

# IFH INSIGHTS

Quarterly News from Rutgers Institute for Health,  
Health Care Policy and Aging Research

## IFH Embarks on Strategic Planning

The Institute for Health convened a strategic planning retreat in Spring Lake this February, bringing together faculty and working group members to shape priorities for IFH's upcoming strategic plan. During the retreat, the Business and Operations; Identity and Culture; Collaboration and Connection; and Mentoring and Learning working groups shared presentations that highlighted key discussions and collective recommendations.

Set for release in early summer, the new strategic plan will provide a roadmap to guide the Institute's continued growth and long-term success.



Nir Eyal, Melanie Rua, Zeeshan Ahmed



Ann Nguyen, Libby Luth, Min Hee Kim, Yanping Jiang



William Hu, Tara Friebe, Mary Beth Ritchey



Colin Coakley



Visual artist, Drew Dernavich



Kim O'Malley, Staci Nelson-Baylor

JANUARY  
-  
MARCH  
2026

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**R** | RUTGERS HEALTH  
Institute for Health, Health Care  
Policy and Aging Research



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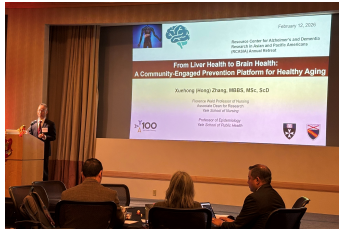


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## Alzheimer's Resource Center Hosts Retreat

The Resource Center for Alzheimer's and Dementia Research in Asian and Pacific Americans (RCASIA) hosted its annual retreat in February in New Brunswick, bringing together researchers, clinicians and trainees from Rutgers Health, New York University and other institutions, as well as community leaders from the NJ-NYC area committed to advancing behavioral, social and economic research related to Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

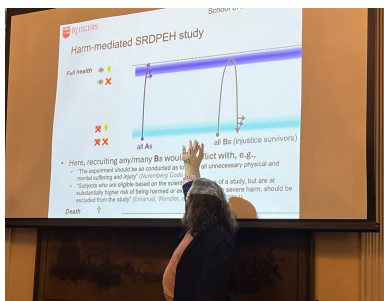
In addition to remarks from William Hu, Dena Schulman-Green and RCASIA core leads, the event featured keynote speeches from Xuehong (Hong) Zhang of Yale School of Nursing and Charlotte Yeh of Yeh Innovation. The retreat also highlighted pilot scientist projects and RCASIA leadership trainees.



## Ryal Presents Research

IFH member Nir Eyal continues to gain recognition for his work in bioethics. He recently presented the Faust Lecture at Wesleyan University on "Disclaiming Research Ethics." The Faust Lecture is part of a project focused on cooperative democracy, democratic self-defense, and repair across political, social, cultural, technological, and medical environments.

In June, he will also deliver the keynote lecture at the 3rd Annual Toronto Bioethics Workshop at the University of Toronto, further highlighting the national and international reach of IFH scholars.



## IFH Members Awarded by Rutgers Health

Four members of the Rutgers Institute for Health were recognized with prestigious Rutgers Health Chancellor Awards, highlighting the depth of talent and leadership across the institute.

Joel Cantor, Director of the Center for State Health Policy, received the Lifetime Distinguished Achievement Award, honoring 25+ years of commitment to policy research. Karen Connaughton, Director of Business Administration, received the Lifetime Distinguished Service Award for 35+ years of dedication to IFH.

Greta Bushnell, assistant professor and PETS core member, earned the Excellence in Clinical or Health Sciences Research Award - Early Career, and Jose Nova, Associate Director of Data & Analytics at CSHP, received the Staff Sustained Service Award.

Together, these awards reflect IFH's broad impact across research, service, and leadership within Rutgers Health.



Jose Nova, Joel Cantor, Greta Bushnell, Karen Connaughton at the Chancellor Award ceremony

## Bates Selected for Yale Training

Congratulations to PETS core member, Benjamin Bates, for his acceptance into the 2026 fellowship cohort for the National Cancer Institute-funded Transdisciplinary Research on Energetics and Cancer (TREC) Training Workshop.

The highly competitive week-long workshop to be held in June at Yale University brings together early-career basic, clinical, and population science researchers and experts in the field to build capacity in transdisciplinary competencies focused on energetics, including obesity, diet and exercise, and cancer. The program offers the only training opportunity on energetics and cancer education in the country.

Dr. Bates' current research in the field of energy balance and cancer uses the RE AIM Implementation Science Framework to enhance adoption of the American Cancer Society Guideline for Diet and Physical Activity for Cancer Prevention among adult survivors of childhood and young adult cancers.

"Regardless of whether patients can access and sustain popular weight loss medications, it is essential that primary care is equipped to support cancer survivors in developing lasting strategies for maintaining a healthy weight and lifestyle," said Bates.

## Lenert Delivers AI Event Keynote

Leslie Lenert, Director of the Center for Biomedical Informatics and Health AI, gave the keynote lecture on “AI’s Impact on Research and Society” at the recent Research Reimagined: AI’s Transformative Power event, part of the inaugural University Librarian’s Symposium Series.



The program brought the Rutgers community together to explore the growing role of artificial intelligence in higher education. With conversations centered on AI’s opportunities, challenges, and long term place in academic life, the symposium encouraged thoughtful discussion about how universities can engage with this ever changing technology.

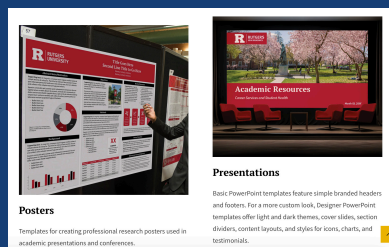


## Resource Corner

Rutgers Communications developed a library of branded resources for consistent and effective communications across digital and print media.

Templates include PowerPoint presentations, flyers and research posters.

Visit [brandtemplates.rutgers.edu](http://brandtemplates.rutgers.edu) or reach out to Nicole Swenarton with questions.



### Posters

Templates for creating professional research posters used in academic presentations and conferences.

### Presentations

Basic PowerPoint templates feature simple branded headers and footers. For a more custom look, Designer PowerPoint templates offer light and dark themes, cover slides, section dividers, content layouts, and styles for icons, charts, and tables.

## NEW GRANTS

Aging Well with HIV through Alcohol Research and Risk Reduction and Education (AWAR3E) Center – Pilot Core / Project 3 / Engagement and Dissemination Core

**Sponsor: Subaward from Yale University**  
**Prime Originating Sponsor: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism**



**Vincent Lo Re III (PETS)**

State-level opioid policies and policies that regulate substance use during pregnancy: a mixed methods exploration of their effects on maternal and infant outcomes

**Sponsor: Subaward from Columbia University**  
**Prime Originating Sponsor: National Institute for Health Care Research**



**Pia Mauro (PETS)**

Loneliness and inflammatory markers as biopsychosocial pathways to AD/ARRD: Analysis of a rapidly aging segment of the US population

**Sponsor: National Institute on Aging**



**Mara Sheftel (CSHP)**

Gestational Antidepressant Exposure and Pediatric Disorders of Motility and Gut-Brain Interaction

**Sponsor: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases**



**Elizabeth Suarez (PETS)**

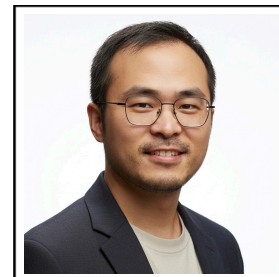
## NEW FACES



**Eveline Camocardi**  
 Research Project Coordinator, Alzheimer’s Research Center



**Sophie Frank**  
 Clinical Research Coordinator, Alzheimer’s Research Center



**Lihui Tu**  
 Postdoctoral Researcher, Alzheimer’s Research Center

## Huang Retires from Rutgers

IFH congratulates Cecilia Huang on her retirement after 22 years of service to Rutgers University and the Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research. Over her tenure, she contributed her expertise across multiple IFH centers, including the Center for State Health Policy, Center for Health Services Research, and, most recently, the Center for Pharmacoepidemiology and Treatment Science.

Cecilia’s remarkable contributions, focused on data management and statistical analyses of major claims databases, have supported a variety of research studies on mental health, drug safety, aging, and health disparities. Her expertise and mentorship have made a lasting impact on the Rutgers research community.

Tobias Gerhard, Director of the Institute, said, “I was fortunate to work closely with Cecilia for more than 15 years. Her remarkable skillset, sharp thinking, and attention to detail will be greatly missed, not only by me, but by many colleagues at Rutgers and our research collaborators across the country. She was a wonderful colleague, mentor to many students and data analysts, and a true role model at the Institute.”

Joel Cantor, Director of the Center for State Health Policy, said, “Cecilia was the go-to member of the CSHP data analysis team as we were building our capacity to meet the New Jersey Medicaid agency’s analytic needs. She helped mentor our junior analysts, one of whom now leads our data team and another who went on to pursue her doctorate and has joined the Rutgers faculty.

Cecilia’s legacy can be seen in our continued productive partnership with the state and in the people she helped to mentor.”

Stephen Crystal, director of the Center for Health Services Research, said, “Cecilia Huang will truly be missed as a member of the IFH family! Her skilled, meticulous and thoughtful approach to analyzing complex datasets has been invaluable to so many studies at IFH. Her sharp eyes and systematic approach have been invaluable in identifying and solving many challenges with these large and complex datasets, assuring that inferential issues like variable completeness and coding differences are carefully addressed. She has truly been an integral part of so many investigative teams, contributing her well-informed insights and assuring that analyses are rigorous.”

## Upcoming Events

Get more details and check out more events at [IFH.Rutgers.edu/events-calendar/](http://IFH.Rutgers.edu/events-calendar/)



<b>Tues., April 7 12pm</b> IFH & Zoom	<b>IFH Seminar with Johanna Schoen</b> of IFH & Rutgers Dept. of History on " <i>The Pain Debate in Neonatology</i> "
<b>Tues., April 7 1pm</b> IFH & Zoom	<b>CCHH Climate &amp; Health Speaker Series: It's Getting Hot in Here</b> with <b>Aayush Visaria</b> of IFH's Center for Climate, Health, and Healthcare & RWJMS on " <i>BMI = Body Mass Index, or more like Bad Measure Ick</i> "
<b>Thurs., April 9 5:30pm</b> Zoom	<b>Rutgers Health Artificial Intelligence Virtual Seminar Series</b> with <b>Chris Ellison</b> of Rutgers Dept. of Genetics on " <i>Transposons: selfish genetic elements or essential chromosome components?</i> " & <b>Vikas Nanda</b> of RWJMS Dept. of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology on " <i>Finding chemical principles in protein large language models</i> "
<b>Mon., April 13 12:30pm</b> IFH & Zoom	<b>IFH Seminar with Peter Guarnaccia</b> of Rutgers on " <i>The Importance of Studying Cultural Syndromes in Psychiatric Epidemiology</i> "
<b>Mon., April 27 12:30pm</b> IFH & Zoom	<b>IFH Seminar with Jeremy Greene</b> of Johns Hopkins on " <i>After the Single Use: Rethinking the Past, Present, and Future of Plastics in Healthcare</i> "
<b>Thurs., May 7 12:00pm</b> Zoom	<b>Perspectives in Global Health Equity: Distinguished Faculty Seminar Series</b> with <b>Hari Iyer</b> of IFH's Center for Climate, Health, and Healthcare & Rutgers Cancer Institute & <b>Tara Fribel-Klingner</b> of Rutgers Global Health Institute on "Leveraging geospatial analysis for cancer control in sub-Saharan Africa"