

# OECM Summer 2026 Newsletter

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## Announcements

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### Welcome to our new residents!



**E Makar, MD**, completed medical school at the University of Maryland and trained in emergency medicine at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, where they saw firsthand the impact of preventable illness and injury. They are interested in how environmental and workplace conditions shape health, with a focus on prevention and universal access to care. Their prior work includes prenatal ultrasound capacity-building in Peru and curriculum development in climate and LGBTQ+ health.

Outside of medicine, you can find them walking their dog, climbing rocks, strumming the ukulele, and cooking meals for family and friends. They are excited to explore the Bay Area by bike and scout out the best dim sum spots.



**Nnedinma Okpala, MD, MPH, MS**, earned her medical degree from Meharry Medical College, where she developed a strong commitment to serving underserved and vulnerable populations. She received her Bachelor of Science in Public Health from the University of Texas at San Antonio and a Master of Public Health from UTHealth Houston, where her training focused on advancing health equity and addressing disparities in care, as well as a Master of Science from Meharry Medical College.

Her research, conducted prior to medical school, examined stroke disparities, telemedicine access, and health outcomes in underserved populations, reflecting a sustained interest in population health and the social determinants of health. Currently completing her internal medicine internship at the University of Louisville, Dr. Okpala has gained broad clinical experience managing a wide range of acute and chronic conditions. She remains engaged in community service through initiatives such as the Houston Food Bank and patient education programs aimed at improving health literacy.

Dr. Okpala's career interests center on advancing workplace safety through evidence-based interventions, optimizing care for the working population, and facilitating safe return to work within corporate settings; while advocating for policies that promote the health of vulnerable workers and underserved communities.

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**Pengse Po, DO**, is a U.S. Navy Flight Surgeon with specialized experience in aerospace and operational medicine, currently serving with the United States Navy in San Diego. A graduate of the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, Dr. Po also holds a Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience and Biochemistry from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

In his role as a Flight Surgeon, he conducts comprehensive medical evaluations for aviation personnel, develops training programs to enhance operational readiness, and leads emergency response efforts during flight operations and military exercises. With experience working in high-demand, resource-constrained environments, he brings a mission-focused approach to advance occupational and environmental health.

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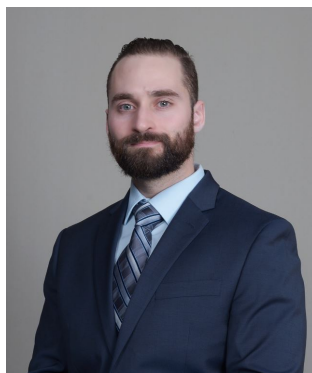


**Akber Sheikh, DO**, is a graduate of Western University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific. He earned his undergraduate degree from University of California, Berkeley, graduating with honors. Dr. Sheikh holds a strong academic foundation in neuroscience, molecular biology, and the humanities. He is currently completing an internal medicine internship at Southwest Healthcare Medical Education Consortium.

Dr. Sheikh is committed to advancing health equity through community outreach, pro bono clinic work, and global health initiatives, including a fellowship focused on rural health and development in South Asia. His academic interests span clinical medicine and public health, with several peer-reviewed publications in dermatology, gastroenterology, public health, and beyond. He is passionate about mentorship and medical education and has served as a Medical Spanish teaching assistant, supporting culturally competent care for diverse patient populations.

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## Congratulations!



**Dr. John Bossalini, DO, MPH**, will graduate from the UCSF Occupational and Environmental Medicine Residency at the end of June 2026. He earned his medical degree from Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine in Erie, Pennsylvania, and completed a Transitional Year Internship at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas.

Dr. Bossalini then served four years as a U.S. Air Force Flight Surgeon at Beale Air Force Base, California, where his work spanned primary care, occupational medicine, aerospace medicine, and public health. Following his military service, he worked as a Center Medical Director at a Concentra occupational medicine clinic in Newport News, Virginia, while applying to occupational medicine residency programs. During residency, he completed a Master of Public Health at UC Berkeley and participated in research with Dr. Suzaynn Schick as both an assistant researcher and study participant, alongside diverse clinical rotations across the Bay Area. Outside of training, he built community through the nonprofit Stonewall Sports leagues, volunteering as both a dodgeball captain and umpire.

After graduation, he joined Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami Beach, Florida, as Director of Employee Health. He looks forward to applying the principles and training of UCSF OEM to strengthen workplace health programs and advance worker safety in the Southeast.

Congratulations, Dr. Bossalini!

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**Dr. Suzaynn Schick, PhD**, has been promoted to the rank of full Professor.

This well-deserved achievement recognizes Dr. Schick's outstanding contributions to research, education, mentorship, and service to the UCSF community and beyond. Throughout her career, she has demonstrated exceptional leadership and dedication to advancing scientific knowledge, fostering collaboration, and supporting the next generation of scholars, researchers, and students.

We are excited to see Dr. Schick's continued impacts and accomplishments at UCSF.

Congratulations, Dr. Schick!



## Residents' MPH Capstone Project

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Our first-year residents recently completed their MPH Capstone Projects. Here's what they worked on:



### Rose Dizon's Capstone Project:

Cardiometabolic Outcomes of Diverse, Working College Students in California

#### Project description:

The objective of this project was to investigate the association between employment status and cardiometabolic outcomes (elevated blood pressure and waist-to-hip ratio [WHR]) among undergraduates at California Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). Then using that data, to explore whether demographic characteristics and basic needs insecurities modify these associations.

### Sophie Jin's Capstone Project:

COVID-19 Employee Contact-Tracing: Exposure Attribution Among Health Care Personnel at ZSFG

#### Project description:

This project is a descriptive analysis of employee contact tracing data of COVID positive employees from Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital during the Delta variant surge (July 1- September 30, 2021).

Overall, we found a majority of SARS-CoV-2 infections among hospital employees were attributable to community sources with a minority attributed to occupational sources. The data suggest that hospital infection control measures were effective in limiting workplace transmission. Where occupational transmission did occur, it was concentrated in communal, nonclinical settings rather than during direct patient care.



### Vibhu Krishna's Capstone Projects:

1. State Regulation of Mass Gathering Medical Care in the United States: A 25-Year Update to Jaslow et al. (1999)
2. Racing the Heat: Multijurisdictional policy review & best practices in mass participation endurance events

#### Project description:

For both of these projects, there is a novel domain framework based on existing data and contemporary needs in mass participation events. One of the major part of the projects, is to review publicly available legal and regulatory documents conducted against the domain framework. The findings are to be disseminated via academic journals and were shared at the National Preparedness Summit 2026.



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#### Hector Rivera Marrero's Capstone Project:

Mental Health Burden in Engineered-Stone Silicosis: A PROMIS-29-Based Clinical Correlates Study

#### Project description:

This project uses the UCSF Artificial Stone Silicosis Registry to characterize the mental health burden experienced by patients with engineered-stone silicosis. The data is analyzed by applying the PROMIS-29 instrument to identify clinical correlates of psychological distress. The goal is to surface an under-recognized dimension of this emerging occupational lung disease and provide a more comprehensive level of patient care.



**Please donate to the UCSF OEM Residency!**



## **UCSF partnership with UNESCO**

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For the first time in UCSF's history, through the efforts of Drs. Matthew Gribble and Sheri Weiser, a new United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) partnership has been established. This partnership created the UNESCO Chair in Oceans, Clean Water, and Health at UCSF. One of the partnership's goals is to expand the global capacity to respond to current and future challenges, which is achieved by compiling existing fact sheets and tool kits about harmful algal blooms, water insecurity, and related topics. The UCSF-UNESCO partnership aspires to make these resources available in multiple languages for the general public. Another objective is to consolidate educational resources for youth about changing environments and their implications for health. Both Drs. Gribble and Weiser are collaborating to help communities be more climate-resilient by supporting safe drinking water, a healthy ocean and interventions to address water insecurity.

The UCSF-UNESCO partnership seeks to foster collaboration across sectors and continents to advance the sustainable management of waters and marine systems, helping ensure public health and climate resilience co-benefits. Specifically, this partnership is focused on advancing the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development SDG 3, 6, 13, and 14.

- SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- SDG 14: To Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development (oceans), and associated public health and climate resilience co-benefits.

This UCSF-UNESCO partnership aims to be a global hub for information about these challenges.



## OECD Faculty Retreat

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On May 12, 2026, our division held a faculty retreat at the beautiful Aldea Center. The retreat provided a valuable opportunity for faculty to come together to discuss funding opportunities and the challenges currently facing the division, while also fostering meaningful collaboration and strategic brainstorming around potential solutions and future initiatives.

Guest speaker, Sandrijin van Schaik, shared an informative presentation on the resources and support available through the Center for Faculty Educators. In addition, Max Blumberg presented an overview of how ChatGPT Enterprise can be leveraged to create custom GPTs designed to help streamline workflows and enhance operational efficiency.

Overall, the retreat was a valuable opportunity to strengthen division morale, align on shared goals and priorities, and foster the exchange of ideas and solutions.



**Joshua Potocko, MD, MPH, (UCSF OEM 2019)**

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I am now New Orleans based, and the current proprietor of a brand new medical practice specializing in Ketamine Therapy and Psychedelic Support: Althea NOLA; we opened our doors in Spring 2026. We are involving direct patient care to individuals struggling with depression, anxiety, PTSD, and existential distress related to illness, loss, and other challenging life circumstances.

The clinic also provide public health education and harm reduction around the therapeutic use of psychedelics. Our number one priority is improving access to mental health care for vulnerable and under-resourced groups (veterans, LGBTQ, BIPOC, first responders, healthcare workers, artists, service industry). Our biggest challenge is the rising costs of running a medical clinic (rent, payroll, insurance, supplies).

**Share one memory that you have from the OEM residency program.**

August site visits; I tell people all the time about visiting the quarry, the refinery, the cast iron factory, the sugar mill, and the clean room. Those visits were extremely eye opening.

**What advice do you have for the incoming/current residents?**

During your training, explore a wide and diverse array of topics, industry sectors, and future directions. Do not pigeon-hole into "CMO", "research", "public health" or "OEM direct clinical care" - try everything and make the effort to connect with mentors and rotation supervisors. UCSF has a diverse and valuable network of OEM providers; for the rest of your career, you will probably reach out to them from time to time!

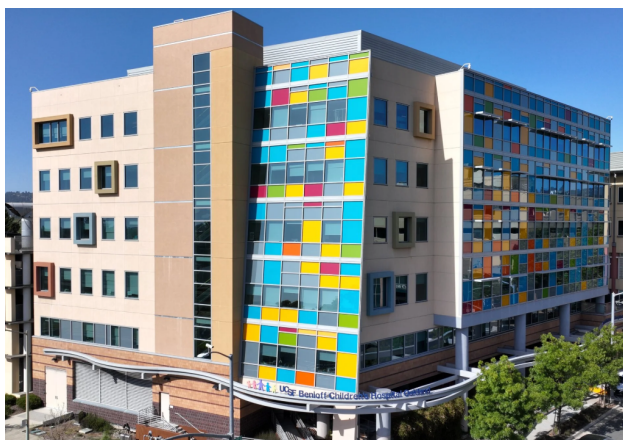
**Any updates to share (e.g kids, family, other things you're doing)?**

I think my gray hair may actually be longer than Jordan Rinker's now.

**Tell us your news**



## **Job opportunity: Associate Medical Director at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital OHS clinic**



We have an exciting opportunity at the UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital OHS clinic. Join the Occupational, Environmental and Climate Medicine team as the Associate Medical Director of Occupational Health Services at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital and make a meaningful impact on the health and well being of healthcare workers every day. This exciting faculty opportunity blends clinical care, leadership, collaboration, and teaching within one of the nation's top academic health systems.

In this role, you will work alongside multidisciplinary leaders to advance occupational health programs, guide quality improvement initiatives, support medical surveillance and exposure response efforts, and serve as a trusted clinical resource for staff across the organization. You will also play an important role in mentoring trainees at the Occupational and Environmental Medicine residency program.

Our team is looking for a collaborative and compassionate physician with expertise in Occupational and Environmental Medicine who enjoys working with multidisciplinary teams, mentoring trainees, and helping shape innovative occupational health programs. If you or someone you know is interested in applying, please click/share the link below.

**Apply here**



## **Remembering Dr. Dennis Shusterman, MD, MPH, Professor Emeritus**



Our colleague Dennis Shusterman MD, MPH passed away in April after a chronic illness. Dennis was a long time, distinguished contributor to the field of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. After completing his OEM fellowship at UCSF, he continued as a faculty member in the Division for 10 years from 1994 to 2004. He then moved to the University of Washington for three years as the Director of their Occupational and Environmental Medicine Residency. Returning to California in 2007, he became Chief of the Hazard Evaluation Section and Information Service (HESIS) at the Calif Dept. of Public Health, Occupational Health Branch.

At HESIS Dennis managed the CDPH response to a wide range of toxicologic concerns. During his career Dennis also served as the mentor for many trainees in our specialty and taught Toxicology to OEM Residents. For many years, he led the Continuing Education Committee for the OEM Division.

Dennis was a pioneer in the field of environmental effects on the upper airway. He developed the Research Laboratory on Upper Airway Biology at the UC Berkeley/Richmond Field Station. He published over 100 peer-reviewed articles, many relating to his work on the upper airway. He was honored with The Clean Air Award by California Breathing (2013); The Occupational Health Hero Award by the UCSF School of Nursing (2015); and the Gaspar de Portola Academic Exchange at the University of Barcelona (2002).

Dennis was known for his keen intellect, curiosity, and creativity. Even in retirement, he continued his ground-breaking research activities and was an active contributor to the OEM Residency. He was an engaging and enthusiastic person. We will miss him tremendously.

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