

The UHAND Program is a long-term, collaborative partnership between the University of Houston and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center funded by the National Cancer Institute that supports and stimulates excellence in educational programming and innovation in research designed to affect health equity among racial/ethnic groups disproportionately affected by cancer disparities.

UHAND General Updates

This May we were able to graduate our first cohort of scholars from our UHAND program virtually. They began their journey with UHAND in September 2018, and have proven over the course of their time with us how capable and determined they are in achieving their goals and making strides in their respective fields. We look forward to witnessing their continued evolution into strong cancer disparities research professionals as they continue on to the next part of their academic careers!



Dr. Kayce Solari Williams (UHAND Education Program co-director, third row, right), Dr. Shine Chang (UHAND Education Program co-director, bottom row, left), Dr. Lorraine Reitzel (University of Houston Principal Investigator, bottom row, middle) and Dr. Lorna McNeill (MD Anderson Principal Investigator, bottom row, right) celebrate the graduation of Cohort 1 Scholars Sahar Eshtehardi (top row, left), Sara Flores (top row, second from right), Paulina Linares-Abrego (top row, right), Shreya Desai (second row, left), Krystal Christopher (second row, second from left), Basant Gamal (second row, second from right), Dr. Chisom Iwundu (second row, right), Ashley Taylor (third row, left), Sean Reuven (third row, second from left), and Christine Smith (third row, second from right) from UHAND as they display their certificates of completion.

We are excited to welcome a recent addition to UHAND's second cohort of scholars: [Ivan H.C. Wu, PhD](#). Dr. Wu completed his pre-doctoral internship at the New Mexico VA health Care System in



Ivan H.C.Wu

Albuquerque, and received a Ph.D. from Michigan State University in Clinical Psychology. He now serves as a Postdoctoral fellow at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in the Department of Health Disparities research, where he focuses his research on predictors of cancer risk among racial/ethnic minority populations. His mentor is [Dr. Lorna H. McNeill](#) (MD Anderson Principal Investigator).

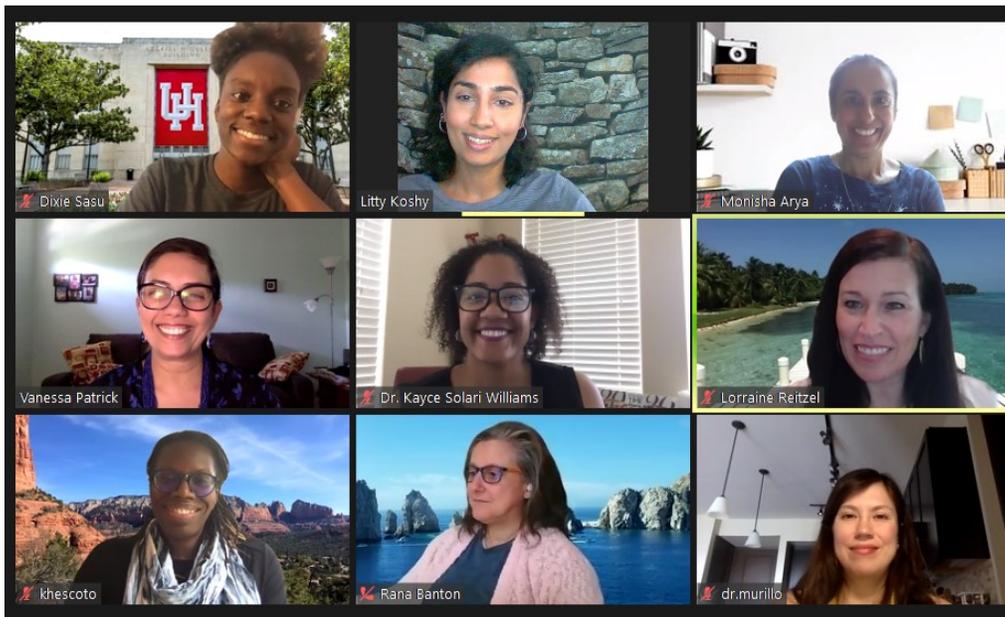
We are excited to welcome [Litty Koshy](#), our newest member to the UHAND team! She will serve as UHAND's Program Coordinator, and will provide logistical and administrative support by facilitating communication and collaboration between various components of the program. Litty graduated with a Master's in Public Health from the [University of Florida](#) in Gainesville, Florida and has gone on to work in several research hospitals across the United States since. Her previous work has included her coordinating and managing research protocols, ranging in topics from cancer to health disparities to childhood obesity.



Litty Koshy

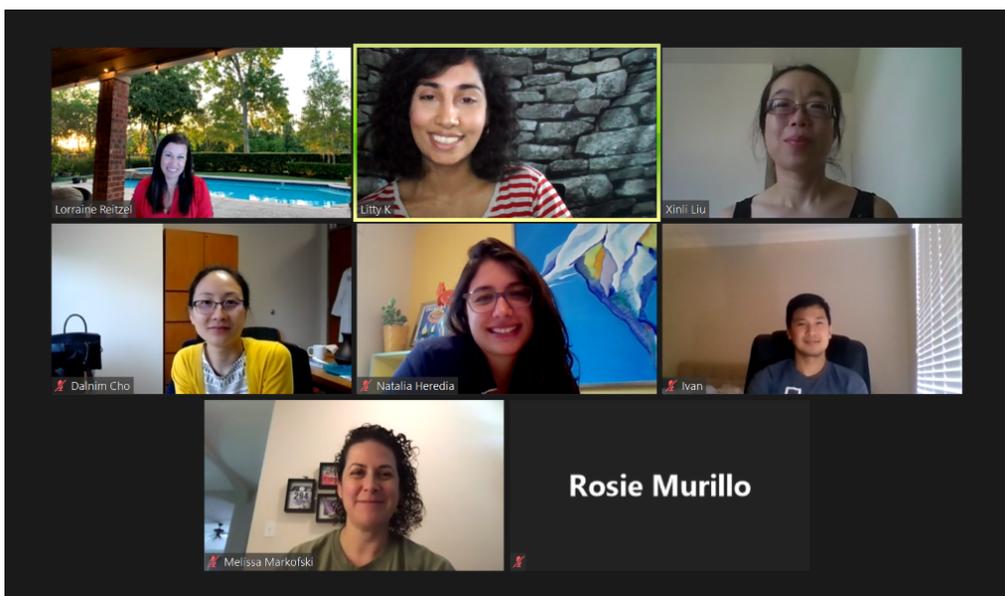
UHAND offers an ongoing [Professional Development Series](#), where experienced faculty members present a variety of topics relevant to [Early Stage investigators](#) and [HEALTH Research Institute](#) affiliates to aid in their professional development and advance their careers in research.

Earlier this year in May, [Dr. Vanessa Patrick-Ralhan](#) (University of Houston's College of Business Associate Dean of Research) delivered her seminar on "Showcasing You and Your Work", where she discussed the importance of marketing yourself and using different marketing strategies to highlight your achievements.



Dr. Vanessa Patrick (University of Houston Associate Dean of Research, middle left), discusses the importance of showcasing your work with Dixie Sasu (Health Research Institute Staff, top left), Litty Koshy (UHAND Staff, top middle), Dr. Monisha Arya (Baylor College of Medicine Investigator, top right), Dr. Kayce Solari Williams (UHAND Education Program co-director, center), Dr. Lorraine Reitzel (University of Houston Principal Investigator, middle right), Dr. Kamisha Escoto (UHAND Education Program team member, bottom left), Rana Banton (UHAND Education Program team member, bottom middle), and Dr. Rosenda Murillo (UHAND Supplement Investigator, bottom right).

In July, [Dr. Lorna H. McNeill](#) (MD Anderson Principal Investigator) delivered her seminar titled “Professional Coaches: Do you need one?,” to a number of UHAND’s [Early Stage Investigators](#) as well as postdoctoral fellows [Dr. Ivan Wu](#) (UHAND postdoctoral Scholar) and Dr. Natalia Heredia (MD Anderson postdoctoral fellow), during which she described the roles and responsibilities of professional coaches in relation to achievement of career goals, as well as the best way to go about the process of obtaining and using one to their fullest potential.



Dr. Lorna H. McNeill, MD Anderson Principal Investigator (not pictured) discusses the advantages and dynamics of utilizing a professional coach for your career with Dr. Lorraine Reitzel (University of Houston Principal Investigator, top left), Litty Koshy (UHAND staff, top middle), Dr. Xini Liu (UHAND Pilot Investigator, top right), Dr. Dalnim Cho (UHAND Early Stage Investigator and Pilot Investigator, middle left), Dr. Natalia Heredia (MD Anderson postdoctoral fellow, center) Dr. Ivan Wu (UHAND Postdoctoral Scholar, middle right), Dr. Melissa Markofski (UHAND Supplement Investigator, bottom left), and Dr. Rosenda Murillo (UHAND Supplement Investigator, bottom right).

Our Scholars

Scholar Achievements

[Ashley Taylor](#) (Former UHAND graduate Scholar) in partnership with her UHAND research mentor, [Dr. Tracey Ledoux](#), had their abstract titled “Exploring Parent Feeding Practices, the Home Environment, and Toddler Diet” accepted for presentation at the upcoming annual [Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo](#) in Indianapolis, Indiana.

[Sahar Eshtehardi](#) (Former UHAND graduate Scholar) has been appointed to serve as student representative on the board of directors for the [American Psychological Association’s Society of Pediatric Psychology](#), effective July 2020. In this role, Sahar will serve as the liaison between students and the board directors by serving as a voting board member, and will assist with the planning and execution of the [Society of Pediatric Psychology Annual Conference and APA Convention](#). Sahar has also been able to publish her thoughts on pursuing her Ph.D. from Home during the COVID 19 pandemic on the [Society of Behavioral Medicines’](#) website.

[Matthew Taing](#) (UHAND undergraduate Scholar) has been awarded the Louise Woestemeyer Scholarship for the 2020-2021 academic year at the [University of Houston](#). He was selected from a large pool of well-qualified students who also applied for this honor.

Scholar Spotlight

This quarter, we spoke with [Danielle Llaneza](#) (UHAND graduate Scholar) and [Stephanie Ramirez](#) (UHAND undergraduate Scholar) to learn more about them and their experiences in UHAND thus far, as well as about what milestones they hope to achieve by the end of their time with us.



What have you enjoyed the most about your time here at UHAND?

One of the things I enjoy is definitely the Cancer Prevention Career Conversations series we participate in. I get to see multiple, different people in action – everyone’s story is so unique. Not everyone has come into their research career in a “traditional” way, and they have been honest in sharing their journey, which includes the hardships and barriers they

faced along the way.

Name one thing you've learned from working with your mentor thus far.

One thing I've learned from my mentor, [Dr. Virmarie Correa Fernandez](#), is that one of the keys to success is organization – she is very detail oriented and has a strong organizational system which helps in managing different projects and in moving forward with all of them.

What do you hope to get out of UHAND by the end of your time with us?

I definitely want to learn more about recruitment in minority populations – I'm excited to learn different techniques and best practices in reaching underrepresented populations, particularly Hispanic and black populations. I'm also looking forward to opportunities to learn more about grants and how to write them.

What is one of your favorite quotes that has stuck with you?

Luck is when opportunity meets preparation – my dad says this all the time. *[The original quote is from Lucius Annaeus Seneca.]*



What have you enjoyed the most about your time here at UHAND?

Some of my favorite things I've enjoyed here is building a relationship with my mentor as well as learning about the entire process of a research project – I've had some experience, but nothing as extensive as UHAND provides. The constant mentorship from different sides of the program gives me the support I didn't know I needed.

Name one thing you've learned from working with your mentor thus far.

One thing I've been learning from my mentor, [Dr. Chiara Acquati](#), is how to structure my research projects. She's also been helping me develop my time management skills by having me create and achieve weekly goals.

What do you hope to get out of UHAND by the end of your time with us?

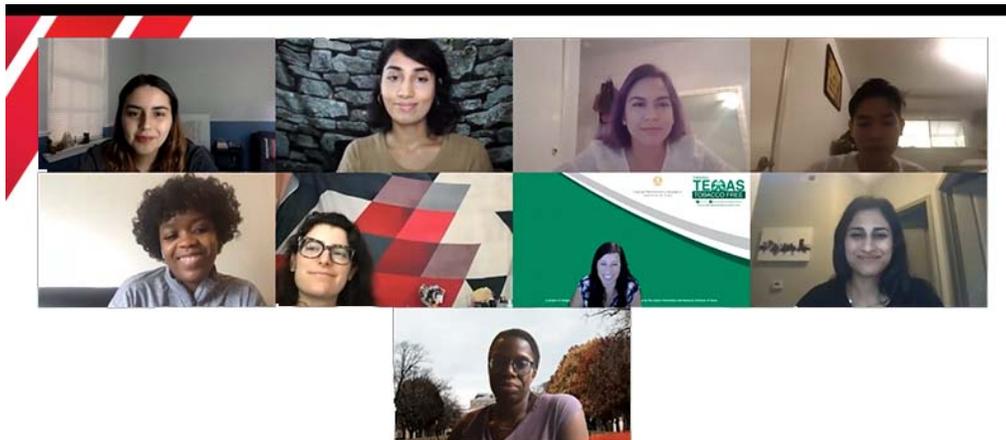
My end goal has always been to learn the research process from beginning to end, but I also want to learn more about community engagement – I think working with community partners and volunteering (even though it's virtual) is helpful in getting a grasp on how research is done in the community and on how to get community members engaged.

People would be surprised if they knew:

That I love face painting – it's something I've been doing for a while now. I used to do a lot of face painting events at the Houston Aquarium.

Education

Although programming this year for UHAND has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, we continue to host various educational sessions for our [Scholars](#) and [Early Stage Investigators](#) virtually. Some examples include our P.O.W.E.R. Writing sessions geared toward enhancing our scholars' writing abilities, and Cancer Disparity Seminars that highlight the different cancer disparities that exist for vulnerable populations and ways researchers have and can target them.



Dr. Lorraine Reitzel, University of Houston Principal Investigator (middle second from the right) discusses Social Determinants of Health as part of the Cancer Disparities Seminar with Stephanie Ramirez (UHAND undergraduate scholar, top left), Litty Koshy (UHAND staff, top second from the left), Karina Serrano (UHAND undergraduate scholar, top second from the right), Matthew Taing (UHAND undergraduate scholar, top right), Journa Cobite (UHAND graduate scholar, middle left), Danielle Llana (UHAND graduate scholar, middle second from the left), Niloofer Tavakoli (UHAND graduate scholar, middle right), and Dr. Kamisha Escoto (UHAND staff, bottom).

Our Scholars have also had the opportunity to partake in several Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) seminars, presented by [Dr. Lorraine Reitzel](#) (University of Houston Principal Investigator). These seminars cover a variety of topics spanning several important areas related to ethical conduct of research, such as being inclusive of minority populations during recruitment and accounting for health literacy. Below is one quote taken from the feedback we receive from our scholars regarding these seminars.

UHAND
A partnership to address cancer disparities
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
MD Anderson Cancer Center

RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH SEMINARS

Regarding *Best Practices for Respectful Engagement with Minority Communities*:

“ I think this was my favorite RCR training so far! I really enjoyed learning about the importance of not only the need to train PI's but laboratory staff in minority recruitment. It made me see the importance of community advisory boards not only in assisting with recruitment but helping build trust between you and the community you want to study.”

– UHAND Scholar

Community

While COVID-19 has made outreach a much different process than how it was done before, the UHAND's [Community Outreach Team](#) has adjusted accordingly to expose our scholars to essential education on reaching communities via a virtual format. In June, the Community Outreach Team, during a lecture series, shared with the scholars how crucial forming a relationship with the community is to research. The team was able to share their experiences with the community and their thoughts on how outreach will be different, but still effective, during a pandemic.

The scholars were also able to sit in on a [virtual panel discussion](#) and Q&A about Racial Health Disparities held via Zoom. On the panel was the director of the Humana Integrated Health System Sciences Institute at the University of Houston and a University of Houston College of Medicine professor [Dr. LeChauncy D. Woodard](#), and the Founder/Co-Director of the HEALTH Research Institute and Professor and Associate Dean of the University of Houston College of Education Dr. [Ezemenari M. Obasi](#), and State Representative [Garnet F. Coleman](#).

In July, [Change Happens](#) was featured in our Community Outreach Lecture series. This presentation was especially notable in particular due to its' delivery by a former UHAND scholar, [Christine Smith](#), who was hired at Change Happens due to her service learning experience. Christine shared her experience matriculating through UHAND and volunteering at Change Happens and how she was able to merge the two positions and turn them into a job. The scholars also got to learn about the positive impact Change Happens continues to have on the communities it reaches.



Christine Smith (Former UHAND Scholar, second row, left) discusses her new role as a Health Educator at Change Happens and the organization's impact on local Houston communities with Terrence Adams (UHAND staff, top row, left), Imarogbe Stokes (UHAND staff, top row, second to the left), Ms. Trinell Davis (Change Happens Volunteer Coordinator, top row, second to the right), Ms. Berta Salazar (UHAND staff, top row, right), Cassandra Harris (UHAND staff, second row, second to the left), Niloofar Tavakoli (UHAND Scholar, second row, second to the right), Stephanie Ramirez (UHAND Scholar, second row, right), Danielle Llaneza (UHAND Scholar, third row, left), Karina Serrano (UHAND Scholar, third row, second to the left), Matthew Taing (UHAND Scholar, third row, second to the right), Journa Cobite (third row, right), Royal Wallace (Change Happens Marketing Outreach Specialist, bottom row, left), and Jeness Sherrell (Change Happens Affordable Care Act Navigators Program Coordinator, bottom row, right).

Other scholar attended events this quarter include the Center for Community-Engaged

Translational Research's ([CCETR](#)) Community Huddle, [Third Ward Community Cloth Meeting](#), and two Community Relations and Education ([CRE](#)) Events: Too Cool to Smoke and Teen Tobacco. Upcoming events for the scholars include a presentation on social media, a Health Disparities Conversations on Race and Health by [It's Time Texas](#), and a Community Outreach Lecture featuring Elia Chino of Fundación Latinoamericana de Acción Social ([FLAS](#)).

UHAND's community core is currently recruiting additional [Community Mentors!](#) Community Mentors help provide feedback on research from the community perspective and participate in mentoring team meetings. They enable access to at-risk populations and identify local opportunities for scholars to share research findings. If you are interested, please contact Berta Salazar (brsalazar@mdanderson.org) or Imarogbe Stokes (icstokes@central.uh.edu) for more information.

UHAND Recognition

Congratulations to [Dr. Rosenda Murillo](#) (UHAND Supplement Investigator) and [Dr. Chakema Carmack](#) (UHAND mentor), who have both been recently promoted to Associate Professor with tenure at the [University of Houston!](#)



Dr. Rosenda Murillo



Dr. Chakema Carmack

Select UHAND Publications

Iwundu, C. N. (former UHAND postdoctoral fellow, maiden name Odoh), Agrawal, P., Businelle, M. S., Kendzor, D. E., & Reitzel, L. R. (University of Houston Principal Investigator). Predictors of Overnight and Emergency Treatment among Homeless Adults. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2020, 17, 4271. <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/17/12/4271>

Reitzel, L. R. (University of Houston Principal Investigator), Chinamuthevi, S., Daundasekara, S.S., Hernandez, D.C. (UHAND Pilot Investigator), Chen, T.-A., Harkara, Y., Obasi, E. M. (UHAND IAC co-Chair and UHAND mentor), Kendzor, D. E., & Businelle,

M. S. Association of Problematic Alcohol Use and Food Insecurity among Homeless Men and Women. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2020, 17, 3631.

<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/17/10/3631>



UHAND

A partnership to address cancer disparities

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
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A partnership to address cancer disparities

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