



ATRAN Newsletter

ATRAN and WVCTSI Host the 13th Annual ATRN Summit

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Pictured Top {Left to Right}: ATRN Leadership Committee Members, Rajan Lamichhane, PhD, (Summit Committee Chair and Chair Elect) and Brianna Sheppard, PhD (Immediate Past Chair and Secretary), ATRN Lunch Plenary Speakers, Nicole Stout, DPT, CLT-LANA, FAPTA, Robert Stansbury, MD and Moderator: William D. Lewis, MD, FAAFP, ATRN Summit Poster Session Presenters, and ATRN Summit Attendees. [2023 ATRN Summit Morgantown, WV Credit: Ian Moore, WVCTSI]

The 13th Annual **Appalachian Translational Research Network (ATRAN)** Summit was hosted on **October 5th and 6th, 2023** by the West Virginia Clinical and Translational Science Institute (WVCTSI) at the West Virginia University (WVU) campus, in Morgantown, West Virginia. The ATRN, a 501c3 organization, is comprised of nine academic and medical institutions (many of which are recipients of Clinical and Translational Science Awards) and multiple community-based organizations that are committed to addressing the significant health challenges of the Appalachian region.

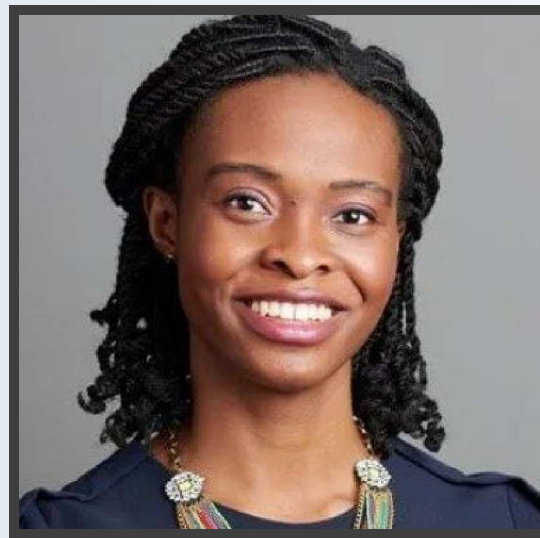
More than 180 researchers, community organizations, members and students came together to present findings on community-based research and projects, share best practices, and discuss ways to facilitate and support health equity for those living in Appalachia. The two-day event featured [18] break-out sessions, including oral and poster presentations selected from abstract submissions.

Center for Clinical & Translational Science & Training (CCTST) KL2/CT2 Career Development Program Impact Story



MEET

DR. CHIDIOGO ANYIGBO



The CCTST at the University of Cincinnati and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center K Scholar, Chidiogo Anyigbo, MD, MPH, Assistant Professor in the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC) Division of General and Community Pediatrics, published as 1st author in *JAMA Pediatrics*. Her article entitled, "Household Health-Related Social Needs in Newborns and Infant Behavioral Functioning at 6 Months", covers important findings that have relevance for infant and child health as well as the on-going conversations in Congress about fully funding the Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC).

Click here to view the write-up in CCHMC's blog, *Research Horizons*.



PennState

Translational Research with Community Health Workers

and Pennsylvania Area Health Education Center to Address the Social Isolation Epidemic in Appalachia



Patricia Bricker, MBA, Amanda Taylor Gehman, MPH, Eugene Lengerich, VMD, MS Penn State University and Pennsylvania AHEC

Not unique to Appalachia, social disconnectedness, including social isolation and loneliness, has reached epidemic proportions and has a huge negative impact on health. Even before the pandemic, the National Academy of Sciences reported 'social isolation presents a major risk for premature mortality, comparable to other risk factors such as high blood pressure, smoking, or obesity' (1). The U.S. Surgeon General released in 2023 an advisory with a call to action to improve social connection (2).

National reports are essential, but a primary solution to a problem will be achieved through translational research at the local and state levels. One local pathway to social connection is through Community Health Workers (CHWs), a grassroots workforce that helps community members access and receive the health and human services they need to lead healthier lives. Effective January 1, 2024, Medicare will pay for assessments of social determinant of health, including social well-being and connectedness, and provision of navigation services by certified CHWs (3). This recent ruling from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services may have opened the door for local services to address social disconnectedness!

The Pennsylvania Area Health Education Center (PA AHEC) has developed new and enhanced CHW initiatives that address the epidemic, and consequently improve health outcomes, in Appalachia. PA AHEC is a statewide education and workforce development program funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration and by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. PA AHEC's CHW programs include a state-approved training program, a monthly education series, an annual statewide conference, and a new state-registered CHW Apprenticeship Program. PA AHEC also supports the PA CHW Collaborative, a statewide coalition dedicated to advancing the CHW profession. The Collaborative is working diligently to obtain payment from Medicaid for CHW services. This effort, coupled with the recent federal approval from Medicare, may lead to sustainable funding for the services of CHWs.

The Advisory from the U.S. Surgeon General lists thoughtful approaches to address the social isolation epidemic for various stakeholders - from health care systems to philanthropy to researchers. For future efforts to achieve their highest level of impact tailored to Appalachia, we would do well to consider the recommended research approaches:

- Establish social connection as a research priority;
- Develop a cross-disciplinary research agenda;
- Develop and establish additional standardized national and local (i.e., Appalachian) measures
- Improve research coordination.

Our hypothesis is that CHWs can have a positive impact on social disconnectedness in Appalachia. Let's challenge ourselves to collaborate with partners like PA AHEC and CHWs in translational research on the epidemic of social disconnectedness in Appalachia.

1. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2020. Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults: Opportunities for the Health Care System. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25663>
2. U.S. Surgeon General. Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation. 2023. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>. Accessed on 01/25/2024.
3. PA AHEC. 2023. Medicare to Start Paying for Community Health Worker Services. <https://www.paahec.org/post/medicare-to-start-paying-for-community-health-worker-services>. Accessed 01/25/2024.

Katherine Hartmann Named Director of the University of Kentucky Center CCTS

Mallory Profeta, UKY CCTS Communications Director

LEXINGTON, Ky. January 17, 2024 – Katherine E. Hartmann, M.D., Ph.D., has been named director of the University of Kentucky Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS). She will assume the role on February 15, 2024.

“As a result of a national search, I am pleased to welcome Dr. Katherine Hartmann as the new director of the CCTS,” said UK Vice President for Research Lisa Cassis. “Dr. Hartmann joins us from Vanderbilt University with considerable relevant experience related to the missions of the CCTS and we are excited to partner with her to advance translational science.”

“I’m drawn to the exceptional breadth of scientific excellence at the University of Kentucky. More so, I’m impressed by the depth of commitment to the well-being of the people of the Commonwealth. The clear mission to advance health and human flourishing by accelerating research is invigorating,” said Hartmann.

Hartmann is an epidemiologist and health services researcher with expertise in large community-recruited cohorts, behavioral interventions and clinical trials. Her primary research focuses on finding answers to questions that matter to women and their care providers including adverse pregnancy outcomes, uterine fibroids, pelvic floor disorders, and risks for cardiovascular disease. Her work crosses many policy-relevant areas including health outcomes, evidence-based practice, systematic reviews, cost analysis, and informed medical decision-making.



A graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill epidemiology Ph.D. program and Johns Hopkins University M.D. program, Hartmann most recently served as associate dean for clinical translational scientist development at Vanderbilt University, as well as vice president for research integration at the Vanderbilt University Medical Center. She was also deputy director of the Institute for Medicine and Public Health for the Vanderbilt campus from 2006 to 2020.

In addition to her role at the UK CCTS, Hartmann will serve as associate vice president for research, clinical & translational science, and in the UK College of Medicine she will be the associate dean of research development and synergy, and a professor of obstetrics and gynecology.

In 2021, the UK CCTS received a \$23.5 million, five-year award from the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) at the National Institutes of Health. This was the third time the CCTS successfully competed for the prestigious Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA), with continuous funding since 2011.

Cassis said, “The CCTS is a complex undertaking that involves all aspects of health-related research on campus and interacts with many other institutions nationally. To facilitate the transition in leadership, Dr. Philip Kern, who has provided passionate and sound leadership of the CCTS since 2009, will work alongside Dr. Hartmann as CCTS co-director. Together they will help CCTS continue its many productive activities, initiate new programs, prepare for the next CTSA grant submission – all of which will help CCTS continue to advance translational science at UK. Dr. Kern will remain an active clinician scientist. We thank him for his leadership these past 14 years and look forward towards his continued engagement.”

Founded in 2006 with the mission of accelerating discoveries to improve health, the CCTS supports research from bench to bedside to community, with particular focus on Appalachia. The center provides robust infrastructure for all types of health research, including pilot funding, training, and career development for the next generation of translational researchers, a full spectrum of research support services, community engagement resources, multidisciplinary mentors, and connections to local and national research networks.

The University of Kentucky Center for Clinical and Translational Science is supported by the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number UL1TR001998. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health



The RTT Collaborative
in rural health professions education and training
Growing our own...together

2024 Scholarly Intensive Seminar Series

The Rural Training Track Collaborative Annual Scholarly Intensive is a community of practice in rural program scholarship and is designed for health professions educators and trainees from across the nation interested in rural health.

Wednesday, February 28 from 12:00PM - 1:00 PM EST via Zoom

The Resident Outreach and Research Engagement Survey

Dr. William Lewis, MD & Dr. Madison Humerick, MD

Department of Family Medicine, West Virginia University Eastern Division

West Virginia Practice Based Research Network

Register: <https://cvent.me/KvZvQV?locale=en>

Thursday, June 13 from 12:00PM - 1:00PM EST via Zoom

Using The Recovery Ecosystem Index Mapping Tool

Michael Meit, MPH

Director, Center for Rural Health Research

Research Associate Professor, Department of Health Services Management & Policy

East Tennessee State University

Register: <https://cvent.me/qL7QYN?locale=en>

Wednesday, September 18 from 12:00 - 1:00pm EST via Zoom

Community Engaged Research for Rural Trainees

Dr. Hana Hinkle, PhD, MPH

Assistant Dean, Rural Health Professions & Director, National Center for Rural Health Professions

University of Illinois College of Medicine Rockford

Executive Director, Rural Training Track Collaborative

Register: <https://cvent.me/2Wqn50?locale=en>

FREE FOR RTTC MEMBERS. \$25/ZOOM SESSION FOR NON-MEMBERS.

Join us in person for our annual meeting

Rural Strong: Pathways and Peaks - Bridging the Gaps

April 10 - 12 in Asheville, NC

Register: <https://cvent.me/KvZvQV?locale=en>

In partnership with  **THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR
RURAL HEALTH
PROFESSIONS**



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR CLINICAL AND
TRANSLATIONAL SCIENCE

The Ohio State University CCTS Welcomes Julie Johnson as New Director and Principal Investigator



We would like to announce The Ohio State University CCTS's new Director and Principal Investigator, Dr. Julie Johnson, PharmD. Dr. Johnson joins us from the University of Florida (UF) where she spent the past 25 years of her career serving in a number of leadership roles, including center director, department chair, director of the UF Health Precision Medicine Program and most recently as Dean of the College of Pharmacy (from 2013-2022).

She is an internationally recognized leader in clinical pharmacology, pharmacogenomics and genomic medicine and spent part of her post-dean sabbatical working with the NIH's All of Us program. In terms of research, she has secured continuous competitive extramural funding since 1990, focused on cardiovascular clinical pharmacology and pharmacogenomics and implementation of precision medicine approaches into clinical practice. A native Ohioan, Dr. Johnson is very excited to return to her alma matter and is committed to advancing clinical and translational science at Ohio State and supporting the next generation of clinical and translational scientists. She looks forward to her work to elevate the impact of the CCTS, including the partnership with the ATRN.

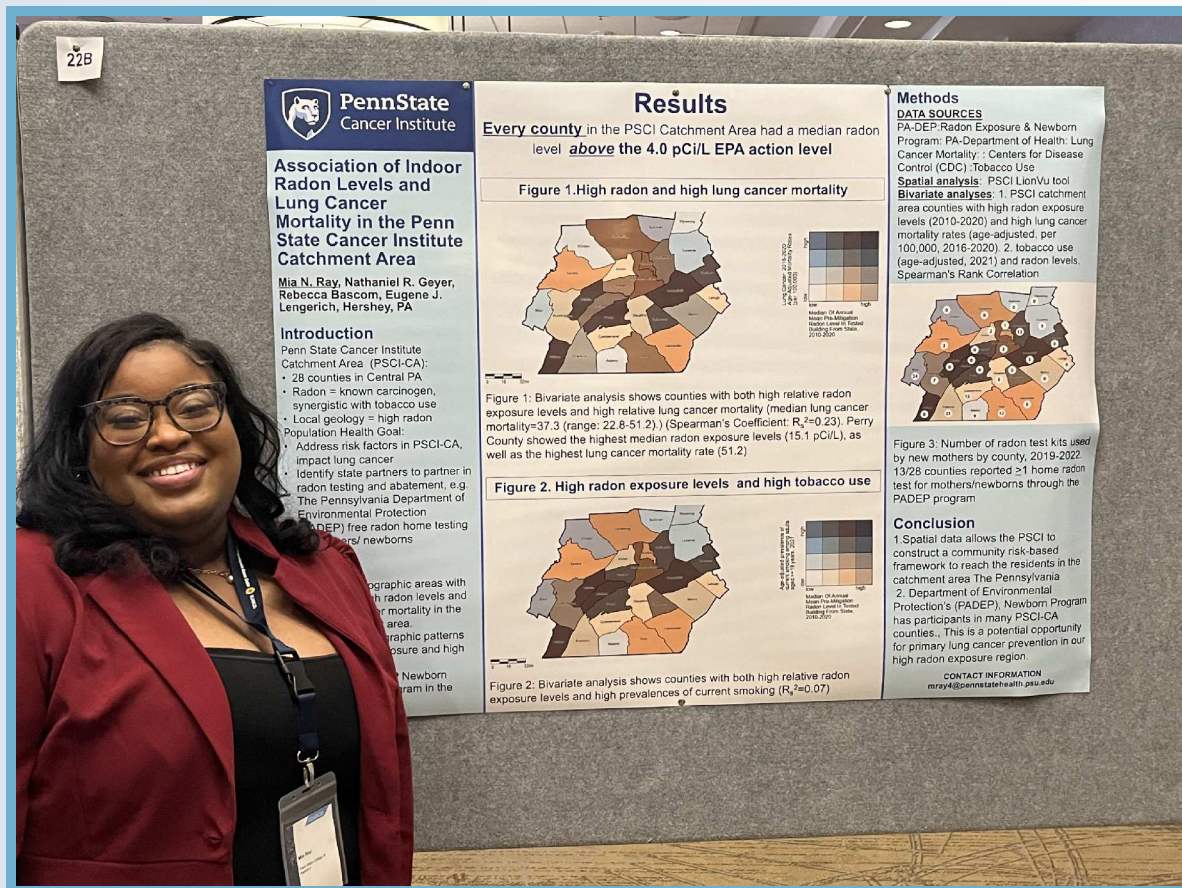
Unlocking the Mystery: Exploring Radon and Lung Cancer in Central Pennsylvania



PennState

Mia N. Ray, BS, Nathaniel R. Geyer, DrPH, CPH, GISP and Rebecca Bascom, MD, MPH, Eugene J. Lengerich, VMD, MS

ATRN seeks to train young professionals in research that impacts Appalachia and rural communities. Mia Ray, who recently received her BS degree, has been working with Penn State investigators to sharpen her research skills. Below is a brief description of her research for which she was invited to present as a poster at the Catchment Area Data Conference in Richmond, Virginia in December 2023.



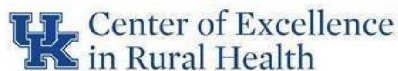
Background– Did you know that lung cancer claims more lives in the US than any other cancer? Even more alarming, radon, an invisible radioactive gas, contributes to 21,000 lung U.S. cancer deaths each year. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) set an indoor radon action level of 4 picocuries/liter (pCi/L). **Methods:** We used LionVu (<https://app-phs.hmc.psu.edu/lionvu/>) for visualization and an initial bivariate analysis of the 2010 to 2020 median indoor radon exposure levels and the 2016 to 2020 age-adjusted lung cancer mortality rates for each of the 28 counties in the catchment area of the Penn State Cancer Institute. We calculated Spearman’s Rank Correlation to assess correlation of county-level exposure level and mortality. **Results:** For the catchment area, the median indoor radon level was 9.4 pCi/L (range: 4.8 to 15.1), while the median lung cancer mortality rate was 37.3/100,000 population (range: 22.8 to 51.2). Perry County, a rural Appalachian county, had the highest radon level at 15.1 pCi/L and the highest lung cancer mortality rate at 51.2. The Spearman’s Rank Correlation found a positive relationship ($R_s^2=0.23$) between radon level and lung cancer mortality, but was not statistically significant ($p=0.26$). **Conclusion:** Our analysis found that every county in the PSCI catchment area had a radon level above the EPA’s action level. LionVu demonstrated that an Appalachian county had both the highest exposure level and lung cancer mortality rate; however, the catchment area- wide relationship did not reach statistical significance. Radon remains a public health issue. Our results can inform community-based strategies to address radon exposure in the catchment area counties.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SAVE THE DATE! APRIL 11, 2024



Ramada by Wyndham Paintsville Hotel and Conference Center | Paintsville, KY

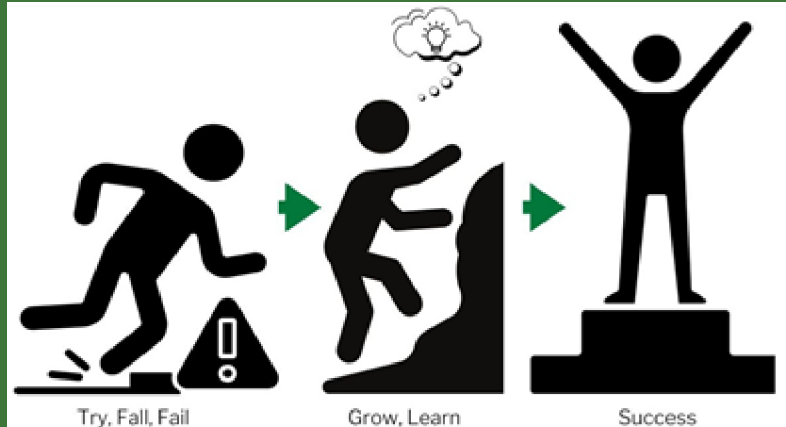


The UK Center of Excellence in Rural Health (CERH)
will be hosting
Appalachian Research Day on April 11th, 2024.

The annual one-day conference event developed by UK CERH, offers a unique opportunity for university researchers, community organizations, and community members to engage in conversation about research studies that have taken place in local Appalachian communities. The event will be hosted at the Ramada by Wyndham Paintsville Hotel and Conference Center in Paintsville, KY.

UPCOMING EVENTS

PEARLS OF (RESEARCH WISDOM): UPCOMING SEMINARS AND REGISTRATION LINKS



Integrating Genomics and Public Health Approaches to Achieve Health Equity

Keith L. Keen, Ph.D. is a Professor of Public Health Sciences and the Director of the Center for Health Equity and Precision Public Health (CHEPPH) at the University of Virginia.

MARCH 26TH, 2024 Register for Dr. Keene's Session [HERE](#)

Dr. Keene has nearly 20 years of experience in Precision Health and Genomics research, with a longstanding commitment to research focused on health disparities and health equity. Dr. Keene's research experience includes using -Omics based approaches (e.g. genetic, epigenetic, metabolomics), statistical, and molecular biology methodologies, to identify heritable risk variants contributing to complex diseases. Dr. Keene is particularly interested in performing integrative -Omics analyses utilizing biospecimens from underserved and marginalized populations, with hopes of alleviating the disparate burden of disease in those populations. As the inaugural director of CHEPPH, Dr. Keene is working to grow an interdisciplinary center devoted to integrating Precision Medicine, Public Health, and Health Informatics approaches to improve the health and well-being of rural, economically challenged, and racial/ethnic-minority populations. He will lead a team of scientists, administrators, and clinicians to utilize inclusive approaches to reduce disparities, promote health equity, and create a diverse workforce population where every person has the opportunity to "attain his or her full health potential". He was listed as one of "1000 Inspiring Black Scientists in America" Recent honors by Cell Mentor in 2021. Dr. Keene is an established NIH and NSF-funded researcher, and his research demonstrates a commitment to team science and multi-disciplinary work.

Seminar Series Recordings from 2023

From the Hills of Southside Virginia to a Career in Infectious Diseases Research

Dr. Margie Lee is a Professor and Head of Biomedical Sciences and Pathobiology and the Interim Director of the Animal Cancer Care and Research Center at the Virginia Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine at Virginia Tech

View a Recording of Dr. Lee's Session [HERE](#)

Originally from Bedford County, Virginia, where her family has resided for 5 generations, Dr. Lee received her DVM from the Virginia Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine in 1986 and her PhD in Medical Microbiology from the University of Georgia in 1990. She is formerly the Associate Director of the Biomedical Health Sciences Institute, Coordinator of Combined and College-wide Graduate Programs at the College of Veterinary Medicine, and Director of the Diagnostic Laboratory of the Poultry Diagnostic and Research Center, all located at the University of Georgia. She has been a member of numerous NIH study sections and USDA research panels. In addition to research and administration, she teaches veterinary students, graduate and undergraduate students, and veterinary residents. Her research focuses on infectious diseases, disease ecology, microbiome and diagnostic microbiology. Her work has resulted in 90 peer-reviewed publications as well as chapters in the Merck Veterinary Manual and the Laboratory Manual for Isolation, Identification, and Characterization of Avian Pathogens



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