

Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences

Weekly Newsletter

FEBRUARY 9-13, 2026



UMass Chan
MEDICAL SCHOOL

WELCOME



We are delighted to welcome **Ruth Opare-Darko** as Clinical Research Coordinator I in the Division of Health Informatics and Implementation Science. Ruth will be working on the Lifestyle Change Implementation Research Network study.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Monday, February 9, 11:00 – 11:30 AM

Live Webinar: OAI CORE Knowledgebase

Join our upcoming webinar: Current State of the Osteoarthritis Initiative (OAI) Data Usage and Introduction to the OAI Knowledgebase, presented by [Dr. Jeffrey Driban](#) (Director, OAI CORE Knowledgebase), Professor of Epidemiology, PQHS.

For questions or support, contact us at oaiknowledgebase@umassmed.edu.
[Register here.](#)



Monday, February 9, 1:00 – 2:15 PM

Gerontology Speaker Series

Presenter: Yalu Zhang, PhD, Assistant Professor, School of Social Welfare, Stony Brook University

Title: Aging in Transition: How Shifting Living Arrangements Shape Later Life

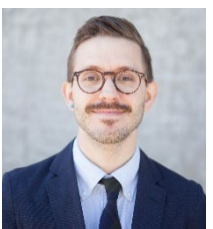
Abstract: Transitioning to living alone is a major life event, but is it a consistent risk factor for depression? Dr. Yalu Zhang will present a longitudinal analysis showing that the impact of living arrangements is dynamic and highly contextual. This series of studies identified a "critical window" of risk two years post-transition and highlights how rurality and family roles greatly affect outcomes. The seminar will also

discuss how older adults use active coping strategies to buffer these shocks and what this means for future community-based practices and social policies.

Bio: Dr. Zhang's research centers on aging, health equity, and social mobility, with a focus on applying advanced quantitative strategies to understand the nuanced dynamics of later life.

Zoom: <https://umassboston.zoom.us/j/94175483404> Password: Boston

For more information contact Qian Song: Qian.Song@umb.edu



Wednesday, February 18, 10:00 – 11:00 AM

Research Methods Meeting

Presenter: Chris Wilson, MS, Quantitative Core Director, Seattle-Denter Center of Innovation

Title: Bridging the Gap: Integrating Patient-Generated Health Data into Healthcare Monitoring and Research

Abstract: The presentation will show preliminary results and the proposed framework for evaluating the utility of continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) data in predicting and understanding diabetes-related outcomes within healthcare systems. We compare and integrate CGM-derived metrics with hospital-based HbA1c values to assess

predictive performance for acute care utilization due to hypoglycemia, as well as complications including diabetic ketoacidosis, neuropathy, and retinopathy. Both traditional econometric models are employed to estimate causal associations, while advanced data science approaches are used to enhance predictive accuracy and identify opportunities for improved monitoring and observational research.

Bio: Chris Wilson is a Senior Data Scientist with the Department of Veterans Affairs and serves as the Quantitative Core Director for the Seattle-Denver Center of Innovation for Veteran-Centered and Value-Driven Care. His work focuses on combining modern data science methods with traditional econometric and statistical approaches to identify the complex phenotypes that drive patient outcomes. Click [here](#) to join.

DEPARTMENT RESOURCE REMINDERS

CONNECT WITH THE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Jeroan Allison and Sharina Person invite you to schedule a 30-minute confidential meeting with them. These sessions are an opportunity for you to discuss any topic of your choice in confidence. Whether you'd like to share ideas, raise concerns, or simply connect, this is an opportunity to speak directly with leadership in a private setting.

If you would like to schedule a meeting with PQHS leadership, please use the scheduling link to reserve your time.

[Sign up here](#) They look forward to connecting with you.

GRANT REVIEW INTERNAL PROCESS (GRIP)

GRIP is a departmental initiative, now in its second year, designed to support and enhance the grant-writing skills of our postdoctoral fellows and faculty (at all levels) as well as improve the overall quality of grant submissions from our department. This program will offer voluntary, constructive reviews to increase the success rates of submitted proposals.

Bi-weekly 30-minute Zoom sessions are held on the first and third Thursdays of each month from 8:30 to 10:00 AM. This year, the program runs from December 4 through May 30. To sign up for a session, [click here](#).

This is a valuable resource, and we encourage you to take full advantage of it to strengthen your proposals. If you have any questions or would like to participate, please feel free to reach out.

Rob Goldberg and Bruce Barton
Co-Committee Chairs
Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences

QUANTITATIVE METHODS CORE (QMC)

The **Quantitative Methods Core (QMC)**, housed right here in PQHS, has been helping investigators turn great ideas into funded, high-impact studies for over 15 years! Our team brings together expert biostatistical faculty, seasoned analysts, and skilled data management staff to support projects of all sizes and across a wide range of content areas. We offer:

- **Study Design & Analysis** – support for clinical trials, cohort studies, case-control designs, and health services research (including claims and EHR data).
- **Grant Development** – guidance in shaping specific aims, analytic plans, and power/sample size justifications.
- **Data & Project Support** – robust data management systems, project coordination, and project management.

Flexible engagement options: You can involve QMC faculty/staff at the level you need—hourly support or percent effort on grants.

QMC Skillsets Available Through the Talent Share Marketplace

- Power/sample size calculations
- Advanced statistical modeling (longitudinal, survival, hierarchical, SEM, etc.)
- Data cleaning, wrangling, and harmonization
- Creation of study databases and REDCap builds
- Statistical programming (SAS, R, Stata, SQL)
- Data visualization and reporting
- Manuscript tables/figures and publication support
- Project and study coordination

Let's connect!

The QMC Directors, Bruce Barton and Sharina Person, are happy to talk with you about your project needs and how they can partner with you.

RESEARCH METHODS MEETINGS

The goal is to share innovative research methods, explore current challenges like reducing inequities, highlight method-focused publications, seek feedback on research problems for grants, and identify collaborators for new or ongoing projects.

Meetings are scheduled on the first and third Wednesdays of each month through the end of June. The meetings are always advertised in this newsletter, but if you would like to receive a calendar invite and reminders before each seminar, please email judi.saber@umassmed.edu to be added to the distribution list.

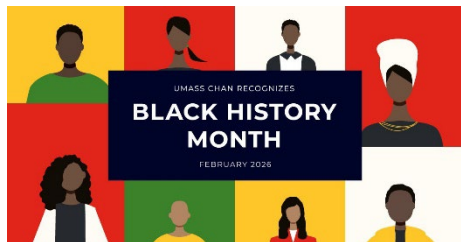
DIVERSITY DIGEST

2026 FEBRUARY Monthly observance: Black History Month Weekly observance: *World Interfaith Harmony Week (Feb. 1-7) *Losar (Feb. 18 - March 4)	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
				National Foundation Day		Rio Carnival (Feb. 13-21)	St. Valentine's Day
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	*Parinirvana Day *Meatfare Sunday	Presidents Day	*Lunar New Year *Seollal *Mardi Gras *Shrove Tuesday	*Ramadan (Feb. 17-18 sundown to sundown) *Ash Wednesday		World Day of Social Justice	
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	*Cheesefare Sunday *Foundation Day	*Beginning of Great Lent *The Emperor's Birthday	Día de la Bandera	Intercalary Days (Feb. 25-March 1)			

Celebrating the Lunar New Year – February 17

On **February 17**, communities around the world will welcome the **Lunar New Year**, a celebration observed across many cultures in East and Southeast Asia, including Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Tibetan traditions. The Lunar New Year marks the beginning of a new year based on the lunar calendar and is often a time for family gatherings, honoring ancestors, sharing meals, and setting intentions for the year ahead. It is both a joyful celebration and a reflective pause—an opportunity to release what has passed and step forward with renewed hope.

This year ushers in the **Year of the Horse**, a symbol of energy, movement, and courage. Traditionally, the Horse represents forward momentum, independence, and the confidence to act with purpose. As we mark this occasion, we invite our community to join in honoring the richness of cultural traditions that shape how people around the world mark time, renewal, and belonging. Celebrating the Lunar New Year reminds us that diversity is not only about difference—it is also about shared human rhythms of reflection, resilience, and new beginnings.



February opens with **National Freedom Day** on the 1st. The observance originated in the efforts of Major Richard Robert Wright Sr., a formerly enslaved man. In 1941, at age 86, Major Wright established the **National Freedom Day Association** to honor President Lincoln's signing, on February 1, 1865, of the 13th Amendment resolution to Abolish Slavery. Congress formalized **National Freedom Day** in 1948 with President Harry signing the bill into law.

The month of February is devoted to **Black History Month**, a powerful testament to Black Americans' resilience, achievements, and cultural legacies amid the horrors of

enslavement and beyond—its roots in Carter G. Woodson's 1926 Negro History Week, expanded through Black-led advocacy to a whole month by 1976.

Here are some great opportunities to dive into local Black history, support entrepreneurs, and build community at UMass Chan, in Worcester, and central Mass:

Thursday, February 12, 10:30 AM – 2:00 PM

Faculty Conference Room

Please join the UMass Chan Diversity and Inclusion Office and community partners for a vibrant Black History Month Celebration featuring a lively vendor fair and pop-up shops highlighting local businesses.

Featured businesses include Big Belly Barbecue, Shoppe 4u Bridal and Prom, Mohrflames, Champayne's Nails, and Unique Creations by Becca. Nataiwi Products, Tide Pool Bookshop, DJ Sha-boo, Bertha's Bag, and more!

Connect, shop, and celebrate.

Explore More Locally:

<https://www.worcesterma.gov/black-history-month>

<https://www.discovercentralma.org/articles/post/explore-educate-through-worcesters-black-history-trail/>



- 🚦 Presidents Day – Monday, February 16th
- 🚦 Patriots' Day – Monday, April 20th
- 🚦 Memorial Day – Monday, May 25th
- 🚦 Juneteenth National Independence Day – Friday, June 19th
- 🚦 Independence Day – Friday, July 3rd (observed)
- 🚦 Labor Day – Monday, September 7th
- 🚦 Indigenous Peoples' Day – Monday, October 12th
- 🚦 Veterans Day – Wednesday, November 11th
- 🚦 Thanksgiving Day – Thursday, November 26th
- 🚦 Day After Thanksgiving – Friday, November 27th
- 🚦 Christmas Eve – Thursday, December 24th
- 🚦 Christmas Day – Friday, December 25th

PQHS Weekly will be sent to all members of PQHS on Monday mornings. The intent is to provide a snapshot of what is going on that week in PQHS and to share our faculty and staff activities with the department. We depend on you to provide the items we need to share. Please send suggestions of events, faculty invited seminars & talks, honors, student thesis presentations, and news – new babies born! – to Judi (judi.saber@umassmed.edu) & Sarah (sarah.yeboah@umassmed.edu) by Friday each week.