

*Notable News*



Dr. Wilbert Van Panhuis

**NIH DIRECTOR’S BLOG FEATURED DENGUE REPORT**

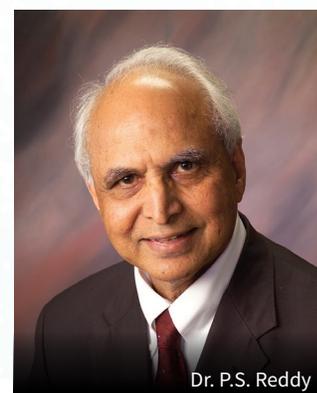
NIH-funded researchers and colleagues, reporting in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, have linked an intense dengue epidemic that struck eight Southeast Asian countries starting in mid-1997 to high temperatures driven by the strongest El Niño event in recent times. In the study, an international team of researchers, led by Dr. Wilbert van Panhuis, assistant professor of epidemiology at the Graduate School of Public Health, were interested in why dengue infection rates soar every two to five years. To find clues, the team gathered monthly reports on the incidence of dengue fever over an 18-year period, totaling 3.5 million reported infections in 273 provinces in eight Southeast Asian countries—Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Taiwan. This effort was detailed in the October 13, 2015 NIH Director’s Blog. [view the NIH Director’s Blog](#)

**SHARE INDIA**

Dr. PS Reddy shared his newsletter from our partner research institute in India, SHARE INDIA, celebrating the growth of the research program there. The number of grants received by SHARE faculty has been accelerated by Dr. Bunker’s Fogarty International Research Training Grant which was established in collaboration with Dr. Reddy and the SHARE faculty. We welcome Dr. Jammy Rajesh from SHARE, who is working with Dr. Cauley towards a PhD in Epidemiology. [see Dr. Reddy’s newsletter](#)



Dr. Clareann Bunker



Dr. P.S. Reddy



At a special symposium on September 24, Dr. Lewis Kuller, professor emeritus of epidemiology, was honored for being chosen by the Awards Committee of the Epidemiology Section of the American Public Health Association (APHA) by receiving the John Snow Award. The symposium, *Contribution of Public Health in the Era of Precision Medicine*, also featured speakers Drs. Dietrich Stephan, Russ Tracey and Roberta Ness

*Notable News continued***IMPROVED MOBILITY AND LESS JOINT PAIN THREE YEARS AFTER WEIGHT-LOSS SURGERY**

After weight-loss surgery, 57 percent of patients with significant mobility issues before surgery no longer had them and about 70 percent of those with severe knee and hip pain or disability, experienced improvements in joint pain and function. “Our study found that clinically meaningful improvements in bodily pain, specific joint pain, and both perceived and objectively measured physical function are common following bariatric surgery. In particular, walking is easier, which impacts patients’ ability to adopt a more physically active lifestyle. However, some patients continue to have significant pain and disability,” said Dr. Wendy King, associate professor of epidemiology at the Graduate School of Public Health. All patient data was obtained from the Longitudinal Assessment of Bariatric Surgery (LABS) 2 study, an observational study of bariatric surgery patients from 10 hospitals across the country. Dr. Steven Belle, professor of epidemiology at Pitt Public Health is a co-author of this study. [view the UPMC news release](#)



Dr. Wendy King



Dr. Anthony Fabio

**TELEVISION VIEWING LINKED TO HIGHER INJURY RISK IN HOSTILE PEOPLE**

People with hostile personality traits who watch more television than their peers may be at a greater risk for injury, potentially because they are more susceptible to the influence of television on violence and risk-taking behaviors, a University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health analysis discovered. “Television viewing is very pervasive, with televisions in almost 99 percent of American households. And injuries cause more than half the deaths among people ages 1 through 44. This means that even modest reductions in television viewing, particularly among people predisposed to hostility, could have major positive outcomes for public health,” said lead author Dr. Anthony Fabio, assistant professor of epidemiology at Pitt Public Health. [view the UPMC news release](#) or [listen to the NPR interview](#) ▶

**FIRST METHANE RULES IN PENNSYLVANIA**

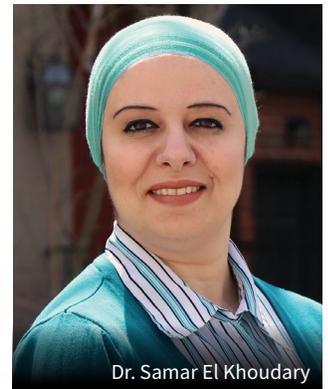
For the first time in its history, the Environmental Protection Agency has established a set of methane standards. These regulations come as part of the White House’s Climate Action plan, which aims to reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas industry by 40-45% by 2025. To analyze the impact of the standards, National Public Radio spoke with Dr. Evelyn Talbott, professor of epidemiology at Pitt Public Health. [listen to the NPR discussion](#)



Dr. Evelyn Talbott

*Notable News continued***HDL-C MAY NOT PROTECT WOMEN  
TRANSITIONING THROUGH MENOPAUSE**

At the annual meeting of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS), findings were presented to show that “As women transition through menopause, increases in good cholesterol were actually associated with greater plaque buildup,” says Dr. Samar El Khoudary, assistant professor in Pitt Public Health’s department of epidemiology who served as the lead author for the study. Results were based on data from the Pittsburgh site of the Study of Women’s Health Across the Nation (SWAN) “These findings suggest that the quality of HDL may be altered over the menopausal transition, thus rendering it ineffective in delivering the expected cardiac benefits.” Dr. Maria Brooks, an associate professor of epidemiology at Pitt Public Health is a co-author. [read the press release](#)



Dr. Samar El Khoudary



Dr. Akira Sekikawa

**PERPLEXING DISCOVERY MAY PROVIDE NEW LEADS**

Despite a dramatic increase in blood cholesterol levels for the past five decades, a new University of Pittsburgh-led study shows that the Japanese have avoided driving up their heart disease-related death rates- contrary to expectations.” This is a perplexing discovery,” said Dr. Akira Sekikawa, associate professor of epidemiology at Pitt Public Health who led the study. “You’d expect to see an increase in heart disease, so there must be something unique about the Japanese that is protecting them. “So what’s different about the Japanese? It’s unlikely to be their genetics – Japanese-Americans experience a dramatic increase in heart disease rates, so it seems to be a protective factor unique to Japanese people living in Japan,” said Dr. Sekikawa. “That leads us to diet.” Compared to the U.S., the Japanese diet is 10 times higher in fatty acids found in fish, and 20 times higher in plant compounds found in soy. The compounds found in these foods are significantly associated with lower incidence of cardiovascular disease in Japan. [view the UPMC news blog](#)

**PITT AWARDED GRANT TO COORDINATE  
PULMONARY TRIALS PROGRAM**

The University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health and School of Medicine investigators will be leading a \$16.8 million, five-year federal initiative to manage national clinical trials aimed at developing new treatments for breathing disorders. The Network Management Core – or NEMO- will be led at Pitt Public Health by epidemiology professor Dr. Stephen Wisniewski. Dr. Maria Brooks, associate professor of epidemiology is an investigator. [view the news report](#)



Dr. Stephen Wisniewski

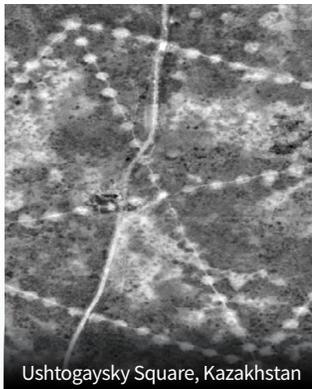
*Notable News continued***TO REDUCE RISK OF INFANT DEATH, SHED POUNDS BEFORE BECOMING PREGNANT**

Achieving a healthy weight before becoming pregnant and gaining an appropriate amount of weight during pregnancy significantly reduce the risk of the baby dying in his or her first year of life, according to new research from Pitt Public Health. “One in three women start pregnancy at an unhealthy weight, and more than half of women gain either too much or too little weight during pregnancy,” said lead author Dr. Lisa Bodnar, associate professor of epidemiology. “While more research needs to be conducted, we are hopeful that this study can be used to start a dialogue between physicians and women on the importance of not only gaining a healthy amount of weight while pregnant, but also reducing excess weight before they become pregnant as a potential way to improve infant survival.”

[view the UPMC news release](#)



Dr. Lisa Bodnar



Ushtogaysky Square, Kazakhstan

**A MYSTERY REVEALED BY SPACE-AGE TECHNOLOGY**

Satellite pictures of a remote and treeless northern steppe reveal colossal earthworks — geometric figures of squares, crosses, lines and rings the size of several football fields, recognizable only from the air, the oldest estimated at 8,000 years old. In the biggest sign so far of official interest in investigating the sites, NASA released clear satellite photographs of some of the figures from about 430 miles up. Dr. Ronald E. LaPorte, professor emeritus of epidemiology at the Graduate School of Public Health, who helped publicize the finds, is quoted in the *New York Times* article, calling NASA’s involvement “hugely important” in mobilizing support for further research. [read more from the New York Times](#)

**ALUMNI DR. EDWARD GREGG: NEWLY DIAGNOSED CASES OF DIABETES DECLINE**

After decades of relentless rise, the number of new cases of diabetes in the United States has finally started to decline. The rate of new cases fell by about a fifth from 2008 to 2014, according to researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the first sustained decline since the disease started to explode in this country about 25 years ago. Dr. Edward Gregg, Chief of the Epidemiology and Statistics Branch in the Division of Diabetes Translation at Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, received a PhD in epidemiology from Pitt Public Health. His current efforts involve oversight of the National Diabetes Surveillance system and is quoted in the *New York Times*, “It seems pretty clear that incidence rates have now actually started to drop. Initially it was a little surprising because I had become so used to seeing increases everywhere we looked.” [read more from the New York Times](#)



Dr. Edward Gregg

## *Farewell to Dr. Janice Zgibor*

At a November 5 reception, the department bid farewell to Dr. Janice Zgibor who departs Pitt Public Health for the University of South Florida, in Tampa. Dr. Anne Newman, Chair of the Department of Epidemiology recognized Dr. Zgibor's many contributions to the department. After receiving her Ph.D in epidemiology in 1999, her postdoctoral training was in the Endocrine Division at the School of Medicine and her primary research interests have been primary and secondary prevention in diabetes and diabetes education. Dr. Trevor Orchard, professor of epidemiology, spoke of Janice's ability to rise to any challenge and complimented her as a student, colleague, mentor and friend. Dr. Maria Brooks, associate professor of epidemiology, mentioned her passionate advocacy for students, having served together on the Curriculum Committee for several years. In her remarks, Dr. Zgibor said it has been her privilege to be an educator and that her work with students gave her the energy to get through each day with great enthusiasm. We all wish Janice well in her new position.



## *Congratulations*

### **DR. CATERINA ROSANO**

New NIH R21 – *Retinal Imaging Markers of Cognition in Middle-Aged Adults with Type 1 Diabetes*

## *Presentation*

### **DR. JENNIFER ADIBI**

presented *Plastics, Placentas, Genitals, and Small Nucleolar RNAs* in a Spotlight Session on Epigenetics at the Pitt SCIENCE 2015 symposium.

## *Promotion*

### **DR. WENDY KING**

Associate Professor

## *Honors*

### **DR. SAMAR EL KHOUDARY**

### **DR. IVA MILJKOVIC**

both assistant professors of epidemiology were inducted as Fellows of the American Heart Association (FAHA)/ Council on Epidemiology and Prevention at the November 10, 2015 American Heart Association Annual Reception and Dinner. In addition, department alumnus Dr. Sunita Dodani was newly elected as an FAHA at the meeting.



## *In Memorium: Tammy Outly, Doctoral Student*

A friend's quote regarding Tammy: "She was a strong-willed, feisty, smart, fun, and amazing powerhouse of a woman!"

It was with great sadness that the Department of Epidemiology learned of the unexpected and untimely death of Tammy Pappert-Outly, one of our DrPH students, on Saturday, September 26, at the age of 49.

Tammy was a lifelong Pittsburgh resident and grew up in the Troy Hill section of the city. As a full-time employee of the Veteran's Administration (VA) Hospital in Pittsburgh for many years, she applied her Bachelor and Master of Nursing training (both obtained at the University of Pittsburgh) in addition to her Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner (CRNP) certification in the cardiac unit. After joining the Epidemiology Department in fall 2008, she became a part-time student.

*"She was a strong-willed, feisty, smart, fun, and amazing powerhouse of a woman!"*

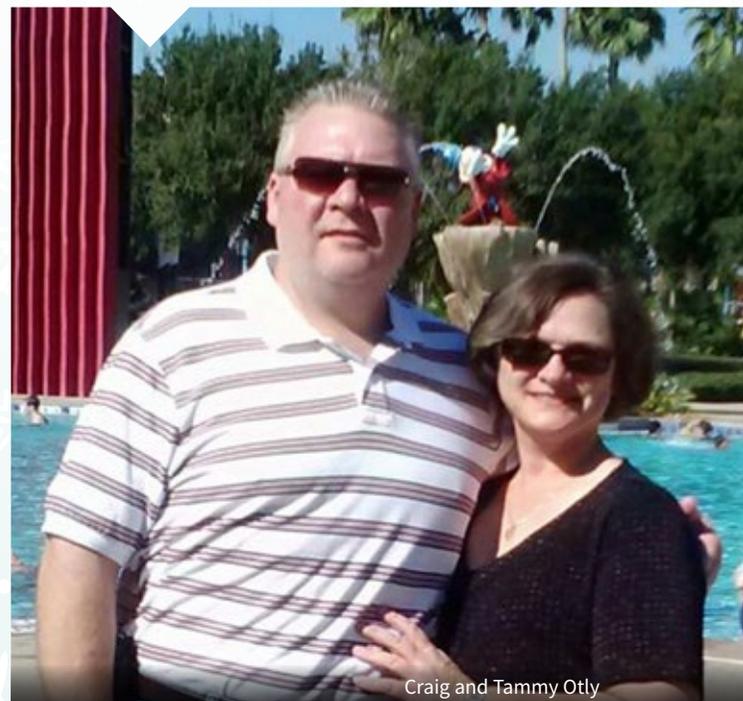
She is remembered among her many friends and colleagues at the VA for her sense of humor and magnetic personality, well-honed nursing skills, and compassion for veterans struggling with health issues.

At Pitt Public Health, she was a dedicated student who was determined to complete her doctoral dissertation after "passing her Comprehensive Exam with flying colors," according to her academic advisor and mentor, Dr. Jane Cauley. She had anticipated defending her research, "Serum Troponin and Cardiovascular Risk Among Older Veterans," in December 2015. Her correspondence over the years with Epidemiology Student Services staff was consistently cheerful and forward-looking, without reference to health problems with which she was coping, despite the rigors of her professional and academic responsibilities.

Tammy's strong personal interests in animal welfare and rescue were evidenced by her involvement with Pittsburgh's Animal Rescue League. Friends and colleagues, including Dr. Lewis Kuller and staff member Monica Love, received updates from her about specific animals awaiting adoption in hopes that they would take them in, or know of others who might do so.

She is survived by her husband Craig, her mother, two sisters, one brother, and several nieces and nephews.

Her favorite quote, which was displayed in her office at the VA, summarized her perspective on life and her thoughts concerning relationships with others. It is also a reflection of the legacy she leaves behind: "No matter how educated, talented, rich, or cool you believe you are, how you treat people ultimately tells all. Integrity is everything."



Craig and Tammy Otly



*Submit News to the  
Epidemiology Newsletter*

If you have a story, award or other milestone you would like to share, please email Frani Averbach at [averbachf@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:averbachf@edc.pitt.edu) with your submission.

top: Holiday Research Symposium, Student Poster Session on December 3, 2015  
middle, bottom: Epi In Action! Student Poster Session, October 15, 2015