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Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

New Participants in *RWJF Health & Society Scholars* Program to Study Determinants of Population Health

The *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health & Society Scholars* program is pleased to announce the selection of 12 new scholars who will investigate how connections among biological, genetic, behavioral, social, economic, and environmental conditions impact the population's health.

"We're pleased to announce our newest class of *Health & Society Scholars*. These new scholars will continue to advance the program's decade-long mission to answer the questions critical to guiding health policy and improving our nation's health," said Jo Ivey Boufford, MD, co-director with Christine Bachrach, PhD, of the national program office for the *Health & Society Scholars* program, and president of the New York Academy of Medicine.

The program seeks to improve the nation's health by better understanding and acting on the determinants that can reduce population health disparities. Among many topics, the new scholars will study social factors underlying infectious disease transmission, as well as possible interventions designed to improve urban health. Previous cohorts of scholars have researched how health is influenced by civic engagement, discrimination, human happiness, work environment, public health policies, and many other societal factors.

Health & Society Scholars receive a stipend of \$80,000 annually. During their time in the program, they participate in intensive seminars, produce scholar-directed research and analysis, and receive focused training in the skills necessary for effective leadership, program implementation, and policy change.

The new Health & Society Scholars will serve in one of four nationally prominent universities: Columbia University; Harvard University; the University of California, San Francisco/Berkeley; and the University of Wisconsin.

The *Health & Society Scholars* program's 2014–2016 participants are as follows:

Jonathan Zelner, PhD, plans to extend his current research focused on developing and evaluating public health interventions aimed at preventing infectious disease transmission, by exploring the social and biological processes underlying disease transmission. (Columbia University)

Angie Boyce, AB, is a historian and ethnographer who studies public health emergencies, surveillance, infrastructure, and cross-jurisdictional policy response. She plans to conduct an analysis of major public health emergencies, examining historical and contemporary debates about the infrastructure of the U.S. public health system. (Harvard University)

Joan Casey, MA, uses electronic medical records to study the effects of environmental exposures on population health. She will build on her body of research by investigating, among other areas, changes in the human microbiome due to exposure to industrial agriculture operations. (University of California, San Francisco/Berkeley)

Daniel Hackman, PhD, ScB, focuses on how early life social and environmental contexts—including socioeconomic status, family, and neighborhood—impact executive function, stress reactivity, and emotion regulation. He will extend this work to examine the specific pathways by which such neural differences influence disease risk and look to identify interventions and strategies for preventing and reducing social disparities. (University of Wisconsin)

Elizabeth Wrigley-Field, MS, MA, uses demographic methods, a technique used to identify public health problems and develop profiles of those at risk for certain health conditions, to study social inequality. She will use her training in demography and sociology to investigate the social side of microbiome development and infectious disease spread. (Columbia University)

Rourke O'Brien, PhD, studies household finance, taxation, and welfare state policy, and how these domains intersect with population health. His dissertation analyzes how labor market conditions and social policy shape evaluations of health and disability. (Harvard University)

Kara Rudolph, PhD, MHS, MPH, is a social epidemiologist whose research focuses on understanding social and contextual influences on substance use and mental health prevalence in disadvantaged urban areas. She will evaluate policy and program interventions designed to improve urban health. (University of California, San Francisco/Berkeley)

Christy Erving, PhD, MA, plans to investigate the impact of having co-occurring health conditions on health care costs, socioeconomic outcomes, and mortality for individuals across different racial and ethnic groups. (University of Wisconsin)

Christopher Muller, MA, studies the historical origins of racial inequality as related to: incarceration in the United States, the social consequences of mass imprisonment, and the long-term effects of slavery and the economic institutions that succeeded it. His dissertation examines racial inequality in American incarceration in the postbellum South, during the Great Migration, and following postwar suburbanization. (Columbia University)

Colleen Reid, MPH, ScB, will develop policy-relevant research that can inform decisions related to adaptation to and mitigation of climate change from a public health perspective. (Harvard University)

Jacqueline Torres, MA, MPH, will examine how cross-border social connections and separation influence the health of immigrants in the United States. (University of California, San Francisco/Berkeley)

Debraj Mukherjee, MD, is a neurosurgery resident. He leads projects related to decreasing disparities and increasing access to care for adult and pediatric brain and spine tumor patients. (University of Wisconsin)

The *Health & Society Scholars* program is overseen by a national advisory committee of individuals from various disciplines and experiences related to population health. The advisory committee is chaired by Jonathan Samet, MD, MS, a pulmonary physician and epidemiologist, who is currently Professor and Flora L. Thornton Chair for the Department of Preventive

Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California.

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The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Health & Society Scholars program is designed to build the nation's capacity for research, leadership, and policy change to address the broad range of factors that affect health. Additional information about the RWJF Health & Society Scholars program can be found at RWJFLeaders.org.

For more than 40 years, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has focused on the most pressing health issues facing our country. We are committed to fostering a national culture of health that will enable all Americans to live longer, healthier lives now and for generations to come. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at www.rwjf.org/twitter or on Facebook at www.rwjf.org/facebook.