being deployed or are interested in deploying?

Most deployments tend to be stressful, so keep calm and cool, be observant, make a daily to-do list, prepare to meet the challenge, and be confident.

What was the most important thing you learned during this deployment?

You can't be perfectly prepared for a deployment, and they are rarely planned without faults or run precisely. The same is true for this one. Be adaptable, flexible, resourceful, and make do of what you have and can. We faced many obstacles during the IMT set up and operation, such as no internet service, lack of printing capability, etc., but we managed and did a successful job of completing the mission.

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Deployment Narratives: CDR Wei Guo

What were some of the key challenges that you experienced?

Protecting others while protecting oneself and keeping the fear at bay while remaining aware of the danger of becoming infected.

What did you enjoy the most (e.g., favorite memory) about this deployment?

I enjoyed the quick buddy-forming and friendship we shared during the two-week deployment. We had a good time both on and off-duty. We shared life experiences, cared for each other, and looked forward to the next time together.

What would you consider to be your major accomplishment stemming from this deployment?

We responded to the call at the earliest time, contributed to the mission to host the possible COVID-19 patients in the quarantine facility, and showed the public that we are a reliable and courageous force during public health emergencies.

Were there any classes or trainings that helped you in your deployment?

Although you can learn all the lessons in the classroom or online, the most important lessons will come from what you learn in the field.

How was your post deployment/reintegration experience? Was it a smooth transition back to your daily activities?

Self-quarantined for two weeks. Slept 18 hours straight. Felt the warmth when the Corps Care unit called.

Be sure to keep up with the [SciPAC Deployment Narratives webpage](#). Read about Scientist Officers' latest deployment experiences and share your own!

DC Region Scientists Winter Holiday Social

By LCDR Adi Rosario

On December 10, 2022, the Winter Holiday Social was held at the Gaylord National Resort in Oxon Hill, MD. CDR Michelle Tsai and LCDRs Jorge Muniz Ortiz, Israel Cross, and Adi Rosario along with their families enjoyed several holiday-themed activities and events in the resort, as well as spending time in the beautiful indoor atrium. It was a wonderful way to end the year together. We hope to see more familiar faces at upcoming socials!



From left to right: CDR Tsai, LCDRs Rosario, Muñiz Ortiz, and Cross



CDR Tsai and her spouse

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DC Region Scientists Winter Holiday Social

By LCDR Adi Rosario



LCDR Muñiz Ortiz and his family



LCDR Cross and his family

SciPAC Fist Bump

By LT Kerui Xu, LT Dianca Finch, LCDR Olivia McGovern, and LT Amanda Hott



LCDR Bill Davis

LCDR Bill Davis served as an invited speaker at the 2022 International Society of Infectious Disease (ISID) Conference and chaired a scientific session on respiratory infections at ISID. Since the SARS CoV-2 pandemic and successes with using influenza surveillance platforms for SARS CoV-2 surveillance, there has been increased interest globally in pan-respiratory disease surveillance. LCDR Davis's presentation on "pan-respiratory disease surveillance in Southeast Asia" provided a short history of 70 years of the global influenza surveillance system; demonstrated the impactful work of his team on pan-respiratory disease surveillance in Bangladesh, Thailand, and Laos; discussed the justifications necessary for expanding influenza surveillance; covered the approaches to improve performance monitoring of surveillance sites; and highlighted ways forward for pandemic surveillance and emerging infections. At the ISID Conference, approximately 2,500 professionals, including leading scientists, clinicians, public health officials, and allied health professionals from over 100 countries came together to share world-class expertise to address global health challenges.

Congrats again LCDR Davis on your scientific contributions!

SciPAC Fist Bump

By LT Kerui Xu, LT Dianca Finch, LCDR Olivia McGovern, and LT Amanda Hott



LT Jueichuan (Connie) Kang

Congratulations to LT Jueichuan (Connie) Kang for her presentation at the 2022 Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Validation of Alternative Methods (ICCVAM) Public Forum. LT Kang was invited to present her research investigating the potential harms caused by e-cigarettes following her publication in *Toxicology and Applied Pharmacology* on the use of *in silico* approaches to identify DNA damage from flavor chemicals and tobacco byproducts in e-cigarettes. LT Kang serves as a representative for the FDA Center for Tobacco Products (CTP) on the ICCVAM committee composed of distinguished scientists from 17 federal agencies. The ICCVAM promotes the advancement of alternative methods to reduce and replace animal testing and fosters communication among international stakeholders at the annual Public Forum across government, academia, industry, and advocacy groups. LT Kang's presentation highlights FDA/CTP's progress in alternative methods, as well as FDA and USPHS' commitments to protecting public health.

Congrats again LT Kang on your scientific achievements!

SciPAC Fist Bump

By LT Kerui Xu, LT Dianca Finch, LCDR Olivia McGovern, and LT Amanda Hott



LT Andres Wong-Sam

We recognize and congratulate recently-commissioned officer LT Andres Wong-Sam for being selected to participate in the CDC Director's Debrief, where Laboratory Leadership Service (LLS) and Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) participants shared their reasons for joining the programs. LLS is a flagship CDC program that transforms health professionals into future public health laboratory leaders. With 9 years of experience as an HIV molecular biologist, LT Wong-Sam joined LLS to receive a crash course in public health. He was commissioned as a USPHS Commissioned Corps Officer at the beginning of LLS and is assigned to the CDC's Division of High Consequence Pathogens and Pathology, where he performs applied public health research. He recently helped pass a CLIA laboratory inspection and presented a poster on antigen stability at the 2023 CDC Laboratory Science Symposium. The CDC Director's Debrief video in which he was featured was published on the CDC Director's official Twitter account and encourages healthcare professionals to learn more about these programs (<https://twitter.com/CDCDirector/status/1592257362915532800>).

Congrats LT Wong-Sam on your selection!

SciPAC Fist Bump

Remember to nominate yourself or another Scientist officer for a SciPAC Fist Bump! Whether you welcomed a new family member, delivered an impactful talk or service, or completed a deployment, we want to hear about it!

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

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