VANDERBILT HEALTH



Institute for Population and Public Health

BRIDGING RESEARCH AND TEACHING WITH POLICY AND REAL-WORLD SOLUTIONS

IMPACT REPORT 2026

The Institute for Population and Public Health (IPPH) at Vanderbilt bridges research and teaching with policy and real-world solutions.

Our mission is to reimagine and strengthen collaborations among faculty, trainees, students, and the broader Vanderbilt community across both Vanderbilt Health and Vanderbilt University.

The Institute extends its reach across Tennessee, the nation, and the world to translate knowledge into improved health.

IPPH brings together expertise across epidemiology, biostatistics, health policy, implementation science, health services research, biomedical ethics, community health, global health, and other areas.

By fostering collaboration across disciplines, the Institute accelerates the translation of research discoveries into improvements in health care delivery and population and public health outcomes.

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Russell L. Rothman, MD, MPP
Professor of Medicine, Pediatrics, Health Policy
Ingram Chair in Integrative and Population Health
Senior Vice President, Population and Public Health
Associate Dean, Population Health Sciences
Director, Institute for Population and Public Health

Message from the Director

While Vanderbilt Health and Vanderbilt University have a long history of research and education related to population and public health, the Institute for Medicine and Public Health was formally founded by Robert Dittus, MD, MPH, in 2006 to bring together groups across the organization with the common mission of connecting research and teaching with policy and practical solutions to improve individual, population, and public health.

Over the past two decades, the Institute, now known as the Institute for Population and Public Health (IPPH), has grown into a nationally recognized hub for interdisciplinary collaboration, research innovation, and education and training. Through sustained investment in partnerships across Vanderbilt Health, Vanderbilt University, and communities locally and globally, IPPH has helped translate discovery into measurable improvements in health.

As we reflect on 20 years of impact, we celebrate the growth of our faculty, trainees, and collaborative centers, as well as the scientific discoveries that have shaped clinical practice and public health. Looking ahead, IPPH remains committed to expanding its leadership in learning health systems, digital health, implementation science, epidemiology, health policy, global health, artificial intelligence, and other areas to address emerging health challenges.

Russell L. Rothman, MD, MPP

Acknowledging Our Founder



Robert S. Dittus, MD, MPH

Robert S. Dittus, MD, MPH, was recruited to Vanderbilt University Medical Center in 1997 to lead the Division of General Internal Medicine and to help expand the institution's research efforts. Dr. Dittus founded the Center for Health Services Research in 2000 and grew this into a major nationally recognized center with over 100 faculty engaged from across the organization.

In 2006, he then founded the Institute for Medicine and Public Health to unite existing and future public health initiatives across Vanderbilt University and Vanderbilt University Medical Center (now Vanderbilt Health) and to expand interdisciplinary research in key areas. The Institute was established with the mission to improve personal and public health through discovery, training, and service programs designed to protect against threats to health, promote healthier living, improve the quality of health services, and prepare leaders to advance health and health care.

IPPH by the Numbers

250+

AFFILIATED FACULTY ACROSS MULTIPLE DEPARTMENTS, CENTERS, AND SCHOOLS

3 PhD programs

HELPS SUPPORT PHD PROGRAMS IN BIOSTATISTICS, EPIDEMIOLOGY, AND HEALTH POLICY

3 MPH tracks

EPIDEMIOLOGY/ CLINICAL RESEARCH, GLOBAL HEALTH, HEALTH POLICY

$200M+

AFFILIATED FACULTY ENGAGED IN OVER $200M IN ANNUAL FUNDED RESEARCH

350+

AFFILIATED FACULTY LEADING OVER 350 ACTIVE GRANTS

$100M+

OVER $100M IN GRANTS MANAGED BY CORE GROUPS OF IPPH

SCIENTIFIC ADVANCES TO IMPROVE HEALTH

Impact in Health Services Research, Epidemiology, Bioethics, Global Health, Aging, Biostatistics, Health Policy, and Other Fields

By advancing knowledge across key thematic areas, our faculty have demonstrated leadership in translating research into concrete and observable improvements in individual, population, and public health.

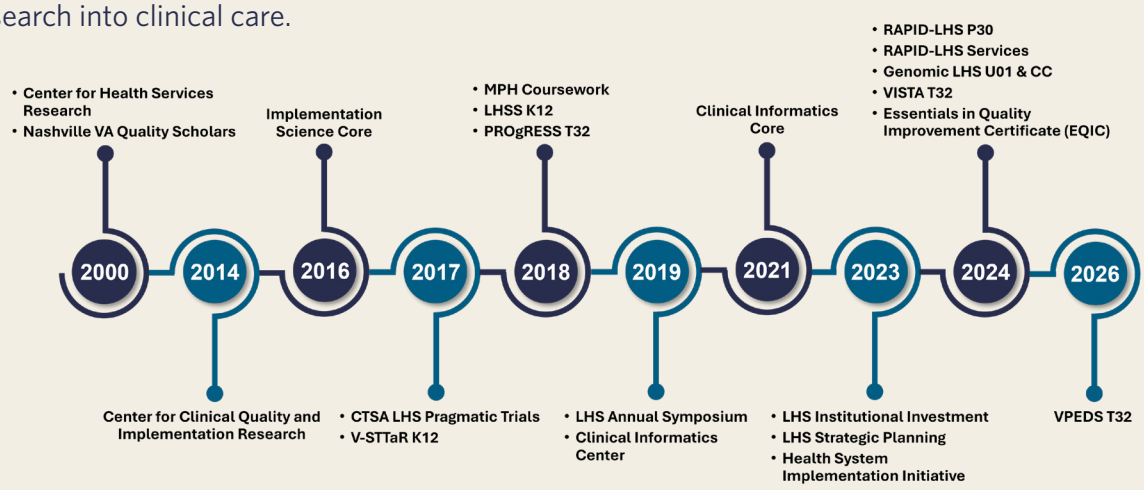
The following 20 examples are intended to represent the scope of IPPH's 20-year impact in health services research, epidemiology, health policy, global health, population and public health, and other areas.

1 Transforming Patient Care with a Learning Health System Approach

A learning health system (LHS) is a health care model anchored in a continuous process of generating and applying evidence to improve patient care. Through a series of purposeful programmatic developments over the past 25 years, highlighted in the timeline below, IPPH and the Center for Health Services Research (CHSR) have been integral to Vanderbilt Health's transformational journey as an LHS and its emergence as a national leader in this space.

Training to build capacity in implementation science, LHS science, quality improvement research, and patient-centered outcomes research has been central to this LHS approach. Faculty in CHSR have led seven externally funded postdoctoral and faculty research training programs related to LHS, as the Center has two internal quality improvement training programs, which provide a strong pipeline for clinicians, researchers, and operational leaders at all career stages. Many graduates of these programs have led and evaluated impactful health system initiatives, on topics ranging from lung cancer screening to hospital discharge transitions of care. The annual Vanderbilt LHS Symposium brings together more than 100 academic and clinical leaders and staff to learn about the latest innovative work taking place across Vanderbilt Health, which integrates research into clinical care.

Recent key initiatives led in part by Sunil Kripalani, MD, MSc, Director of CHSR and Vice President for Health System Sciences, have catalyzed further academic and operational collaboration. Following a strategic planning process, the establishment of RAPID-LHS Services has provided a mechanism for academic consultation or deeper collaboration with health care delivery initiatives, supporting more than 30 projects in its first 2.5 years; this innovative approach is serving as a model for other institutions around the country. Vanderbilt Health was selected to participate in the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI)-supported Health Systems Implementation Initiative — a learning collaborative that funds system-wide LHS capacity building and large-scale implementation of research evidence into clinical practice. Initial projects focus on achieving sustained improvements in pediatric antimicrobial stewardship (47 sites) and adult hypertension control (34 sites), supporting institutional quality metrics. These advancements have been made possible through an institutional investment in LHS and a strong leadership commitment to LHS culture at Vanderbilt Health.



2 Improving the Delivery of Intensive Care to Improve Lives

Within CHSR, the Critical Illness, Brain Dysfunction, and Survivorship (CIBS) Center has led efforts to improve patient care in the ICU for 20 years. Founded by Wes Ely, MD, MPH, the Center has transformed critical care globally by showing that ICU delirium is a dire form of acute brain dysfunction with profound prognostic implications.

Through rigorous cohort studies and clinical trials, the CIBS Center has shown that delirium and deep sedation are predictors of excess death, longer length of stay, higher cost of care, and acquired dementia among critical illness survivors. These findings have fueled major shifts in ICU practice, moving care toward lighter sedation, international recommendations for routine delirium screening in the ICU, and coordinated daily awakening and breathing trials to get patients mobilized and off life support sooner. The Center's work has emphasized the importance of preventing and mitigating unintentional harm resulting from medical care while prioritizing survival and long-term recovery.



Wes Ely, MD, MPH

The Center has played a key role in advancing and disseminating bundled care approaches, including the ABCDEF bundle, which has been translated into over 35 languages and is used worldwide as a basis for modern standard of care in ICU practice. By integrating pain management, sedation optimization, delirium prevention, early mobility, and family engagement into large cohort studies involving over 25,000 patients across the United States, Center investigators have shown that higher rates of ABCDEF bundle implementation predict higher survival, shorter lengths of stay, less delirium and coma, fewer ICU bounce backs, and reduced need for nursing home and rehabilitation center transfers.

3 Elevating the Role of Early Prevention in Respiratory Health

The Center for Asthma Research, which is housed within CHSR and led by Tina Hartert, MD, MPH, has significantly advanced our understanding of how modifiable early-life factors shape the development and severity of asthma. The Center's work has contributed to identifying targets for preventive interventions in early life that are likely to have both short- and long-term benefits on respiratory health.

Through its multidisciplinary work, the Center has helped define the complex interplay between early respiratory infections, such as RSV and rhinovirus, and host susceptibility, clarifying how these interactions influence both immediate respiratory health and long-term asthma risk. By emphasizing environmental and social drivers that are both modifiable and relevant to policy, the Center has generated critical insights into differences in asthma outcomes across individuals and populations.

This focus has elevated the importance of prevention in respiratory health for all people, highlighting actionable pathways to reduce disease burden at the individual and population levels, and has informed national guidelines. By integrating epidemiology with translational science, the Center has been instrumental in establishing causal relationships between risk factors and disease, thereby strengthening the evidence base for effective, scalable interventions.



Tina Hartert, MD, MPH

4 Addressing Health Literacy and Health Communication to Improve Disease Control and Health Outcomes

Vanderbilt Health researchers are internationally recognized for their work in health literacy and health communication. Their work has demonstrated that patients' ability to understand health information directly affects care decisions, medication use, and chronic disease outcomes. Research led by Russell Rothman, MD, MPP, and Kerri Cavanaugh, MD, MHS, has shown how limited health literacy and numeracy contribute to health disparities and has developed patient-centered communication tools that improve self-management and control of illnesses such as diabetes and chronic kidney disease. Complementing this work, Sunil Kripalani, MD, MSc, has advanced the field by creating a measure of medication adherence that is used worldwide in 37 different languages, as well as health communication interventions to improve safe and effective medication use. His work in hospital discharge and care transitions, including medication reconciliation and structured follow-up, has been adopted widely. Together, this work demonstrates how improving communication between patients and health professionals leads to better disease control, patient safety, and health.

5 Preventing and Managing Obesity and Diabetes Through Community-Based Interventions

Research led by Dr. Rothman; William Heerman, MD, MPH; and Colin Orr, MD, has advanced childhood obesity prevention, treatment, and nutrition security in health care and community settings, supported by over $20 million in federal and foundation funding. Through the We Grow Healthy Center, these investigators have positioned IPPH as a national leader in developing family-centered interventions for real-world settings. The Greenlight Plus Trial enrolled 900 US parent–infant dyads and found that children receiving a tailored text messaging/web-based support intervention had a 42% lower prevalence of obesity at age 2. Ongoing studies are expanding evidence-based programs in primary care and community settings. This work has generated nationally influential evidence and advanced scalable solutions that improve nutrition, healthy growth, and cardiometabolic health for children.

Research led by Lindsay Mayberry, PhD, MS; Lyndsay Nelson, PhD; Sunil Kripalani, MD, MSc; McKenzie Roddy, PhD; and Emily Morrow, PhD, has made advances in testing precision and health systems approaches to diabetes management through several NIH-funded studies. This work includes studies of the implementation of social needs screening for adults with type 2 diabetes and the impacts on diabetes management (Drs. Nelson & Kripalani); the REACH Study of mobile phone-delivered diabetes medication adherence support, conducted in partnership with community health centers and federally qualified health centers (Drs. Mayberry & Nelson); ongoing trials applying precision medicine principles to behavioral diabetes care (Drs. Mayberry & Roddy); and studies addressing the needs of adults managing type 2 diabetes and cognitive decline (Dr. Morrow).

6 Advancing Evidence-Based Emergency and Acute Care Through Clinical Trials

The Center for Emergency Care Research and Innovation (CERI) is a worldwide leader in complex, multi-site clinical trials. The Center has played a central role in coordinating large, federally funded studies, including the NIH-funded ACTIV-6 trial to evaluate repurposed drugs for the treatment of outpatient COVID-19. This innovative decentralized platform trial identified and consented participants remotely, sent study drugs to participants' homes, and collected data remotely. The study successfully recruited over 7,000 participants from all 50 states. These efforts have contributed critical evidence to inform treatment strategies during a global pandemic and strengthened preparedness for future public health emergencies.

Additionally, CERI leads innovative research to improve emergency and early inpatient care pathways. Ongoing work includes protocol-driven approaches to the management of acute heart failure, focusing on early interventions initiated within the first hours of emergency department evaluation. These studies are designed to improve symptom relief, enhance decongestion, reduce in-hospital worsening, and ultimately decrease readmissions and cardiovascular mortality. By standardizing and testing early treatment strategies, the Center is helping to define best practices for acute care delivery and to optimize outcomes across health systems. CERI also coordinates and participates in studies of patients with critical illness, airway emergencies, acute musculoskeletal and traumatic injuries, and burn emergencies as part of its heterogeneous and diverse portfolio of studies. In its role as a coordinating hub for large pragmatic clinical trials that address common and impactful clinical decisions, CERI has enabled research that has directly improved patient care.

7 Transforming Biomedical Research Through Innovations in Biostatistics and Clinical Prediction

Frank Harrell, PhD, Professor and founding Chair of the Department of Biostatistics at Vanderbilt University, has had a profound impact on biomedical research, clinical prediction modeling, and modern biostatistics through his development of rigorous approaches to regression modeling, model validation, and statistical prediction. He helped shift the field away from simplistic hypothesis testing and automated variable selection toward principled predictive modeling that emphasizes preserving information, handling nonlinear relationships, assessing model performance, and preventing overfitting. His landmark textbook, *Regression Modeling Strategies*, has become one of the most influential references in applied statistics, training generations of researchers in methods for linear, logistic, ordinal, and survival models. Dr. Harrell also created the widely used rms package for R, providing practical tools for implementing these methods in research and clinical medicine. His work has been especially influential in the development of clinical risk prediction models, prognostic research, and evidence-based decision-making, promoting greater reproducibility, accuracy, and scientific rigor across medicine, epidemiology, and health services research.

8 Understanding How Lifestyle Factors Influence Cancer to Improve Outcomes

Within the Vanderbilt Epidemiology Center, Wei Zheng, MD, PhD, leads research on cancer epidemiology and prevention that has advanced understanding of how modifiable lifestyle and metabolic factors influence cancer risk and survival across varied populations. Through large-scale cohort studies that have engaged hundreds of thousands of individuals and through integrated population-based research, this research program has generated robust evidence linking obesity, diabetes, diet, and physical activity to the incidence and progression of multiple cancers.

By bringing together expertise in epidemiology, biostatistics, and translational science, the program has translated population-level findings into actionable prevention strategies and survivorship guidance. This research has informed clinical recommendations and public health interventions to reduce cancer risk, improve outcomes after diagnosis, and promote long-term health among survivors. More broadly, the program has strengthened the evidence base for prevention-focused cancer control by identifying modifiable risk factors and clarifying their impact across the cancer continuum.

9 Improving Health and Health Care for All Through Targeted Research and Intervention

Vanderbilt Epidemiology Center faculty member Todd Edwards, PhD, leads a research program aiming to understand cardiometabolic disease and differences in health outcomes across populations. Along with other Center investigators, Dr. Edwards has identified key genetic factors that influence the detection and management of disease in different populations. These findings have had implications for widely used clinical measures and have served to inform ongoing research and efforts to adapt diagnostic and treatment strategies to reduce disparities in diabetes complications and promote better health outcomes. The team's recent work on G6PD deficiency has the potential to affect more than 400 million people worldwide living with this condition by providing important insights that may improve disease detection, risk assessment, and clinical decision-making for all.



Todd Edwards, PhD

10 Benefiting Public Health and Guiding Policy with Transformative Research across the Southeastern United States

The Southern Community Cohort Study (SCCS), a cornerstone initiative within the Vanderbilt Epidemiology Center, has enabled transformative research on cancer and chronic disease disparities across the US Southeast. The SCCS includes approximately 85,000 adults and has been conducted for the past 25 years. This effort combines detailed individual-level data on exposures, health behaviors, and social drivers with long-term follow-up, providing a rich platform for understanding the drivers of differences in health care and health outcomes.

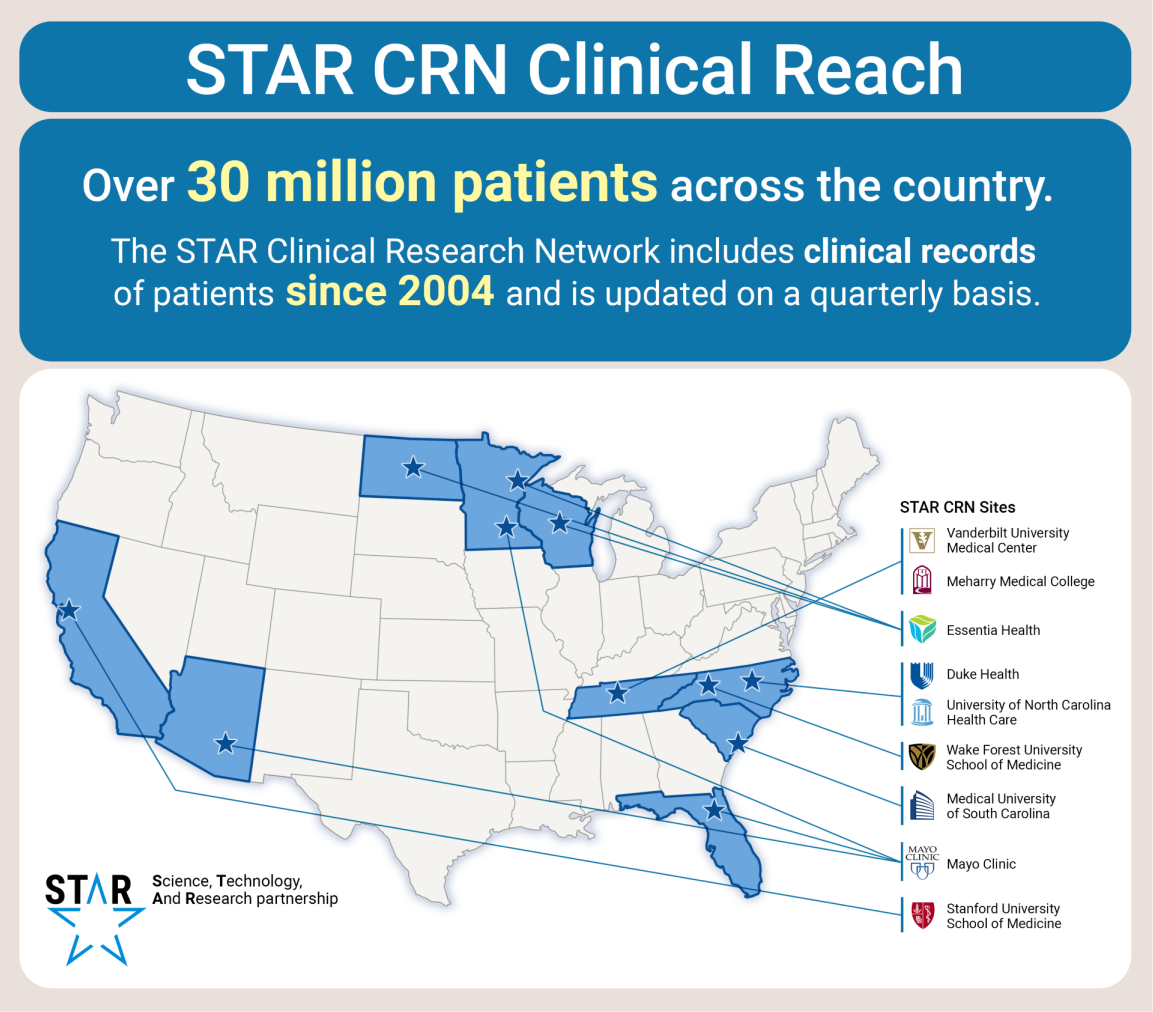
Research emerging from the SCCS and associated programs has clarified how structural, environmental, and behavioral factors intersect to shape disease risk, access to care, and survival outcomes. This work has highlighted the disproportionate burden of cancer and chronic disease in certain populations and identified critical opportunities for targeted interventions. Recent examples include SCCS research linking regular walking to reduced mortality, clarifying the dramatic impact of extreme poverty on mortality, and understanding the association of salt consumption with cardiovascular disease-related deaths. These efforts have informed public health strategies, strengthened evidence to guide policy and resource allocation, and advanced the goal of reducing disparities in cancer and chronic disease outcomes.



- **85,000+ adults in rural areas**
- **addressing causes of common and rare cancers**
- **chronic and cardiovascular disease**

11 Improving Health and Health Care Nationwide by Supporting Patient-Centered Outcomes Research

The Science, Technology, and Research partnership (STAR) Clinical Research Network (CRN) is part of PCORnet®, a national network funded by PCORI, and is designed to support patient-centered outcomes research. Currently encompassing eight CRNs, PCORnet engages over 75 health systems, reaching over 47 million patients seen in 2025, with standardized electronic health records on over 150 million patients. STAR CRN, led by the Vanderbilt IPPH, comprises (1) Vanderbilt Health System, (2) Meharry Medical College, (3) UNC Health Care System, (4) Duke Health Care System, (5) Wake Forest University and Advocate Health, (6) Medical University of South Carolina, (7) Mayo Clinic, (8) Essentia Health, and (9) Stanford University. These systems include scores of academic and community hospitals, hundreds of practices, and electronic health records for over 25 million patients nationally. The CRN has been involved with over 140 funded projects, including comparative effectiveness research, pragmatic clinical trials, surveillance studies, and other projects. Work by the CRN has advanced how real-world evidence research is performed and has led to the completion of landmark pragmatic trials that have leveraged informatics tools, EHR data, community engagement, and other resources supporting innovations in clinical research.



12 Improving Individual and Population Health Internationally

Vanderbilt Institute for Global Health (VIGH) faculty and staff have a long-standing track record of strengthening health care delivery, workforce training, and services to improve patient care and public health worldwide.

In 2007, VIGH launched a nonprofit NGO in Mozambique, in partnership with local clinicians and the government to improve access to HIV care and strengthen the health system. For more than 17 years, under the technical guidance of C. William Wester, MD, MPH, and operations oversight from Julie Lankford, MBA, the program supported on-the-ground program staff as well as clinicians delivering antiretroviral therapy (ART) and related services at 150 health centers in Zambezia province. By 2025, the program had reached over 300,000 people, and the local clinicians and staff assumed leadership and operational responsibility for the program. The program continues to make progress toward HIV epidemic control. In Nigeria, a similar VIGH-initiated project supported clinicians providing HIV care and treatment to 128,000 people from 2008 to 2013, also helping to strengthen the health system. These efforts laid the foundation for VIGH's enduring commitment to long-term solutions and partnerships that empower local communities to improve health outcomes.

On the research front, Michael DeBaun, MD, MPH, led pioneering stroke prevention trials in Nigeria that demonstrated the effectiveness of low-dose hydroxyurea in preventing strokes among children with sickle cell disease. His work has improved access to early diagnosis and ongoing care for thousands of vulnerable children in areas where transfusion therapy is unavailable.

VIGH has trained over 700 trainees through NIH-supported research training programs. Many of these individuals now hold leadership positions in academic institutions, government, and industry worldwide. In total, more than 1,500 scholars have completed short courses, degree programs, or postdoctoral training through VIGH, creating a global network of health leaders committed to improving health outcomes around the world.

13 Advancing the Prevention and Treatment of Tuberculosis Worldwide

Timothy Sterling, MD, directs a team of four program managers and collaborates with over 100 Vanderbilt faculty and international investigators to advance tuberculosis (TB) prevention, particularly for high-risk populations such as individuals living with HIV. Their collective research has developed shorter, more tolerable regimens for latent tuberculosis infection and has informed global clinical guidelines. These achievements have enhanced real-world adoption and reinforced tuberculosis control efforts globally.

With support from VIGH, Dr. Sterling founded the Vanderbilt Tuberculosis Center and serves as its director. The research hub focuses on multisite TB studies, with an emphasis on epidemiology, clinical trials, and translational research. Since the Center's inception in 2012, funding for TB research projects has increased fivefold, from $3.3M in 2012 to $17.4M in 2025, and the number of TB research projects has increased from 10 in 2012 to 47 in 2025.

14 Increasing Medication Access and Reducing Prescription Costs Nationwide

Department of Health Policy Professor Stacie Dusetzina, PhD, has conducted highly impactful studies on how prescription drug pricing, insurance benefit design, and health policy shape patients' access to medications and their health outcomes. Using large-scale claims and administrative data, she has generated influential evidence on how changes in cost-sharing and coverage affect whether patients initiate, continue, or forgo high-value therapies, particularly in cancer care. Her research has clarified the real-world consequences of health insurance benefit design and coverage rules, helping policymakers, clinicians, insurers, and the public better understand barriers to treatment.

By translating complex utilization and spending patterns into actionable insights, this research advances the science of pharmacoepidemiology and health policy evaluation while supporting efforts to reduce financial toxicity and improve equitable access to essential medicines. Crucially, Dr. Dusetzina and her research directly informed the legislation that became the Inflation Reduction Act. This law provided over 60 million Americans on the Medicare program with an out-of-pocket limit for their prescriptions for the first time, making high-cost medications — including anticancer drugs — more affordable and accessible.



Stacie Dusetzina, PhD

15 Improving Drug Safety and Facilitating High-Quality Real-World Evidence

Housed within the Department of Health Policy, Vanderbilt's pharmacoepidemiology program is a long-standing leader in evaluating medication safety using large health care databases and advanced analytic methods. The research program was established by Wayne Ray, PhD, and Marie Griffin, MD, MPH, who established methodological standards for observational drug safety research and informed FDA communications, clinical guidelines, and prescribing decisions. Since then, a number of Vanderbilt Health investigators have advanced medication safety and effectiveness research under their mentorship, including William Cooper, MD, MPH; Walter Smalley, MD, MPH; Katherine Murray, MD; C. Michael Stein, MD; Carlos Grijalva, MD, MPH; Christianne Roumie, MD, MPH; Sarah Osmundson, MD, MS; Margaret Adgent, PhD, MPH; Andrew Wiese, PhD, MPH; and numerous students and trainees.

Vanderbilt investigators have advanced observational drug safety and effectiveness research methods by addressing confounding, bias, and active comparison groups, helping set standards for high-quality studies in the field. The pharmacoepidemiology group has advanced drug safety and effectiveness of medications including antidiabetes drugs, NSAIDs, ACE inhibitors, DMARDs and biologics, antipsychotics and other psychotropics, and opioid analgesics, among others, influencing diabetes, rheumatology, and OB/GYN prescribing guidelines and clarifying many benefits and harms of these drugs in routine care — especially among older adults, pregnant women, and other high-risk patients. This research has had substantial public health impact through safer medication use and assessment of comparative effectiveness.

16 Shaping Public Health Recommendations on Infectious Diseases

The Tennessee Emerging Infections Program, which was established more than 25 years ago, is currently housed within the Department of Health Policy. The Program's team of faculty researchers and staff lead a network of academic medical centers and departments of health across the country in collecting, analyzing, and reporting data and associated findings to the CDC on recurring and emerging disease patterns in populations across the country. The collaborations within this network produce population-level assessments of disease scope and severity and directly inform CDC recommendations on prevention and intervention strategies to benefit population health.



Ellen Wright Clayton, JD, MD

17 Pioneering Robust Ethical Frameworks for Genomic Research and Clinical Practice

Vanderbilt's Center for Biomedical Ethics and Society, co-founded by Ellen Wright Clayton, JD, MD, and Larry Churchill, PhD, MDiv, is a national leader in developing ethical frameworks guiding the responsible use of genomic and health data in research and clinical care.

The Center has played a vital role in shaping national and international standards for genomic research and clinical practice. Its work has informed policies on informed consent, biobank governance, data sharing, and the return of genetic results to patients and research participants. Center faculty conduct pathbreaking work in the eMERGE genetic discovery and implementation project and have conducted transdisciplinary work through Vanderbilt's NIH Center of Excellence in Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications (ELSI) Research — the Center for Genetic Privacy and Identity in Community Settings (GetPreCiSe). Dr. Clayton has served as an advisory council member for the National Center for Human Genome Research, the ELSI Group co-chair for the International HapMap Project, and an executive committee member for the National Academy of Medicine. The Center's contributions have helped establish best practices for integrating genomic information into health care while respecting individual rights and promoting transparency.

The Center's research and policy engagement have been instrumental in strengthening public trust in biomedical research. By addressing ethical challenges related to access, representation, and potential disparities in precision medicine, the Center has helped ensure advances in genomic science benefit all groups. Through scholarship, policy leadership, and training, Vanderbilt's Biomedical Ethics program continues to shape the ethical foundation of modern medicine, supporting innovation while safeguarding patients, participants, and communities.

18 Improving Dementia Prevention, Detection, and Care Through Integrated Research

A defining strength of the Vanderbilt Memory and Alzheimer's Center (VMAC) is its integration of biological, clinical, and population-level research to better understand the mechanisms driving Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD). VMAC has emerged as a national leader in elucidating the role of vascular risk factors in cognitive decline, demonstrating that even subclinical cardiovascular dysfunction can adversely affect brain health and may represent an important target for dementia prevention. Through innovative studies leveraging neuroimaging, biomarkers, genetics, and longitudinal phenotyping, VMAC researchers identify early signs of disease and modifiable risk factors that inform prevention and treatment strategies. These scientific advances, coupled with the establishment of Tennessee's first NIH-designated Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, enable discoveries to be translated more rapidly into approaches that improve dementia detection, clinical care, and health outcomes for individuals and families affected by ADRD.

19 Engaging the Community in Research on Dementia and Cognitive Health

Community engagement is central to VMAC's mission. Through partnerships with individuals, families, health care systems, and community organizations, VMAC promotes brain health, expands research participation, and ensures discoveries in ADRD are translated into meaningful community impact.



Angela L. Jefferson, PhD, and VMAC-affiliated faculty members

20 Transforming Care for People Living with Chronic Pain Through Patient-Centered Research

The Vanderbilt Center for Musculoskeletal Research, founded and directed by Kristin Archer, PhD, DPT, is transforming care for individuals living with chronic pain through innovative, patient-centered research that improves recovery, reduces pain-related disability, decreases opioid reliance through integrated nonpharmacologic care, and enhances quality of life. Center faculty conduct research in orthopaedics, rehabilitation, behavioral health, and chronic pain, including trials assessing interventions to reduce opioid use and to improve health and functional outcomes in patients with chronic pain. Key contributions include advancing understanding of why some patients develop chronic pain and respond differently to opioids, and developing screening tools that help identify patients at risk for poor recovery and chronic pain.

The Center's research has informed psychosocial physical therapy practice; expanded access to mind–body programs such as mindfulness, health coaching, and yoga through telehealth and other innovative care models; improved care during recovery after surgery or injury; and advanced the use of wearable technology such as activity trackers to support functional recovery. These scientific discoveries have made chronic pain care more effective, personalized, and accessible for patients worldwide.



Kristin Archer, PhD, DPT, and team members

WHO WE ARE

The work of IPPH is conducted by its members and affiliated centers, institutes, and programs. This growing community of researchers, teachers, and experts are working collaboratively to address important health care issues, generate innovative hypotheses, and expedite discovery and dissemination of new knowledge. The Institute serves to motivate, educate, and support investigators and educators who will translate new evidence into health care practice, thereby improving personal and community health.





Sunil Kripalani, MD, MSc, MHM, FACP
Professor of Medicine, Health Policy
Director, Center for Health Services Research
Vice President, Health System Sciences

Center for Health Services Research

Founded by Robert Dittus, MD, MPH, in 2000, the Center for Health Services Research (CHSR) develops, implements, and evaluates interdisciplinary solutions to improve health care delivery and health outcomes for patients, families, and the community. CHSR conducts research and advances knowledge to create health care systems that provide care that is safe, timely, effective, patient-centered, and efficient. Our mission is to improve health care delivery and health outcomes for all people through translational research and training initiatives, bridging the gap between evidence and real-world practice.

Health Services Research and the Learning Health System

Upon assuming the role of CHSR director in 2020, Sunil Kripalani, MD, MSc, established development of the learning health system (LHS) across Vanderbilt Health as one of three strategic priorities for the Center. CHSR has been a key player in this pursuit, along with the VICTR Center for Learning Healthcare, the PCORI Health Systems Implementation Initiative, the RAPID-LHS Center, VETWISE-LHS, and the Science, Technology, and Research partnership (STAR) Clinical Research Network.

Notable achievements in this area include the founding of several training programs related to LHS science, deep and broad collaborations across the health system, and the acquisition of several extramural research awards and center grants to support the LHS. A particularly vital achievement was the establishment of the Center for Clinical Quality and Implementation Research (CCQIR) to support implementation science across Vanderbilt Health. The CCQIR was established in 2014 by Dr. Kripalani to serve as a nexus for rigorous research and training in implementation science. In 2024, the CCQIR leadership was transitioned to Carolyn Audet, PhD (Co-Director), Amanda Mixon, MD, MPH (Co-Director), and Lyndsay Nelson, PhD (Assistant Director), with Anna Gallion, DNP, APRN, as director of the Scholarly Series. The Center currently includes 41 multidisciplinary faculty members engaged in research, training, and leadership at the local, national, and international levels. Locally, CCQIR faculty lead weekly seminars and workshops for more than 20 postdoctoral research trainees each year and serve as leaders and collaborators for translating research into practice. Nationally, CCQIR faculty provide leadership for the national NIH-sponsored Conference on the Science of Dissemination and Implementation in Health and co-lead the Genomic-Enabled Learning Health System and the Southeast Implementation Science Hub. Internationally, faculty lead the Implementation Science Core in the IMPAACT Network, as well as federally funded research and training in more than 10 countries, including Nigeria, Mozambique, South Africa, and Greece.

The scale of our work to advance the LHS across Vanderbilt Health is impacting patient and population health. For example, through our work with the PCORI Health Systems Implementation Initiative, CHSR has large projects underway across the pediatric and adult primary care enterprise to improve appropriate antibiotic use in acute respiratory tract infections in children, and to improve blood pressure control in adults with hypertension. Each year, the Vanderbilt Learning Health System Symposium brings together academic and clinical leaders and staff to learn about the latest innovative and impactful work taking place across Vanderbilt Health.

Training the Next Generation of Health Services Researchers

CHSR is committed to developing future leaders in health services research through a robust portfolio of training programs.

A Strong Foundation: Training efforts began with the Nashville VA Quality Scholars (VAQS) program (established in 2000) and have grown to include multiple postdoctoral fellowships and faculty career development opportunities.

Current Programs: Today, CHSR supports several nationally funded training programs, including VAQS, PROgRESS T32, VISTA T32, and VPEDS T32 training positions.

A Vibrant Learning Community: Approximately 25 research trainees participate in weekly Work-in-Progress sessions to refine their research through feedback, as well as a weekly Implementation Science Scholarly Series. Trainees also benefit from biostatistical consulting, peer mentorship groups, internal grant reviews, and other professional development resources.

PROVEN IMPACT: Many fellows and faculty who have completed training through these programs have gone on to successful careers as independent investigators and leaders in health systems.

The CHSR Research Community
Supported Centers and Programs

Program in Unplanned Care
Jin Han, MD, MSc
Michael Ward, MD, PhD

Center for Asthma Research
Tina Hartert, MD, MPH

Center for Health Economic Modeling
John Graves, PhD

Center for Surgical Quality and Outcomes Research
David Penson, MD, MPH

Center for Clinical Quality and Implementation Research
Carolyn Audet, PhD
Amanda Mixon, MD, MS, MSPH

VA Health Services Research Center
Lucy Spalluto, MD, MPH

Critical Illness, Brain Dysfunction, and Survivorship (CIBS) Center
Wes Ely, MD, MPH
Pratik Pandharipande, MD, MSCI

Center for Health Behavior and Health Education
Tom Elasy, MD, MPH
Lindsay Mayberry, PhD, MS

Program in Improving Health Behavior for Families
William J. Heerman, MD, MPH

Center for Improving the Public's Health through Informatics
Michael Matheny, MD, MS, MPH

Center for Women's Health Research
Digna Velez Edwards, PhD, MS

Center for Musculoskeletal Research
Kristin Archer, PhD, DPT

Vanderbilt Center for Tobacco, Addiction and Lifestyle (ViTAL)
Hilary Tindle, MD, MPH

Center for Research and Innovation in Systems Science
Nicole Werner, PhD

Center for Integrative Health Research
Kristin Archer, PhD, DPT

Center for Quality Aging
Sandra Simmons, PhD

Center for Effective Health Communication
Kerri Cavanaugh, MD, MHS

Center for Transplant Science
Peter Reese, MD, PhD

Center for Population Science and Randomized Controlled Trials (V-POLARIS)
Matthew Freiberg, MD

Program for Population Health and Engagement Research
Velma McBride Murry, PhD, MS
Ebele Umeukeje, MD, MPH



Wei Zheng, MD, PhD, MPH
Anne Potter Wilson Professor of Medicine
Associate Director for Population Science Research
Director, Vanderbilt Epidemiology Center
Chief, Division of Epidemiology, Department of Medicine

Vanderbilt Epidemiology Center

The Vanderbilt Epidemiology Center, led by Wei Zheng, MD, PhD, serves as a hub for interdisciplinary, data-driven research aimed at understanding the distribution and determinants of disease and improving population health by promoting collaboration to translate research findings into cost-effective strategies for disease prevention and health care delivery.

By integrating large-scale electronic health records, biorepositories, and population-based cohorts, the Center supports innovative research that spans genetic epidemiology, cancer prevention and control, and global health. Its collaborative infrastructure enables investigators to translate complex data into actionable insights that inform clinical care, public health practice, and policy.

The Center has considerable strengths in international epidemiologic research and training, and it maintains close collaborations with numerous domestic and international institutions, furthering its mission to improve human health. The Center supports a range of epidemiologic training programs for graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and international investigators, helping develop the next generation of leaders in population health research.

Vanderbilt Epidemiology Center faculty investigators represent more than 10 departments and divisions across Vanderbilt Health, with broad expertise that contributes to innovative methods and important scientific discoveries. These faculty members share a common interest in studying environmental and lifestyle factors, biomarkers, and genetic determinants that influence disease risk and progression. Current research areas include the epidemiology of cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, infectious diseases, and reproductive outcomes. Center investigators direct more than 50 NIH-funded research projects, including four large population-based prospective cohort studies with over 225,000 participants. Among these studies is the Southern Environmental Health Study, a large community-engaged research initiative led by Dr. Zheng and Martha Shrubsole, PhD, that examines environmental exposures and their role in the risk of cancer and other diseases across the US South. Additional ongoing projects include large case–control studies of cancer and long-term follow-up studies of breast cancer and childhood cancer survivors.



Susannah L. Rose, PhD
Associate Professor of Biomedical Informatics, Health Policy
Director, Center for Biomedical Ethics and Society

Center for Biomedical Ethics and Society

For over 20 years, the Center for Biomedical Ethics and Society (CBMES) has advanced science, improved care, and shaped the future of health, serving as a national leader at the intersection of ethics, science, clinical care, and health policy. The Center helps ensure that advances in medicine are translated into care that is scientifically rigorous, ethically responsible, and worthy of public trust. Today, CBMES faculty lead or contribute to more than $57 million in externally funded research and have produced over 450 scholarly publications in the past 5 years.

A defining strength of CBMES is its ability to anticipate and address the ethical challenges accompanying major biomedical innovations. The Center has played a nationally recognized role in the ethical, legal, and social implications of genomics and precision medicine, helping shape approaches to informed consent, privacy, governance, return of results, and public trust.

As health care has evolved, CBMES has expanded its focus to emerging technologies and clinical innovations. Faculty are advancing ethical scholarship and evidence-based practice in artificial intelligence (AI), transplantation, genomic medicine, robotic surgery, emergency research, and data-intensive health care. The Center provides practical frameworks for responsible innovation that support patients, clinicians, researchers, and health systems navigating rapidly changing technologies.

CBMES transforms patient care through its Clinical Ethics Consultation Service, which supports patients, families, and clinicians facing complex health care decisions. Combining clinical expertise with high-impact research, CBMES has developed innovative approaches for addressing pediatric, neonatal, reproductive, transplant, surgical, cancer, palliative care, and mental health ethics. Insights from this work inform institutional policy, health care delivery, and national conversations about patient-centered care, extending its influence well beyond Vanderbilt.

Throughout the past two decades, CBMES has demonstrated the enduring importance of integrating ethics into biomedical innovation. Whether addressing genomic privacy, informed consent, health equity, surgical innovation, artificial intelligence, or emerging biotechnologies, the Center serves as a trusted institutional resource that brings together diverse perspectives to address complex problems. As medicine continues to evolve, CBMES remains uniquely positioned to help ensure that advances in science improve health while respecting the values, needs, and trust of the people they are intended to serve.



Muktar Aliyu, MD, DrPH, MPH
Professor of Health Policy, Medicine
Director, Vanderbilt Institute for Global Health
Directorship in Global Health

Vanderbilt Institute for Global Health

For more than 20 years, the Vanderbilt Institute for Global Health (VIGH) has advanced global health through research, training, and international partnerships. Our efforts focus on maternal and child health, noncommunicable diseases, and infectious diseases with an emphasis on HIV. VIGH is expanding its portfolio to include global surgery and data science, while strengthening its focus on cancer, cardiovascular health, and mobile health. Many programs aim to develop and strengthen scientific leadership and research capacity at institutions in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Vanderbilt scientists lead interdisciplinary projects across the Americas, Asia, and Africa, united by a shared commitment to tackling complex global health challenges. With over 125 faculty members from eight Vanderbilt schools and colleges, VIGH operates as an institute without walls, fostering collaboration with Vanderbilt experts and international partners. VIGH educates and trains the next generation of global health leaders and empowers researchers in LMICs to address urgent health challenges and advance global scientific knowledge.

Innovation and creative solutions are essential to overcoming the challenges of delivering health care worldwide. Meeting these challenges demands rigorous scientific study, a multidisciplinary approach, and deep community engagement. VIGH serves as a hub for international health research and education at Vanderbilt, dedicated to improving health and well-being for the most vulnerable, advancing global public health, and making global health local.

VIGH envisions a world where everyone, regardless of location, can thrive in healthy communities through cutting-edge, interdisciplinary research, comprehensive training, and impactful service programs. This commitment to global health is a collaborative effort that unites faculty, partners, staff, and communities to improve health and well-being locally and globally.





Angela L. Jefferson, PhD
Professor of Neurology
Herbert O. and Vineta Christopher Directorship in Alzheimer's Disease
Director, Vanderbilt Memory and Alzheimer's Center
Director, National Institutes of Health-Designated Vanderbilt Alzheimer's Disease Research Center of Excellence
Director, Vanderbilt Interdisciplinary Training Program in Alzheimer's Disease
Vice Chair, Scientific Strategy & Innovation, Department of Neurology

Vanderbilt Memory and Alzheimer's Center

The Vanderbilt Memory and Alzheimer's Center (VMAC) is an interdisciplinary research program dedicated to advancing understanding of risk factors, early diagnostic markers, prevention strategies, and treatment approaches for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD). Led by founding Director Angela Jefferson, PhD, VMAC unites 80 faculty across Vanderbilt Health, Vanderbilt University, Meharry Medical College, Belmont University, and Tennessee State University who conduct innovative research to examine ADRD mechanisms, risk factors, prevention, and treatment.

VMAC integrates biological, clinical, and population-level research to understand how vascular risk factors contribute to ADRD onset and progression. The Vanderbilt Memory and Aging Project (VMAP), the Center's flagship longitudinal cohort study that is now in its 13th year, has followed nearly 900 middle-aged and older adults through comprehensive neuropsychological, state-of-the-art neuroimaging, genetic characterization, and biospecimen collection protocols. Findings demonstrate that subclinical cardiovascular dysfunction harms brain health, reframing cardiovascular screening as an important strategy for maintaining cognitive health with age. VMAP has generated hundreds of peer-reviewed publications and presentations, and its data resources have supported over 20 training grants.

In 2025, VMAC received funding to establish the NIH P30 Vanderbilt Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (VADRC) of Excellence, Tennessee's first NIH-funded Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. Led by Dr. Jefferson and Associate Directors Timothy Hohman, PhD, and Consuelo Wilkins, MD, MSCI, the VADRC further positions VMAC as a regional hub and national leader in dementia research, care, training, and outreach. VMAC's collaborative infrastructure includes national partnerships that enable data harmonization and scientific discovery. Under Dr. Hohman's leadership, the Alzheimer's Disease Sequencing Project Phenotypic Harmonization Consortium aligns data collection across 32 cohorts nationwide, harmonizing over 5,000 variables from more than 100,000 participants. The consortium has supported over 100 publications and provides a powerful platform for collaborative discovery. VMAC also advances workforce development and community partnerships. Together, VMAC and the VADRC provide an integrated ecosystem for scientific discovery, training, and engagement aimed at reducing the public health impact of dementia.



Yu Shyr, PhD
Professor of Biostatistics, Biomedical Informatics, Health Policy
Chair, Department of Biostatistics
Harold L. Moses Chair in Cancer Research
Director, Vanderbilt Center for Quantitative Sciences
Director, Vanderbilt Technologies for Advanced Genomics Analysis and Research Design

Department of Biostatistics

Faculty in Vanderbilt's Department of Biostatistics understand the changing landscape for statistical science. In addition to facilitating biomedical research by providing methodological expertise and by closely collaborating with other scientists and physician–researchers, Biostatistics faculty also serve as leaders in the data revolution. From methodology to application to education, the Department of Biostatistics embraces the concepts of data science and continues to advance the ability to extract evidence from data. Department faculty welcome the challenges and opportunities of the big data era — from the explosive growth in sheer volume of data, to treating unstructured text as quantitative data, to machine learning, to burgeoning applications for artificial intelligence — and look forward to increasingly rapid advances in biomedical knowledge.

Since 2005, the Department of Biostatistics has offered free consulting to investigators from Vanderbilt and Meharry Medical College who have methodological questions about their research projects or published articles. The Vanderbilt Biostatistics Data Coordinating Center, formally established in 2023, provides large-scale biomedical research support across Vanderbilt Health and beyond, including database and dashboard builds, data management and monitoring, and other forms of scientific and technical support.

The Department of Biostatistics hosts a strong graduate training program, which was launched in 2011. To date, the program has conferred 40 doctoral degrees and more than 50 master's degrees.

In 2025, the Department entered into a partnership with Academia Sinica to organize and implement joint initiatives, including an international multiyear symposium series.





David Stevenson, PhD, SM
Professor of Health Policy
Mike Curb Chair in Health Policy

Department of Health Policy

The Department of Health Policy, established in 2013 under the leadership of Melinda Buntin, PhD, is now a dynamic community of 20 full-time faculty whose research spans a wide range of health care and policy issues. In 2023, David Stevenson, PhD, SM, became the second Department chair. Among the Department's most influential areas are pharmacoepidemiology and infectious disease surveillance, where Vanderbilt investigators have generated critical evidence shaping policies on the real-world safety, effectiveness, and cost of medications, as well as protecting millions from disease.

By using large-scale data sources, applying rigorous causal inference methods, and collaborating closely with clinicians, Department faculty have produced impactful studies that illuminate rare but serious adverse drug events, identify barriers to life-saving therapies, evaluate health care costs, and assess the scope and severity of disease outbreaks nationwide. Their work has been widely cited, with impact reaching from informing provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 to guiding clinical practice and contributing to daily public health decision-making during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department contributed broadly to informing policy on COVID-19. In March 2020, the Department established the Vanderbilt Center for Health Economic Modeling, directed by John Graves, PhD. Under the umbrella of this Center, Drs. Buntin and Graves established an ad hoc committee of disease surveillance, economics, and public health researchers to monitor, report, and analyze the COVID-19 pandemic. From March 2020 to August 2021, the committee delivered 12 analyses of near real-time data and policy interventions to the public and to Governor Bill Lee's Unified-Command Group. Carlos Grijalva, MD, MPH, was awarded more than $30 million in federal grants to conduct surveillance and monitor transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in a multi-state collaboration, with findings informing state and federal policy.

Faculty Policy Impact Highlights

In 2018, two Health Policy faculty members delivered testimony to the US Senate HELP Committee — Dr. Buntin on federal health care spending levels, primarily focused on the Medicare program, and Stephen Patrick, MD, MPH, on the impact of the opioid crisis on infants and children. In 2019, Stacie Dusetzina, PhD, testified before the Senate HELP Committee on the rising costs of prescription drug spending, primarily in the Medicare Part D program. In 2022, Dr. Dusetzina's research was included in the development and ultimate passage of the Inflation Reduction Act. In 2023, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services instituted a rule related to nursing home oversight and transparency based heavily on a report co-authored by Dr. Stevenson.



Christianne Roumie, MD, MPH
Professor of Medicine
Associate Director, Education and Training Programs, IPPH
Director, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine Masters In Public Health Program
Deputy Director, Nashville VA Quality Scholars TVHS
Section Head, Veterans' Health

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

IPPH fosters a learning community of faculty, trainees, and students at Vanderbilt, all committed to transforming knowledge into enhanced health care delivery and well-being. Our mission centers on eliminating barriers and uniting teams to innovate and implement new ideas, advancing health care locally, nationally, and globally. IPPH faculty and staff teach courses, support practicums, and mentor student and trainee research projects across various Vanderbilt University degree programs.

Graduate Education Programs

Master of Public Health (MPH)

Master of Science (MS) in Biostatistics

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Biostatistics

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Health Policy

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Epidemiology

Certificate in Biomedical Ethics

Graduate Certificate in Global Health




#VandyMPH
VANDERBILT



Master of Public Health

The Master of Public Health (MPH) is one of ten degrees conferred by Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, and it is Vanderbilt's only public health degree accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), the national standard for excellence in public health education. The MPH program prepares students to address today's most pressing public health challenges through rigorous, interdisciplinary training. Offered in affiliation with the Institute for Population and Public Health, the program features concentrations in Epidemiology and Clinical Research, Global Health, and Health Policy, with flexible full-time and part-time options to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Since welcoming its inaugural class in 1996, the Vanderbilt MPH program has continually evolved to meet the changing landscape of public health. Originally designed to prepare physicians and doctoral-trained professionals for careers in research, academia, and public health practice, the program has expanded its mission in response to growing global and national health priorities. The introduction of dedicated concentrations in Global Health and Health Policy has broadened opportunities for students from a wide range of academic and professional backgrounds, strengthening the program's interdisciplinary approach while enhancing collaboration across Vanderbilt's nationally recognized research and clinical enterprises. As of 2026, the program has graduated more than 400 public health leaders.

"As IPPH celebrates 20 years, we celebrate its lasting impact on MPH students through mentorship, research opportunities, and leadership that have helped shape countless careers and improve public health outcomes."

Annie Smart, Sr. Program Manager, MPH Program

Today, Vanderbilt MPH graduates are making an impact across the health care and public health spectrum. Alumni serve in leadership, research, and policy roles within academic medical centers, government agencies, nonprofit and community organizations, consulting firms, health care systems, insurance organizations, and international health institutions. Grounded in Vanderbilt's commitment to innovation, collaboration, and evidence-based practice, the MPH program equips graduates with the knowledge, analytical skills, and leadership experience needed to improve the health of populations locally and around the world.

MPH Alumni Making an Impact



Jay Bala, DrPH, MPH, Senior Director of Strategic Analytic and Informatics Initiatives, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene



Taylor Carty, MPH, Senior Associate of Foundation Partnerships, UNICEF USA



Hannah DuChanois, MPH, Chief Product Officer, U.S. Employer Sector, Cigna Healthcare



Mary-Margaret Fill, MD, MPH, Interim State Epidemiologist at State of Tennessee



Mimi Huizinga, MD, MPH, Vice President, Global Franchise Head for Late Development Oncology, AstraZeneca



Rachel Idowu, MD, MPH, Director of Bioresponse, National Security Council



Muna Muday, MPH, Director of Programs, The Addis Clinic



Kathy Neuzil, MD, MPH, Director of the Polio Program at the Gates Foundation



Neal Patel, MD, MPH, Chief Informatics Officer, HealthIT, Vanderbilt Health



JW Randolph, MPH, Deputy Commissioner for Public Health



Rashad Taylor, MPH, Division Chief, Maryland Department of the Environment



Michael Warren, MD, MPH, FAAP, Chief Medical and Health Officer, March of Dimes, Pediatrician

Health Policy & Health Services Research PhD Program

In 2020, the Department of Health Policy launched the PhD in Health Policy & Health Services Research program. Shaped by the vision and efforts of Melinda Buntin, PhD, and David Stevenson, PhD, SM, the program was implemented with generous support from Vanderbilt Health and engagement from schools across Vanderbilt's campus. Stacie Dusetzina, PhD, was selected as the program's first director, and the PhD program continues to thrive under her leadership. The program includes 21 mentoring faculty, spanning three schools and six departments across Vanderbilt University.

The first cohort welcomed three students in August 2020. As of Fall 2026, 24 students have matriculated, with three to four students per cohort. There are currently 15 students enrolled; 54% enter with a master's degree, and 63% enter with relevant health-related work experience. In addition to recruiting students through direct admissions, the program also partners with the Medical Scientist Training Program (MD/PhD) and has welcomed two students during their PhD training phase.

The strength of the program's students has been locally, nationally, and internationally recognized via the funding of peer-reviewed grants including NIH Dissertation Awards (R36), selection for NIH-awarded training programs, and institutional research grants. Students have also been selected to participate in competitive internships with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, NORC at the University of Chicago, the Government Accountability Office, and Humana.

In total, students have produced over 60 peer-reviewed publications while in the program. The quality of their research has been lauded through numerous honors, including the Horowitz Foundation Award for Social Policy, the Laurence G. Branch Doctoral Research Award and the Grant W. Farmer Memorial Scholarship Award from the American Public Health Association, and the Lee B. Lusted Student Prize from the Society for Medical Decision Making. The program awarded its first PhD in May 2024 and has now graduated eight doctoral students, who have accepted positions in government (1), industry (1), and within academia as postdocs (4) and faculty (2).

21 mentoring faculty, spanning **three schools** and **six departments** across Vanderbilt and Vanderbilt University School of Medicine.

Vanderbilt Epidemiology PhD Program

The Epidemiology PhD program was established in 2007 by Katherine Hartmann, MD, PhD, who served as its first director through 2023. Peter Rebeiro, PhD, serves as the program's current director. Reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of epidemiology research, the program was founded within the Institute for Medicine and Public Health, now known as the Institute for Population and Public Health. The program is housed within the Office of Biomedical Research Education and Training under the School of Medicine at Vanderbilt University.

The program welcomed its first cohort of five students in August 2009 and has since matriculated 66 students, with 19 currently enrolled. Three students have completed MD/PhD training at Vanderbilt University through the program's partnership with the institution's Medical Scientist Training Program. In total, 48 faculty are currently affiliated with the program, mentoring students, serving on dissertation committees, and/or teaching courses.

Students have brought local, regional, national, and international accolades to the program, which boasts NIH (F30/31) and American Heart Association fellowship recipients, P.E.O. Scholar awardees, and Fogarty and Fulbright fellows. Numerous students have received recognition at conferences for their scientific research work.

In August 2013, the program awarded its first degree to Stephen Deppen, PhD, who continues to be a part of the Vanderbilt community as a member of its faculty. Six of the program's graduates are current faculty at Vanderbilt, and an additional five alumni remain as postdoctoral fellows or staff scientists.



Vanderbilt Epidemiology PhD program alumni are found throughout the world, working as epidemiologists in academia, government, public health, and industry. They include members of the Epidemic Intelligence Service; NIH researchers; postdocs, faculty, and staff scientists at US and international institutions; scientists within industry and consulting; and public health practitioners at the CDC and in city and state health departments.

Health Policy & Health Services Research PhD Alumni



Nathaniel Tran, PhD'24, Assistant Professor, Health Policy & Administration, University of Illinois Chicago School of Public Health



Emma Achola-Kothari, PhD'25, Postdoctoral Fellow, Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics, University of Pennsylvania



Hannah Crook, PhD'25, Medical Policy Director, Eugene S. Farley Health Policy Center; Senior Instructor, Department of Pediatrics, University of Colorado

Epidemiology PhD Alumni



Alex Sundermann, MD'20, PhD'19, Assistant Professor, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Vanderbilt Health



Lauren (Saag) Peetluk, PhD'21, MPH, Senior Manager, Center for Observational Research at Amgen; Adjunct Instructor, Epidemiology, Vanderbilt Health



Rany Octaria, MD, PhD'22, MPH'17, Postdoctoral Researcher Laboratoire Modélisation, Epidémiologie et Surveillance des Risques Sanitaires (MESuRS), France

Training Programs

Medical Residents, Fellows, and Postdoctoral Scholars

- Vanderbilt Patient/pRactice Outcomes Research in Effectiveness and Systems Science (PROgRESS) T32 Program
- Nashville VA Quality Scholars Program

Junior Faculty and Postdoctoral Scholars

- Vanderbilt Emergency Medicine Research Training (VEMRT) program
- Vanderbilt Learning Health System Scholars (LHSS) program

Research Training Grants funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), National Cancer Institute (NCI), National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).



2024–2026
Notable Recent News and Honors

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Institute for Population and Public Health: In 2025, the Institute for Medicine and Public Health was renamed the Institute for Population and Public Health, reflecting an expanded focus on population health research, implementation science, digital health, artificial intelligence, learning health systems, and health outcomes improvement.

VUMC Awarded $26.4 Million for Patient-Centered Research: Four new PCORI awards will support patient-centered outcomes research, community engagement initiatives, and the expansion of the STAR Clinical Research Network.

RAPID-LHS Center Launches: VUMC established the RAPID-LHS Center through a $5 million grant to accelerate learning health system research and translate evidence into clinical practice and public health policy.

STAR Clinical Research Network Expands: The addition of Stanford University and Essentia Health strengthened the VUMC-led national network supporting multi-site, patient-centered research.

New Center for Biomedical Ethics and Society Director Named: Susannah Rose, PhD, an expert in the ethical integration of new technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), in health care, was named director of the Center for Biomedical Ethics and Society.

Long COVID Clinical Trial Expanded Nationwide: Vanderbilt Health is leading the REVERSE-LC multicenter trial evaluating baricitinib as a treatment for neurological and cardiopulmonary symptoms associated with long COVID.

Preventing Childhood Obesity Advanced Through Early Intervention: The Greenlight Study demonstrated the effectiveness of early-life interventions in improving childhood health outcomes and preventing obesity.

Cardiovascular Medication Safety Improved Through New Research: Research published in *Annals of Internal Medicine* identified important bleeding risks associated with commonly prescribed medications used to treat atrial fibrillation.

Gestational Dating Differences May Help Predict Miscarriage Risk: A landmark study found that differences between ultrasound and menstrual dating may help predict miscarriage risk and improve early pregnancy care.

Epilepsy Research and Care Advanced in the Sahel: Researchers investigate the epidemiology, genetic risk factors, and preventable causes of epilepsy in Africa's Sahel region to improve diagnosis, prevention, and access to care for underserved populations.

Seventh Annual Learning Health System Symposium Held: The seventh annual Learning Health System Symposium highlighted Vanderbilt's national leadership in developing and advancing learning health systems.

National Study Advances Understanding of Youth Obesity Trends: A national study highlighted persistently high rates of overweight and obesity among US youth, emphasizing the need for prevention and early intervention efforts.

Access to Lung Cancer Screening Facilitated: Researchers found that women receiving mammograms were more likely to complete lung cancer screening when informed of their eligibility.

New Pediatric Acute Care Atlas Supports Research and Policy: A new pediatric acute care atlas provides data to support research, health policy, and strategic planning for children's health services.

Advancements in Alzheimer's Disease Research Enabled by Federal Funding: The Vanderbilt Memory and Alzheimer's Center has been awarded a 5-year, $25 million NIH Center of Excellence grant.

PCORI-Funded Initiative Aims to Improve Blood Pressure Control: Vanderbilt launched a PCORI-supported hypertension implementation project that uses a team-based, primary care approach to improve blood pressure management for adult patients.

Funding Expands Lung Cancer Screening for Veterans: Vanderbilt investigators received support to understand and improve veteran access to mobile lung cancer screening through a $1 million grant.

Tuberculosis Transmission Research Facilitated by $5.7 Million NIH Grant: A Vanderbilt study received NIH funding to examine tuberculosis transmission and inform disease control efforts.

Pediatric Heart Research Supported by American Heart Association Awards: Three investigators at the Pediatric Heart Institute at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt jointly received more than $500,000 in funding to advance early disease detection, genetic risk assessment, and family-centered decision-making for children with heart conditions.

Study Examines Metabolic Complications in Adults Living with HIV: Vanderbilt investigators are leading a study in Nigeria to investigate cardiometabolic disease risk and the mechanisms underlying weight gain following antiretroviral therapy.

Large Language Models Compared with Traditional Machine Learning: Vanderbilt researchers evaluated GPT-4o and conventional machine learning approaches for predicting early discontinuation of home cancer medications.

Synthetic Patient Data May Accelerate HIV Research: Vanderbilt investigators developed an AI approach to generate realistic HIV patient records while preserving privacy and facilitating data sharing.

Quality Academy Celebrates a Decade of Systemwide Improvement: Over the last 10 years, Vanderbilt Health's Quality Academy has trained more than 175 leaders to advance patient safety, quality improvement, and clinical outcomes across the health system.

Faculty Honored for Excellence in Teaching, Clinical Service, and Research: Vanderbilt School of Medicine recognized 14 faculty members for outstanding contributions to education, patient care, and scientific discovery at its Spring Faculty Assembly, including IPPH faculty William Dupont, PhD, and Sunil Kripalani, MD, MSc.

Study Identifies Elevated Amputation Risk in Veterans with Borderline ABI: Vanderbilt investigators found that even modest decreases in ankle-brachial index values were associated with increased risk of major adverse limb events among veterans.

Study Explores GLP-1 Therapies for Asthma in Patients with Obesity: Vanderbilt researchers are investigating whether GLP-1 receptor agonists may improve asthma outcomes by affecting inflammatory and metabolic pathways beyond weight loss alone.

Target Trial Emulation Evaluates Diabetes Medications for Kidney Outcome Prevention: A Vanderbilt-led study found that GLP-1 receptor agonists and SGLT2 inhibitors were associated with lower risks of kidney events and death than DPP-4 inhibitors among veterans with diabetes.

Rapid Bloodstream Infection Testing Improves Timely Treatment of Drug-Resistant Infections: A multinational Vanderbilt-led study found that rapid antimicrobial susceptibility testing accelerated targeted antibiotic treatment for bloodstream infections and showed promise for improving outcomes in patients with highly resistant infections.

Genomic Testing Reveals Higher Rates of High-Risk Breast Cancer in Black Women: Vanderbilt researchers found that Black women were more likely to have genomically high-risk breast tumors, underscoring the importance of genomic testing to guide personalized treatment.

Study Links Sickle Cell Disease to Precancerous Blood Cell Clones: Vanderbilt investigators found that children with sickle cell disease were more likely to develop clonal hematopoiesis, a clonal growth of precancerous blood cells, providing new insight into blood cell development and disease risk.

Genotype-Guided Care Improves Depression Outcomes: A national clinical trial found that using genetic information to guide antidepressant prescribing was associated with higher rates of depression remission than usual care.

AI Assistant Helps Patients Communicate More Effectively with Care Teams: Vanderbilt Health launched an AI-powered tool that helps patients draft clearer portal messages, reducing delays caused by incomplete information and streamlining communication with clinicians.

Study Identifies Opportunities to Improve Antibiotic Stewardship in Children: A Vanderbilt study found that hospitalized children frequently receive unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions, highlighting opportunities to improve prescribing practices.

Human Milk Processing Method Found to Influence Preterm Infant Microbiome: Vanderbilt researchers found that pasteurization methods can affect the microbiome of donor human milk, with potential implications for the care of preterm infants.

Study Examines Heart Disease Risk in Patients with Liver Disease: Vanderbilt investigators launched a study to identify risk factors for cardiovascular disease among patients with cirrhosis and liver transplant recipients.

Study Highlights Challenges in Alzheimer's Blood Test Interpretation: Vanderbilt researchers identified sources of confusion surrounding blood-based Alzheimer's disease testing, emphasizing the need for clearer guidance in clinical practice.

Excess Dietary Salt Associated with Increased Heart Failure Risk: A Vanderbilt study linked high sodium intake to a greater risk of developing heart failure, reinforcing the importance of dietary prevention strategies.

Study Finds AI-Assisted Lung Nodule Assessment Is Cost-Effective: Vanderbilt researchers found that AI-enhanced risk prediction can help guide lung nodule management while improving cost-effectiveness.

Keloid Risk Genes May Lead to Improved Treatments: Vanderbilt investigators identified genetic factors associated with keloid formation, opening new avenues for understanding and treating the condition.

AI System Aims to Prevent Deadly Hospital Complication: Vanderbilt researchers are developing an AI approach to reduce blood clots that form inside blood vessels during hospitalization, a leading cause of preventable hospital deaths.

National and International Recognition

Russell Rothman, MD, MPP, was awarded a prestigious professorship by the University of Oxford in recognition of his international leadership in population health, implementation science, and learning health systems.

Stacie Dusetzina, PhD, Professor of Health Policy and Ingram Professor of Cancer Research at VUMC, and Co-Leader of the Cancer Health Outcomes and Control Research Program at Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center, and **Michael Matheny, MD, MS, MPH,** Professor of Biomedical Informatics, Medicine, and Biostatistics and Director of the IPPH-supported Center for Improving the Public's Health through Informatics, were elected to the National Academy of Medicine (NAM).

Christianne Roumie, MD, MPH, was appointed director of a new U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Center of Innovation, recognizing her leadership in implementation science and health services research.

Velma McBride Murry, PhD, received the American Psychological Association Distinguished Scientific Award for her career-long contributions to psychology and behavioral science.

Robert S. Dittus, MD, MPH, was honored by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for outstanding contributions to health professions education.

Michael R. DeBaun, MD, MPH, was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Kristin Archer, PhD, DPT, was named a Catherine Worthingham Fellow of the American Physical Therapy Association (FAPTA), the highest honor awarded by the Association.

Rogelio Coronado, PhD, MPT, received the APTA Eugene Michels New Investigator Award for excellence in musculoskeletal research.

Keith Cole, DPT, PhD, was awarded the Paul B. Beeson Emerging Leaders Career Development Award in Aging.

Consuelo Wilkins, MD, MSCI, received the Duke Medical Alumni Association's Distinguished Alumni Award.

Bradley Malin, PhD, and **Michael Matheny, MD, MS, MPH**, were elected honorary fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) for their contributions to advancing scientific knowledge and its applications.

William Schaffner, MD, was selected as the 2025 recipient of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation David E. Rogers Award from the Association of American Medical Colleges in recognition of his vaccination and public health advocacy.

Wes Ely, MD, MPH, was inducted into the American Academy of Sciences and Letters.

Roger Dmochowski, MD, MMHC; Melinda Aldrich, PhD, MPH; Carlos Grijalva, MD, MPH; Adriana Hung, MD, MPH; and Derek Williams, MD, MPH, were honored with new endowed directorships.

Advancing Health, Health Care, and Policy Through Landmark Studies

IPPH has led and contributed to high-impact studies that advance population health, improve care delivery, and inform policy. Key examples of these studies include the following:

ACTIV-6 – National adaptive platform trial testing repurposed therapies for COVID-19 in outpatients, providing rapid, actionable evidence for clinical care.	**mini-MENDS** – Randomized controlled trial to determine the best sedative medication to reduce delirium and improve functional and behavioral recovery in pediatric patients.
ADAPTABLE – National pragmatic trial evaluating aspirin dosing strategies for patients with established cardiovascular disease.	**PREVENT TB** – Phase III clinical trial comparing a 3-month weekly rifapentine-based regimen with 9-month daily isoniazid therapy for tuberculosis prevention.
ASPREE-2 – Long-term evaluation of preventive interventions, including low-dose aspirin, for older adult health and longevity.	**Reverse-LC** – Randomized controlled trial of an immunomodulator (baricitinib) for patients with long COVID.
Assessing Household Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 Infections – Prospective study that helped characterize community spread of COVID-19.	**Shanghai Women's Health Study & Shanghai Men's Health Study** – Population-based prospective cohort studies investigating risk factors for cancer and other major diseases in Shanghai, China.
BRAIN-ICU-2 – Study examining the link between delirium and dementia after critical illness.	**Southern Community Cohort Study** – Prospective cohort study examining the causes of cancer and other major diseases in the US Southeast.
Ceribell – Prospective observational cohort study measuring brainwave abnormalities and their association with outcomes in ICU patients.	**Southern Environmental Health Study** – Prospective cohort study assessing how environmental exposures influence risk of cancer and other diseases across the US South.
COVID-19 and Diabetes Assessment (CODA) – National prospective study examining the development and progression of type 1 and type 2 diabetes, including the impact of COVID-19 infection.	**SPRING Trial** – Randomized clinical trial evaluating whether moderate-dose hydroxyurea therapy can prevent stroke in children with sickle cell disease in sub-Saharan Africa.
GREENLIGHT & GREENLIGHT Plus – Multicenter randomized trials evaluating behavioral, health literacy, and digital health interventions to prevent early childhood obesity and promote healthy weight gain.	**STAR CRN** – National network of 9 health systems with data on more than 25 million patients and extensive research-enabling resources.
Human Epidemiology and Response to SARS-CoV-2 (HEROS) – Prospective cohort study of US households with children that advanced understanding of SARS-CoV-2 infection and related behavioral and environmental factors.	**Vanderbilt Inpatient Cohort Study (VICS)** – Prospective cohort study examining how health literacy and social drivers of health affect care transitions and post-hospitalization outcomes.
Infant Susceptibility to Pulmonary Infections and Asthma Following RSV Exposure Study (INSPIRE) – Prospective birth cohort study examining how infant RSV infection and other early-life factors are associated with childhood asthma.	**NIH-designated (P30) Vanderbilt Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (VADRC) of Excellence** – Tennessee's first Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, advancing dementia research, care, training, and outreach.

Community Outreach and Public Impact

For over 20 years, the Vanderbilt Institute for Population and Public Health (IPPH) has built strong partnerships with communities, addressing the social, environmental, and structural factors that influence health through community-engaged research, innovative clinical programs, student-led initiatives, and volunteer service. Several examples of this commitment are summarized below.

Collaborating with Local and Federal Agencies

Over the past 20 years, IPPH has had a close relationship with the Nashville Metro Public Health Department, Metro Parks, Metro Nashville Public Schools, the Tennessee Department of Health, the Tennessee Public Health Association, and other local and state agencies. Members of the Tennessee Department of Health serve on the advisory board of the MPH program, and dozens of students have done their MPH practicum or thesis projects in collaboration with local or state agencies. In addition, faculty across IPPH have provided the Tennessee Department of Health and other state agencies with support for health data analyses, infectious disease surveillance, epidemiology, and policy evaluations. Faculty and students have also collaborated with local and state agencies on projects focused on improving health care delivery and public health interventions to improve individual, family, and community health.

Faculty across IPPH have also worked closely with the NIH, PCORI, AHRQ, CDC, FDA, VA, Indian Health Service, HRSA, CMS, and other federal agencies on scientific research, training and education, health policy, and interventions to improve health. Faculty have also engaged global organizations and governments in over 25 countries across the world to address population and public health.

Volunteering to Support Communities Locally and Globally

Faculty, staff, and students volunteer with organizations such as Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee, Project CURE Nashville, and Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt, reflecting IPPH's commitment to directly support our communities.

Promoting Healthy Communities

Nutrition, environmental stewardship, and community engagement improve population health, and IPPH supports healthier lifestyles through access to nutritious food and community wellness. The Growing Good Health Community-Supported Agriculture program connects Vanderbilt employees with local farms to promote healthy eating. The Garden of Hope, a sustainable gardening partnership with Rooted Community Health and Vanderbilt Health Human Resources, provides fresh produce, education, and volunteer opportunities.





Education, Service, and Health Care Transformation

For many years, IPPH provided support for the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine Shade Tree Clinic, which offers free primary care to uninsured/underserved Middle Tennessee residents. Combining compassionate patient care with hands-on education, the clinic serves as a national model for student-led health care. IPPH remains a proud supporter of the Shade Tree Clinic and its efforts.

IPPH supported the CMS-funded Mid-South Practice Transformation Network, which engaged 110 clinician practices and thousands of clinicians across the Mid-South to implement evidence-based strategies, improving quality, patient safety, care coordination, and value-based care across the region.



FIREFLY

Improving Care for Populations

IPPH leads programs addressing complex public health challenges. IPPH helped lead the CMS-funded Firefly Program to provide comprehensive, coordinated care for pregnant and postpartum women with opioid use disorder and their infants, reducing barriers to care while promoting healthier outcomes. Within the Center for Health Services Research, the Center for Women's Health Research advances interdisciplinary research and mentors future investigators to improve women's health across the lifespan.

Community Research

IPPH provides support for resources that facilitate engaging local communities for research. This includes the engagement of key partners such as community members, patients, clinicians, government officials, health systems, payers, and other partners to help ensure that projects are designed with input from key constituents, are implemented with ongoing input, and have robust plans for dissemination and sustainability.

The Future: IPPH at 20 and Beyond

Advancing Health Through Innovation, Collaboration, and Impact

As IPPH moves into its third decade, the Institute will continue to build on a strong foundation in scientific discovery, education, community engagement, and collaborative partnerships. Over the next 5 to 10 years, the Institute will pursue continued innovation, deeper integration between Vanderbilt Health and Vanderbilt University, and a renewed commitment to translating research into meaningful improvements in health.

Advancing Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Digital Health

Advances in AI, data science, and digital health are creating new opportunities to understand risk factors for poor health, improve health care delivery, strengthen prevention, and advance precision population health. Drawing on expertise in informatics, health services research, clinical science, epidemiology, and ethics, IPPH will help ensure that these innovations are translated into meaningful benefits for patients and communities.

Expanding Implementation Science and Learning Health Systems

Building on Vanderbilt's national leadership in health services research, implementation science, and learning health systems, IPPH will continue to accelerate the adoption of evidence-based practices into real-world care. Through broad-based partnerships, IPPH will develop new strategies to improve quality, safety, and effectiveness in health care delivery.

Enhancing Institutional Integration and Collaboration

Many of today's most pressing health challenges cannot be solved within a single discipline. IPPH will continue to bring together investigators, educators, clinicians, operational leaders, and community partners across Vanderbilt Health, Vanderbilt University, local communities, and beyond to address complex problems and accelerate progress.

Developing the Next Generation of Health Leaders

Developing future leaders through education and workforce development is one of IPPH's central priorities. Through graduate education, research training, mentorship, and interdisciplinary learning experiences, the Institute will prepare students, postdoctoral trainees, scientists, clinicians, educators, and policy leaders to address emerging health challenges.

Expanding Policy Impact and Public Health Leadership

Research has the greatest impact when it informs decisions. IPPH will continue to generate and translate evidence that shapes clinical practice, public policy, and community action, guiding decisions that improve health outcomes at local, national, and global levels.

Strengthening Local and Global Partnerships

Global and domestic partnerships will remain a major strength of IPPH. Through expanded collaborations with institutions, government, and local communities around the world, the Institute will advance innovative research, strengthen public health capacity, and help train the next generation of local and global health leaders.



A Vision for the Next 20 Years

As IPPH moves beyond this 20-year milestone, we remain committed to the Institute's founding mission: connecting research, education, and community partnerships to create practical solutions that improve health. Through innovation, collaboration, and a continued focus on impact, our faculty, trainees, and staff will drive the next generation of population and public health discovery, transforming knowledge into action and advancing health for communities.



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