2018-2019 Interdisciplinary Fellows
Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health
Department of Pediatrics

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Division of Epidemiology and Community Health, School of Public Health
MSW Degree Program, School of Social Work
University of Minnesota

Pooja Brar, M.S. is a pre-doctoral fellow funded by the Leadership Education in Adolescent Health (LEAH) grant. She received her BS in Psychology from the University of Maryland, College Park and MS in Marriage and Family Therapy from University of Wisconsin-Stout. She went on to have a decade long career as a family therapist in the U.S. and India. Her international clinical work with youth and families prompted her return to academia. She is currently pursuing her PhD in the Department of Family Social Science. Her research focuses around intimate relationships and sexual health of youth nationally and internationally. Her dissertation research examines sexual self-efficacy among sexually active adolescent women. In combination with her current studies of adolescent youth in India, her long-term research agenda is to extend this scholarship to examine the role of culture, media, and health policies on adolescent sexual health.

Calla Brown, MD, FAAP, is a second-year fellow in Academic General Pediatrics and is funded by the Interdisciplinary Research Training in Child and Adolescent Primary Care (IRTCAPC) grant. She is an internist and a pediatrician, and is pursuing a master’s degree in human rights at the University of Minnesota during the fellowship. She majored in women’s and gender studies while an undergraduate student at Columbia University, and following college graduation joined the Peace Corps, serving for two and a half years in southern Ecuador. She obtained her medical degree from the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, spending a fifth year as a medical student volunteer in rural El Salvador with Doctors for Global Health. She then completed residency in internal medicine and pediatrics at the University of Minnesota. During the past academic year, she and her family lived in Malawi as volunteer physician educators at the Malawi College of Medicine with Seed Global Health. She is interested in the intersection of health, human rights, and immigration/migration.
Leslie Kummer, MD, is a second year fellow in Academic General Pediatrics and is funded by the Interdisciplinary Research Training in Child and Adolescent Primary Care (IRTCAPC) grant. She is a pediatrician and is pursuing an MPH in Maternal Child Health as part of her fellowship. Leslie received her BA in Biology from Carleton College, and subsequently lived and studied in Norway for a year as a Fulbright Scholar. She received her MD from Brown University and completed a Pediatrics residency at the University of Massachusetts in 2013. Prior to fellowship, she worked for three years as a primary care pediatrician. Leslie’s research interests focus on health disparities and social determinants of breastfeeding in the United States. She is the recipient of the J.B. Hawley Student Research Award from the UMN School of Public Health, which is supporting a qualitative study of the use of mobile technology in the Minnesota WIC Peer Breastfeeding Support program. Leslie is interested in utilizing research to inform the development and expansion of programs to support the breastfeeding mother-baby dyad. When her nose is not in a book (or computer), she is busy with her husband and two young boys (6 and 3 years).

Katy Miller, MD, is an Adolescent Medicine Fellow through the LEAH program with a background as a pediatrician. She is completing a three-year fellowship to become board certified in Adolescent Medicine. She completed her undergraduate degree in Spanish Literature from the University of St. Catherine, and then spent a year with a volunteer corps working at a free clinic in East Los Angeles. Her role included working as a medical assistant and assisting in tattoo removal for former gang members. During that year, she developed a passion for working with the underserved, especially immigrants and adolescents. She went on to spend a year traveling and volunteering in Latin America before starting medical school at the University of IA. During medical school, she co-founded a mobile clinic for a migrant community in rural Iowa, and continued to travel when she had the chance. Katy completed her pediatric residency at the University of WI, where she participated in the Global Health Track and worked as Global Health Chief Resident after completing her residency. During residency, she began working with Atlas International, a non-profit in Eastern Uganda that promotes capacity building for health care organizations and hospitals. Her interests include the intersection of adolescent medicine and global health, especially relating to medical education and capacity building. She is strongly passionate about LGBTQ health and advocating for vulnerable populations, including immigrant and undocumented patients. Katy continues to work with Atlas International as the Clinical Field Liaison Officer, and looks forward to visiting Uganda each year during fellowship.
**Janna Gewirtz O’Brien, MD, FAAP** is a post-doctoral Adolescent Medicine Fellow through the LEAH Program. She is a board-certified pediatrician. She plans to obtain a master’s degree in Public Health and board-certification in adolescent medicine during fellowship. She obtained a BA in Public Health and Biology and then an MD at the University of Rochester in Rochester, NY. She completed Pediatric Residency at Mayo Clinic; after residency, she worked as a primary care pediatrician at Mayo Clinic. For the past 5 years, she has also volunteered at the Rochester Alternative Learning Center Clinic, a free school-based clinic for adolescents at high risk of academic failure. She has been involved in piloting a primary care-based approach to family-based treatment of adolescents with eating disorders. She serves on the Minnesota American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Board and served on the AAP’s Executive Board of the Council on Community Pediatrics. She hopes to take a deeper dive into community-based research and advocacy for adolescents. Areas of focus include runaway and homeless youth, adolescent mental health, and reproductive health, with a particular interest in providing school and community-based interventions and health care services.

**Michael J. Parks, PhD**, is a second-year postdoctoral fellow funded by the Interdisciplinary Research Training in Child and Adolescent Primary Care grant. He received his Ph.D. in sociology (2012), as well as his M.A. (2005) from Pennsylvania State University. He received a B.A. in psychology in 2005 from the U. of MN. After receiving his Ph.D., Michael became a senior Research Scientist at the MN Department of Health within the Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Division. Generally, Michael is interested in applied health promotion that addresses health behaviors among youth populations, with a particular focus on reducing disparities associated with socioeconomic status. His research interests lie within three primary areas: (1) prevention of health-risk behaviors with a primary focus on tobacco use and tobacco-related disparities; (2) how psychosocial factors can inform public health policy and programs, and particularly tobacco-related programs; and (3) cross-national healthy youth development, focusing particularly on urban youth populations and community-based approaches. His research has been published in outlets such as American Journal of Health Promotion, Behavioral Medicine, Addictive Behaviors, Health Education & Behavior, Journal of Health Communication, among others. He is the Principal Investigator of a 2018 New Investigator Grant from the American Academy of Pediatrics Julius B. Richmond Center of Excellence, which will allow him to implement a population-based program designed to reduce socioeconomic disparities in smoke-free rules in homes and cars.
Lydia Pfluger, BS, is a graduate student in her third year of a dual master’s degree in Public Policy and Social Work at the University of Minnesota with a focus in community practice. She received a B.S. degree in Human Development and Family Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Stout. Lydia has previous research and direct service experience in areas such as child welfare, juvenile and criminal justice, family violence, healthy youth development, among others. Additionally, she has experience in program evaluation and child and family policy advocacy. Her research interests are related to welfare issues for families and children, prevention and intervention methods to reduce justice and welfare involvement, and healthy youth development in the face of adversity. Lydia hopes to be a leader in bridging the gap between policy, research, and practice within social services and be an advocate for effective programs that are responsive to community needs.

Katie Querna, PhD received her doctoral degree in Social Welfare from the University of Washington in June 2018. She was recently a research fellow through the National Institutes of Health Institute of Translational Health Sciences, and a member of institutional and state policy boards related to health disparities and gender/sexuality related health and well-being. Katie is a mixed methodologist who uses feminist and community-based approaches to research conceptions of gender and sexuality norms with the aim of improving health. Her recent projects examine cis men and trans masculine individuals’ experiences of bisexuality as they transition out of adolescence. Prior to beginning her doctoral studies, Katie earned her MSSW from Columbia University in 2008 and moved to Seattle to work in HIV/AIDS and related research, practice, and policy. Katie has taught in higher education and community settings for over 15 years. Katie also teaches adaptive yoga, and loves to dance, ski, and ride her bike.

Molly (Mollika) Sajady, DO, MPH, is a first-year fellow in Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics at the University of Minnesota. In addition, she is a fellow in the Leadership and Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) program. She completed her Pediatric Residency at the University of Minnesota with a focus on global health and child development. She attended medical school and completed a Masters of Public Health degree at Des Moines University. She also received a B.A. in Child Psychology from the University of Minnesota in 2009. As a fellow, Molly is interested in strengthening her advocacy skills for children with disabilities and to become familiar with services and interventions within the community that will better serve her patients in the future. Molly will participate in the LEAH seminar series in the fall of 2018.
Maura Shramko, M.P.P, PhD, focuses her research and evaluation work on promoting well-being among diverse young people in the US and internationally using a positive youth development (PYD) lens. Specifically, she is interested in examining young people’s internal strengths as well as supportive resources in their families, schools, and communities that promote health, while acknowledging structural inequalities youth face. Maura has a PhD in Family Studies and Human Development from the University of Arizona, a Master’s degree in Public Policy from the University of Minnesota and a B.A. in American Studies and a Spanish minor from Macalester College. Before pursuing a PhD, as Research Associate at Search Institute, Maura conducted PYD-focused research and evaluation in Minnesota and internationally. In particular, she worked closely with international partners to develop and pilot cross-cultural PYD measures for youth programming in low-income countries, including technical assistance and training. Prior to this, she conducted and contributed to program evaluations in English and Spanish with the State of Minnesota, University of Minnesota Extension Center for Family Development, and community-based organizations, as well as providing direct services for young people and their families in education and youth programming.

Damir S. Utržan, PhD, MS, LMFT, is a second-year postdoctoral fellow funded by the Interdisciplinary Research Training in Child and Adolescent Primary Care (IRTCAPC) grant. Damir is a licensed marriage and family therapist as well as a board-approved clinical supervisor. He earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology, with double-minors in philosophy and human development, from Rockford University. Damir then earned a master’s degree in marriage and family therapy from the Family Institute at Northwestern University. As a practicum intern at the National Immigrant Justice Center, he performed comprehensive psychiatric evaluations of asylum-seekers detained by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. Damir also earned a doctorate in family social science, couple and family therapy specialization with a human rights minor, from the University of Minnesota. Before completing specialized training in integrated behavioral health medicine at the North Memorial Family Medicine Residency Program at the University of Minnesota Medical School, He was a doctoral intern in the Psychological Services Unit at the Center for Victims of Torture. Damir is an expert consultant to the Advocate for Human Rights on the psychological sequela of immigration proceedings. His scholarship is on the intersection of interpersonal relationship dynamics; with an emphasis on families, mental health, and human rights.
April Wilhelm, MD, MPH, is a third-year Academic General Pediatrics fellow funded by the Interdisciplinary Research Training in Child and Adolescent Primary Care (IRTCAPC) grant. April completed her undergraduate education at Carleton College, and then spent two years as a Community Health Education Volunteer with the Peace Corps in Mauritania. April received her medical degree from Brown University. She completed her medical residency training at the United Family Medicine Residency Program in Saint Paul in 2015. Her primary research interests center on adolescent refugee and immigrant health disparities. April is particularly interested in applying participatory research principles to guide community health program design and implementation aimed at improving the wellbeing of refugee and immigrant youth. In her clinical practice, April is interested in full spectrum family medicine in under-resourced settings.