

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

[Dr. Lorna McNeill](#) (MD Anderson UHAND Principal Investigator) was recently inducted into the [Greater Houston Women's Chamber of Commerce](#) Hall of Fame on December 3rd, 2020! This organization contributes to the advancement and empowerment of women in business through leadership, education, advocacy, and mentoring. The Hall of Fame honors women who have contributed significantly to the community through their dedication to bettering their community members' quality of life.

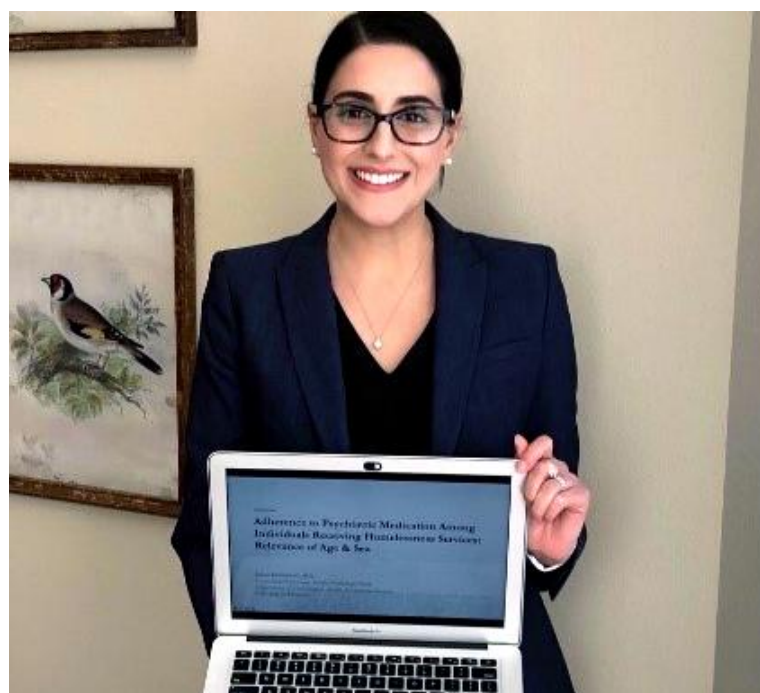


Dr. Lorna McNeill (MD Anderson Cancer Center Principal Investigator) is honored at the Hall of Fame Gala hosted by Greater Houston Women's Chamber of Commerce.

Our Scholars

Scholar Achievements

Former UHAND graduate Scholars [Sahar Eshtehardi](#) and [Ashley Taylor](#) were able to successfully complete their candidacy projects in November 2020! Sahar Eshtehardi defended her thesis entitled "Adherence to Psychiatric Medications Among Individuals Receiving Homelessness Services: Relevance of Age & Sex," and Ashley Taylor defended her thesis on the "Physical Activity and Sleep Inadequacies in an Adult Homeless Sample and the Potential Moderating Effect of Sex." Their successful defense of their projects showcase their effort and dedication into the research they conduct, and UHAND looks forward to witnessing their continuing advancements in health disparities research!



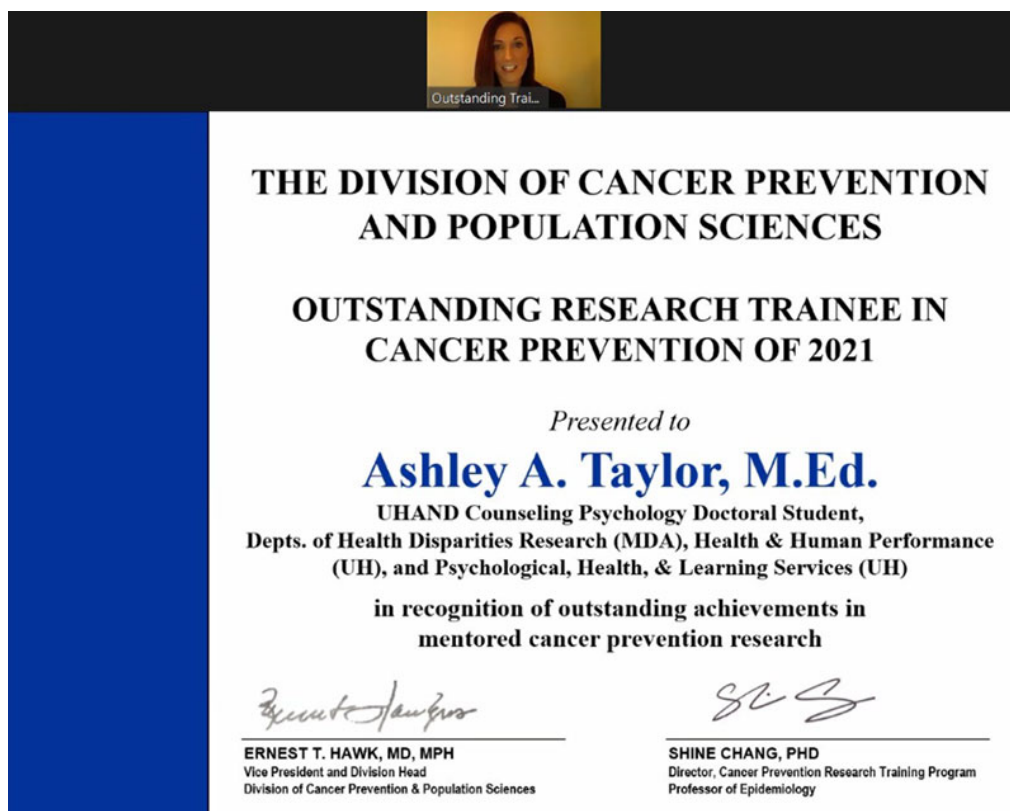
Sahar Eshtehardi (former UHAND graduate Scholar) poses with her candidacy paper on the relationship of age and sex to adherence of psychiatric medications among homeless individuals.



Ashley Taylor (former UHAND graduate Scholar) successfully defends her candidacy project, which covers sex as a factor that influences the level of physical activity and sleep inadequacy experienced by homeless adults.

[Sahar Eshtehardi](#) (former UHAND graduate Scholar) recently had her poster submission entitled “Health-Related Quality of Life in Pre-Adolescents with Type 1 Diabetes (T1D): Differences between Sociodemographic Groups” accepted for presentation at the [2021 Virtual Society of Pediatric Psychology Annual Conference](#)! This conference provides a forum for research professionals to collaborate on and promote cutting edge research and education regarding pediatric psychology, clinical care, and policy.

Former UHAND graduate Scholar [Ashley Taylor](#) was recently selected as a MD Anderson Outstanding Research Trainee in Cancer Prevention for 2021! A doctoral candidate at the University of Houston, Ashley has been involved in research at [MD Anderson Cancer Center](#) since her time with UHAND, and has proven herself exceptionally capable in her research skills and undertakings.



Ashley Taylor (former UHAND graduate Scholar) attends a virtual ceremony hosted by the Division of Cancer Prevention and Population Science at MD Anderson Cancer Center, where she is recognized as an Outstanding Research Trainee in Cancer Prevention.

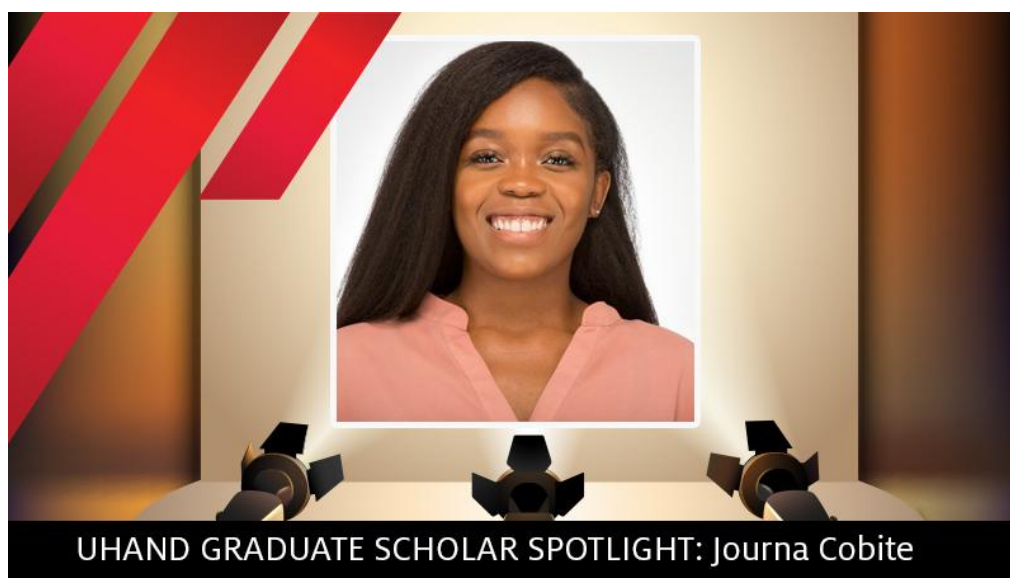
An additional congratulations goes to former UHAND undergraduate Scholar [Basant Gamal](#), who received an honorable mention as a 2021 Outstanding Research Trainee in Cancer Prevention at [MD Anderson Cancer Center](#)!

UHAND graduate Scholar [Danielle Llaneza](#) was recently selected as a peer-mentor for the [American Psychological Association of Graduate Students Committee for the Advancement of Racial and Ethnic Diversity Peer Collaboration Program](#). This committee is dedicated to ensuring the representation and advocacy for ethnic minority graduate psychology students. The program spans 4 months and encourages these minority students to build social support networks, learn from one another’s experiences, and pursue professional collaborations.

UHAND graduate Scholar [Niloofer Tavakoli](#) recently had the opportunity to co-author an article based on the research she assists her UHAND mentor [Dr. Virmarie Correa-Fernandez](#) (University of Houston Assistant Professor) with, who is lead author. The publication is entitled “Hispanic/Latino’s cigarette and e-cigarette use: behavioral and self-related health,” and has been published in the [American Journal of Health Behavior](#)!

Scholar Spotlight

This quarter, we spoke with [Journa Cobite](#) (UHAND graduate Scholar) and [Matthew Taing](#) (UHAND undergraduate Scholar) to get more insight about their interests in research and what they hope to gain through their experience with UHAND.



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

I really enjoyed how intentional UHAND was during Summer 2020 about preparing us for the academic year through the PRIM&R Webinars and RCR workshops, writing workshops, as well as the career conversations with scientist events. They were all very informative and helped prepare me for this academic year.

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

My UHAND Mentor, [Dr. Ezemenari Obasi](#) (Professor & Associate Dean for Research in the College of Education at the University of Houston), has taught me a great deal about the importance of enhancing my competency in all areas of research design including research methodology, statistics, writing skills, etc. He has also taught me the importance of actively engaging with the community through community-based research and he also serves as a great role model in how to effectively collaborate with other professionals in both academia and the community to create sustainable community research programs such as [The Health Research Institute](#). The knowledge that he continues to instill in me will help both build and inform my professional career as a clinician and a researcher.

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

I hope to sharpen my research skill sets as well as continue to enhance my knowledge about cancer prevention and cancer-related health disparities to inform future studies, particularly in Black and ethnic populations. I also hope to actively engage with the community through research and complete an independent project in addition to a cancer disparities publication.

What is a personal motto or mantra that you live by?

A motto or personal mantra that I often use to uplift my spirits and encourage myself is "I create my own path and walk it with joy."



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

Despite COVID-19, my favorite part of UHAND has been working with my mentors, [Dr. Francesco Versace](#) (MD Anderson Associate Professor) and [Dr. Lorraine Reitzel](#) (University of Houston UHAND Principal Investigator). It's been very exciting to not only have an active role in their research, but to also know them on a more personal level. UHAND has really put some of the best mentors into my life.

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

Without a doubt, working with two PIs has been challenging. It's taught me a lot about time management and also my own work ethic. On a personal level, I feel like both of my mentors have taught me a lot about not only working hard, but also taking the time to take care of myself and not burn myself out. I really appreciate that.

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

I definitely want to learn more about [Dr. Francesco Versace's](#) work with event related potentials. I'm currently working with him to do data analysis on some of his previous studies. While COVID-19 has limited our ability to actively collect data, I think this is definitely a good start to familiarizing myself with his work. It's very interesting to see how the brain responds to different stimuli and triggers.

What did you want to be when growing up?

Since Kindergarten, I've always wanted to be a doctor and that hasn't really changed to this day. I think now, however, I have a clear idea of what I want to do in medicine and why I want to become a doctor. I'm not going to talk too much about the why because that's a REALLY long story but I can say that I see myself helping underserved communities and using research to drive my care. Coming back to UHAND, I think that's the beauty of the program. Although there is an emphasis on research, there is also an emphasis on bringing that information to communities and implementing it in a meaningful way.

Education

UHAND's scholars started the year off with a series of Elevator Speech Training Workshop Seminars. These seminars train them on how to summarize their experiences, research interests, and career goals in a short and concise format that they can readily deliver to other professionals throughout their career. UHAND would like to especially thank [Dr. Tamara Laskowski](#) (MD Anderson Scientific Project Director), who gave the scholars an overview on the basics of Elevator Speeches and their importance to the scholars as researchers, as well as to [Dr. Brittany Parker Kerrigan](#) (MD Anderson Scientific Manager) and [Dr. Carrie Cameron](#) (MD Anderson Associate Professor), who covered different styles of elevator speeches to choose from and tips on how to deliver them effectively.





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How to Deliver a Successful Elevator Speech – Day 2

Brittany Parker Kerrigan, Ph.D.
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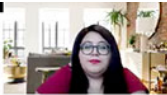
Carrie Cameron, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
ccameron@mdanderson.org

Drs. Brittany Parker Kerrigan (Scientific Manager for the Department of Neurosurgery at MD Anderson) and Carrie Cameron (Associate Professor at MD Anderson) deliver the second series in the Elevator Speech Training Workshop, where they go over different styles and delivery approaches when formatting an elevator speech.

Community

UHAND's [Community Outreach Team](#) hosted its first Community Mentor Meeting this quarter. During this meeting, they were able to provide more insight on how our modified Community Mentor program will deliver a robust mentorship in disparities and community engagement despite the shift toward virtual interactions. At the next meeting, the scholars and community mentors will be brought together so they can meet one another and share their research interests.





Agenda

- Welcome
- Community Outreach Team
- Introductions
- Overview of the UHAND program
- Cohort 1 Scholars
- Cohort 2 Scholars
- Stay Tuned

Berta Salazar (UHAND Community Outreach Team member, top) goes over the agenda for the first Community Mentor Meeting, held virtually.

Our UHAND Scholars were quite active this quarter and were able to participate in a few virtual events, including the [2020 National Minority Quality Forum](#), [Philip R. Nader Legacy of Health Lectureship](#), and [NIH Rural Health Seminar](#), to name a few.

The UHAND Community Outreach Team is still looking for speakers to contribute to our Community Outreach Lecture series. If you have advice for budding scholars seeking a career in health/cancer disparities, we're looking for you! Interested? Please contact Berta Salazar (brsalazar@mdanderson.org) or Imarogbe Stokes (icstokes@central.uh.edu) for more information."

Select UHAND Publications

Wu, I.H.C. (current UHAND postdoctoral fellow), Heredia, N., Dong, Q., McNeill, L.H.,* Balachandran, B., Lu, Q., & Chang, S. (in press). Sleep Duration and Type 2 diabetes Risk: A Prospective Study in a Population-based Mexican American Cohort. *Sleep Health*.

Connors, S. K., Martinez Leal, I., Nitturi, V., **Iwundu, C. N.** (former UHAND postdoctoral fellow), Maza, V., Reyes S., Acquati, C., & Reitzel, L. R.* (in press). Empowered Choices: African-American Women’s Breast Reconstruction Decisions. *American Journal of Health Behavior*.

Savoy, E. J., Businelle, M. S., Nguyen, N., Chen, T-A., Neighbors, C., Norton, P. J., **Taing, M.** (current UHAND undergraduate Scholar), & Reitzel, L. R.* (2021). Examining Moment to Moment Affective Determinants of Smoking Rate Following a Quit Attempt among Homeless Daily Smokers. *Addictive Behaviors*, 115, 106788. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2020.106788>.

Correa-Fernández, V.,* **Tavakoli, N.** (current UHAND graduate Scholar), Motsenbocker, M. & Kim, H.J. (2021). Hispanic/Latino’s Cigarette and E-Cigarette Use: Behavioral and Self-Rated Health. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 45 (1), 95-110.

Agrawal, P., **Taing, M.** (current UHAND undergraduate Scholar), Chen, T-A., **Reuven, S.** (former UHAND undergraduate Scholar), Businelle, M. S., Kendzor, D. E., Bernicker, E. H., & Reitzel, L. R.* (2020). Understanding the Associations Between Smoking-Related Risk Perception, Interest in Quitting Smoking, and Interest in Lung Cancer Screening Among Homeless Adult Smokers. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(23), 8817. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17238817>

Iwundu, C. N. (former UHAND postdoctoral fellow Scholar), Chen, T-A., Edereka-Great, K., Businelle, M. S., Kendzor, D. E., & Reitzel, L. R.* (2020). Mental Illness and Youth-Onset Homelessness: A Retrospective Study Among Adults Experiencing Homelessness. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(22), 8295. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17228295>.

Note: *UHAND mentor on the project; UHAND affiliated faculty member; **current or former UHAND Scholar**. For the full list of UHAND-supported publications and presentations, please visit <https://www.uhandpartnership.com/publications>.



UHAND

A partnership to address cancer disparities

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A partnership to address cancer disparities

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