The latest news and info from
the Department of Health Policy
at Vanderbilt.

The Ph.D. in Health Policy is here!

After much anticipation, the Department officially began a new chapter of growth this fall when it launched the PhD program in Health Policy and began recruiting prospective students for its Fall 2020 cohort.

Applications can be submitted through January 15, 2020.

Learn more about the program and share details by visiting the website.

Department News
Sayeh Nikpay named among 34 "Power Players" in health care

In November, Sayeh Nikpay, PhD, assistant professor of health policy, was named a "Power Player" in health care by Business Insider. The recognition came as her research into the 340B drug program generates headlines nationwide. Nikpay was included among 34 other industry professionals, including CEOs, policy makers, other researchers and lobbyists.

APHA honors Dr. William Schaffner with distinguished career award

William Schaffner, MD, professor of health policy, preventive medicine and infectious disease, was recognized by the American Public Health Association with a Distinguished Career Award for his years of dedicated service to infectious disease surveillance,
research and public health education. The award recognizes outstanding contributions to the profession and 20 or more years of professional practice.

The fall 2019 Research Into Policy & Practice Lecture Series explored one of the biggest health policy topics today: Medicare For All, with a large audience in person and online through a live video stream of the event, which captured viewers from across the country.

The semiannual lecture and discussion was hosted by Melinda Buntin, PhD, Mike Curb Professor of Health Policy and Chair of the Department. Moderated by Dan Gorenstein (above, second from left), executive producer of the new health policy podcast "Tradeoffs," the panelists included Chip Kahn, President and CEO of the Federation of American Hospitals (above, third from left), and Carol Paris, MD, a retired psychiatrist and past president of Physicians for a National Health Program (above, right).

Read more about the event, see photos and watch the recorded live stream by visiting the Department website.
Emerging Infections Program celebrates 20 years

In September, the Tennessee Emerging Infections Program celebrated its 20th anniversary with a special Research Presentation Day that included current research and posters, and a look back at two decades of important infectious disease surveillance and research developments.

Melinda Buntin, PhD, named deputy editor of new JAMA publication

Melinda Buntin, Ph.D., Mike Curb professor of health policy and chair of the Department, in December was named the deputy editor for a new online channel published by the Journal of the American Medical...
Association, or JAMA. The new channel, *JAMA Health Forum*, will focus on “health policy and health strategy issues affecting medicine and health care,” according to a news release from JAMA. Read more about the [new journal here](#).

**Research Highlights**

Tennessee’s opening bid for a Medicaid block grant

> “Negotiations ... will shed light on how much the Trump administration is willing to concede in order to claim the block-grant mantle.”

— Melinda Buntin, PhD  
Mike Curb Professor, Health Policy  
Chair, Department of Health Policy


**Melinda Buntin, PhD**, Mike Curb professor of health policy and Chair of the Department, analyzed Tennessee's opening bid to reform TennCare into a block grant program in an October edition of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. The state is negotiating a proposal to change its Medicaid program to a block grant, in which the state would get a larger, fixed amount in exchange for greater flexibility in how it manages the program. Read more about the analysis.

Trends in opioid prescriptions and overdoses in Tennessee

Melissa McPheeters, PhD, MPH, Research Professor, found in a partner study with researchers at the Tennessee Department of Health that prescription of opioids is common prior to a non-fatal overdose, and medically assisted treatment (MAT) might be underutilized in populations who have experienced an overdose event. Read more about this new research.

How to improve EHR and real-time prescription drug info

“In addition to using a more simplified approach to price disclosure, CMS should support demonstration projects that test the benefits of disclosure.”


Professors Jordan Everson, PhD, and Stacie Dusetzina, PhD, offered ideas that would improve the use of electronic health records in sharing
Muktar Aliyu, MD, MPH, DrPH was promoted to professor in November. Congratulations Dr. Aliyu!

Nursing home staffing shows wide fluctuations

For decades, researchers have relied on facility-reported data to evaluate staffing levels at nursing homes. Staffing is associated with quality of care, but facility-reported data can be inaccurate or incomplete.

New Payroll-Based Journal (PBJ) data from 2017-18 offers a fuller picture. Here’s what we found:

Almost all nursing homes met minimum staffing standards for most facilities nearly met the staffing levels that CMS expected based on federal guidelines.

Daily nursing home staffing levels highly variable, often below CMS expectations. Health Affairs. 2019 Jul 1;38(38). 1095-1100.

David Stevenson, PhD, Professor and Vice Chair of Education, found in a study published by Health Affairs in July that nursing home staffing fluctuates widely during the week, and is often below federal guidelines. The study was among the first to use new payroll-based journal data.

Spotlight

Muktar Aliyu, MD, MPH, DrPH promoted to professor

Dr. Muktar Aliyu was promoted to full Professor in November. Congratulations Dr. Aliyu!
Andrew Wiese, PhD, MPH, honored with diabetes research award

Andrew Wiese, PhD, was awarded the Daryl K. Granner Scholar in Diabetes award in November as the most outstanding PhD research fellow for the year. Dr. Wiese helped lead the first study to identify, validate, and characterize a population of patients with Type 2 Diabetes in PCORnet, the National Patient-Centered Clinical Research Network, which helped demonstrate that PCORnet is a powerful ongoing resource for the investigation of the long-term effectiveness and safety of anti-diabetic medications in patients with Type 2 diabetes.
Zorah Taplin, Associate Program Manager

**Zorah Taplin** joined the Department in December as an associate program manager, providing faculty support in our 2525 West End offices. She earned her degree in health science with a concentration in public health from Tennessee State University. Prior to graduation, Zorah interned with the Department by supporting the MPH program and with Middle-West TN Clean Fuels.
Dr. Velma Murry, Professor

Velma McBride Murry, PhD, holds the Lois Autrey Betts Chair, Education and Human Development, and was appointed University Professor in the department in August, making her the second woman and first person of color to hold two primary appointments in two departments at Vanderbilt. Just 8 others have the title of university professor at Vanderbilt. Murry received her bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee and her master's and Ph.D. from the University of Missouri-Columbia. She joined the Vanderbilt faculty in 2008.

John Ujwok, MPH, Health Policy Analyst II

John Ujwok, MPH, joined the EIP team at the Village at Vanderbilt as a health policy analyst in August. He relocated back to Nashville after a year working at the Shelby County Health Department in West Tennessee. He holds an MPH from the University of Alabama Birmingham and two bachelor's degrees in cell and microbiology from Tennessee Tech and political science and government from the University of Tennessee.
Audrey Cheng, Health Policy Analyst I

**Audrey Cheng**, began working as an analyst at 2525 West End in June. She supports Jordan Everson, Laura Henkhaus and David Stevenson in their research. She earned a degree in finance and public health from Santa Clara University in Cupertino, California, and interned at Kaiser Permanente.

Jean Bruce, Application Developer

**Jean Bruce**, an Air Force veteran, earned his degree in Management Information Systems at the University of South Florida. He joined the Department in August as an application developer and supports Carlos Grijalva in his research, and he is currently working on the MEPREP and Sentinel projects.
Melinda White, Senior Administrative Assistant

Melinda White, joined the Department in July. She provides administrative support to faculty and staff located at the Village at Vanderbilt. She also provides support to the people and projects within the Emerging Infections Program.

Recent Research


- Everson J, Adler-Milstein J. **Sharing information electronically with other hospitals is associated with increased sharing of patients**, Health services research. 2019 Nov 12.

- Krishnaswami S, Mukhopadhyay S, McPheeters M, Nechuta SJ. **Prescribing patterns before and after a non-fatal drug overdose using Tennessee's controlled substance monitoring database linked to hospital discharge data**, Preventive medicine. 2019 Nov 6;130(130).


Available Positions

The following positions are open to application.

Health Policy Analyst III - 1905185

Upcoming Events
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<td>Deadline for applications to begin Ph.D. program in Fall 2020.</td>
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<td>Jan. 31</td>
<td>Public Health Practicum Colloquium</td>
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<td>COMING SOON</td>
<td>Spring 2019 Research Into Policy and Practice Lecture Series</td>
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Vanderbilt University School of Medicine  
Nashville, TN

Website: https://medschool.vanderbilt.edu/health-policy/  
Follow us on Twitter at @VUHealthPol

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