

## 2019 Annual Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) Conference

### Speaker Biographies



#### **Greg Leos, MPH, CPH, CIC, Epidemiologist**

Greg Leos is an epidemiologist and team lead for the Vaccine Preventable Disease (VPD) team in the Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Branch (EAIDU) at the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) central office in Austin. Prior to joining the VPD team, he worked on the Foodborne/Waterborne team for 5 years. He has experience as a Physical Therapist Assistant in the Air Force and with St. David's Rehabilitation Hospital in Austin, Texas. Greg received an A.A.S for Physical Therapist Assistant from The Community College of the Air Force, B.S. in Microbiology from The University of Texas at Austin, and M.P.H. from The University of Texas

School of Public Health.



#### **Jennifer Vinyard, MPH, CIC, Epidemiologist**

Jennifer Vinyard is the Healthcare Associated Infections Data Team Lead for the Texas Department of State Health Services. She conducts and coordinates data validation activities and authors the Texas Annual Healthcare Safety Report summarizing the Healthcare Safety Data reported to the state. She has a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a Master of Public Health in Disease Control and Prevention from the University of Texas and is certified in Infection Control and Prevention. Prior to joining the state, she worked as an Infection Preventionist at various healthcare facilities around Texas and in Colorado.



#### **Andrea Salinas, MPH, CPH, CIC, Epidemiologist**

Andrea Salinas, MPH, CPH, CIC has worked as an epidemiologist with the Vaccine-Preventable Diseases team since June 2019. Prior to moving to Texas, she spent 4 years as a Healthcare-Associated Infections epidemiologist with the Louisiana Department of Health. Andrea received her Bachelor of Science in Sociology from Texas A&M University and her Master of Public Health from Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.



**José J. Aponte, BS, Informatics Services Branch, CDC**

José Aponte is a Public Health Advisor with the Division of Health Informatics and Surveillance (DHIS) in the Center for Surveillance, Epidemiology, and Laboratory Services (CELS) at CDC. He has a BS in Business Administration/Computer Science.

José has 20+ years of experience in surveillance systems and data management and currently provides technical expertise, surveillance systems support, and training to public health practitioners using Epi Info 7, a public domain suite of interoperable software tools.

As a Public Health Advisor, José has had the opportunity to work domestically and internationally supporting public health initiatives and responding to outbreaks of diseases such as H1N1 in Mexico, Zika in the Caribbean region, and Ebola in West Africa.



**Hailey Rucas, MPH, Epidemiologist**

Hailey Rucas is currently an infectious disease epidemiologist at Austin Public Health. She received her bachelor's degree in microbiology from the University of Arizona in May 2013. In May 2015, she received her MPH in epidemiology from the UT Health Science Center at Houston, Austin Regional Campus. She has four years of infectious disease epidemiology experience in Texas, including experience at the local, region, and state levels. She was the Texas State Influenza Surveillance Coordinator from May 2017 to June 2019.



**Tyler Zerwekh, DrPH, REHS, Operations Manager**

Dr. Tyler Zerwekh is the Operations Manager for the operations team in the Immunization Unit at the Texas Department of State Health Services. He recently served as an Epidemiologist III for the Waterborne and Invasive and Respiratory Infectious Disease team in the Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Unit. Prior to Texas, Dr. Zerwekh served as the Administrator of Environmental Health Services for Shelby County Health Department in Memphis, TN. Tyler attended Texas Tech University for his Bachelor's in Arts and was awarded his Master's in Public Health and Doctorate in Public Health from the University of Texas School of Public Health – Houston.

Dr. Zerwekh has spent 21 years in various aspects of public health practice including laboratory, epidemiology, emergency preparedness, and environmental public health programs. Dr. Zerwekh has published numerous articles and textbook chapters on public health emergency preparedness and environmental public health. Dr. Zerwekh serves as a Technical Advisor for the National Environmental Health Association and National Association of City and County Health Organizations while also serving as a Lead Site Team Visitor for the Public Health Accreditation Board.



**Natalie Kay Lee, PhD, Postdoctoral Fellow in Infectious Disease Therapeutics**

Natalie Lee graduated with a master's degree in biochemistry from Oxford University and a PhD in neuroscience from the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia. She has worked as a lead trainer and project coordinator for the Military Assisted Concussion Evaluation training program for the US Navy where she assisted with the design and delivery of a pre-deployment training program on how to identify traumatic brain injuries in combat situations. Currently, she is a postdoctoral research fellow at the WHO Centre for Studies on the Ecology of Influenza in Animals laboratory and the NIH Health Center of Excellence for Influenza Research and Surveillance Program under Dr. Richard Webby at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, TN. Her research

interests include determining the functionality of viral RNA modifications on the influenza genome and comparing human immune responses to seasonal H1N1 and H7N9 influenza infections in Guangzhou, China. Natalie also serves as the viral diagnostics expert for the Global Infectious Diseases Program at St. Jude where she travels to collaborative hospital sites in low-middle income countries such as Haiti, Paraguay, and Myanmar and helps develop research objectives aimed at addressing challenges related to infection care and prevention.

**Melissa McMahon, MPH, Senior Epidemiologist**

Melissa McMahon is a senior epidemiologist with the Minnesota Department of Health, and the surveillance officer for Minnesota's FluSurv-NET program. She has been with the MN Department of Health for 9 years and has coordinated the FluSurv-NET program for 5 years. She received her MPH from the University of Minnesota, where she is currently a doctoral candidate in infectious disease, focusing on influenza.

**Litjen (LJ) Tan, MS, PhD, Chief Strategy Officer, Immunization Action Coalition**

After 15 years at the American Medical Association as their director of Medicine and Public Health, Litjen (LJ) Tan, MS, PhD, joined the Immunization Action Coalition as their chief strategy officer. L.J also is co-chair and co-founder of the National Adult and Influenza Immunization Summit, and the former president of the Board of the Adult Vaccine Access Coalition (AVAC). Dr. Tan received his Master of Science Degree in biology at New York University and earned his Doctor of Philosophy in microbiology/immunology from Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago.

Dr. Tan's current appointments include serving as a special consultant for the European Union Influenza Summit and the Asia-Pacific Influenza Summit and serving as a member of the Advisory Board for AVAC, the Unity (United for Adolescent Vaccination) Consortium, the 317 Coalition, to name a few. He was a voting member of the National Vaccine Advisory Committee from 2009 to 2013 and a liaison member of the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), from 2002 to 2012. Dr. Tan serves on numerous national and international expert advisory committees on issues ranging from vaccine hesitancy, to immunization quality measurement development, to adult immunizations, to immunization access and delivery. His many recognitions include the 2011 CDC National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases Honor Awards: Excellence in Partnering, and an American Pharmacists Association 2009 National Immunization Champion Award.

He is the proud father of three fully-immunized children.



**Jennifer Gonzales, Microbiologist III**

Jennifer Gonzales is the Team Lead of the Viral Isolation Section at the Texas Department of State Health Services Laboratory. She has been a part of the Viral Isolation Team for more than 10 years and has also served as the electron microscopist for the section. Jennifer has a Bachelor of Science in Biology, with a concentration in Pathology and Immunology from the University of Texas at Austin. Presently, the Viral Isolation Team performs Real-Time RT-PCR testing for measles, mumps, influenza, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), chikungunya, dengue, and Zika virus.



**Denise Starkey, MPH, MA, Adolescent and Adult Immunization Coordinator**

Denise began her career with the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) as a Texas Vaccines for Children (TVFC) Consultant partnering with the DSHS Public Health Regions, Local Health Departments, and private clinics providing education, program management, trainings, and presentations on the TVFC Program. She currently is the DSHS Adolescent and Adult Immunization Coordinator at the DSHS Central Office in Austin. Here she leads a team on improving adolescent and adult immunization rates in the state of Texas and the Adult Safety Net (ASN) Program partnering with the DSHS Public Health Regions Adolescent and Adult Immunization Coordinators, Local Health

Departments, and private clinics. Her team provides ASN Program updates and policy revisions, as well as strategies to implement the CDC Standards for Adult Immunization Practice. Her academic career includes a Master in Public Health (MPH), concentrating on health promotion and disease prevention, and a Master of Arts (MA), concentrating on biocultural and medical anthropology from California State University, Fullerton.

**Scott Mize, MPH, CPH, CIC, Epidemiologist, Public Health Region 2/3, Texas DSHS**

**Sarah Y. Park, MD, FAAP**

Dr. Park is the Hawaii State Epidemiologist and Chief of the Disease Outbreak Control Division, Hawaii Department of Health. She directs all activities related to emerging infections, disease surveillance and investigations, immunizations, and emergency responses related to those areas (e.g., Hawaii's response to the 2009 H1N1 pandemic). Aside from her duties for Hawaii, Dr. Park is an Executive Board member for the Council of State & Territorial Epidemiologists, the senior states leadership and decision-making body for reviewing nationally notifiable conditions and establishing disease reporting and surveillance standards. Dr. Park has also served on the National Advisory Committee on Children and Disasters, which advises the US Health & Human Services (HHS) Secretary and Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) on issues related to children and



disasters, specifically regarding the nation's preparedness and capacity to respond. Additionally, Dr. Park has served on several other national committees as well as working groups to address various topics including guidelines for pediatric anthrax vaccines and smallpox management and has provided talks locally and nationally on various infectious disease and public health response related topics.

Dr. Park is a former Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), where her work included activities in bacterial respiratory diseases, West Nile Virus, methicillin resistant and vancomycin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, and SARS. She has worked internationally with the World Health Organization and CDC in activities such as polio elimination, vaccine preventable disease surveillance and program assessment, and epidemic disease investigation and response.

Dr. Park completed her undergraduate education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, her medical education at the Boston University School of Medicine, her pediatrics residency at the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford, and her pediatric infectious diseases fellowship at the University of California at San Francisco. She continues to practice clinically, occasionally covering the pediatric infectious diseases inpatient service at Kapiolani Medical Center for Women & Children in Honolulu, HI, and is an Assistant Clinical Professor at the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine.

**Laura Robinson, DVM, MS, Assistant State Public Health Veterinarian, Zoonosis Control Branch (ZCB)**

Dr. Robinson attended Texas A&M University where she earned her Bachelor of Science, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Master of Science (in Epidemiology) degrees. She was a Commissioned Officer with the Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) program of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia for two years. There she worked as a public health epidemiologist and focused on viral and rickettsial zoonoses, including rabies.

She began working with the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) in 1994 as the Region 11 Zoonosis Control Veterinarian in southern Texas. In September of 2013, Dr. Robinson became the Director of the Texas Oral Rabies Vaccination Program with the Zoonosis Control Branch (ZCB) of DSHS in Austin. In July 2017, she was designated as the Assistant State Public Health Veterinarian for DSHS ZCB.

**Kelly Broussard, MPH, Epidemiologist, ZCB** Kelly Broussard received a Bachelor of Science degree in Microbiology from The University of Texas at Austin and a Master of Public Health degree in Infectious Diseases & Vaccinology from The University of California, Berkeley. Kelly joined the Zoonosis Control Branch of the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) in 2015 as an epidemiologist, coming from working on multidrug-resistant organism reporting at the Emerging and Acute Infectious Diseases Branch at DSHS. With ZCB, she primarily focuses on arboviral disease reporting in humans in addition to surveillance for a variety of other zoonotic diseases. Kelly has research experience in rabies, White Nose Syndrome, and bat ecology through a CDC laboratory research fellowship at the New York State Department of Health rabies laboratory and having previously worked in the DSHS laboratory as a rabies microbiologist.

**Briana O'Sullivan, MPH, Epidemiologist, ZCB**

Briana O'Sullivan is an epidemiologist with the Zoonosis Control Branch. She earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Florida and her Master of Public Health degree from

the University of Cape Town. Prior to coming to the Texas Department of State Health Services, she completed a two-year fellowship as a Florida Epidemic Intelligence Services Fellow with the Florida Department of Health in Palm Beach County. She is a returned Peace Corps volunteer, having served as a Schools and Community Resource Volunteer in South Africa for 27 months.

**Carlos Alvarez, MPH, CPH, Epidemiologist**

Carlos works as an epidemiologist at the Texas Department of State Health Services under the Hepatitis C surveillance program in the TB/HIV/STD Branch. He received both, a B.S. in Microbiology and an MPH degree, from the University of Texas at El Paso and is currently a DrPH student at the University of South Florida. He has worked in public health for more than six years in different capacities. After four years at the El Paso Dept of Public Health, he moved to Austin, TX where he worked as a data collector and currently as an HCV epidemiologist.



**Rachael Straver, DVM, MPH, HCID/Prion Team Lead Epidemiologist, Emerging & Acute Infectious Disease Branch, Texas Department of State Health Services**

Dr. Rachael Straver graduated from Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences after earning a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences and a veterinary medical degree from Texas A&M University. She has practiced both mixed and small animal veterinary medicine. Dr. Straver also earned a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. Dr. Straver has worked as a Florida Emerging Infectious Disease Fellow for the Florida Department of Health in Seminole County, Florida and an Arboviral Disease Epidemiologist for the Virginia Department of Health, Division of Environmental Epidemiology. She is currently the High Consequence Infectious Disease/Prion Disease Team Lead Epidemiologist for the Texas Department of State Health Services.



**Linc Allen, MBA, Texas Syndromic surveillance (TXS2) Coordinator, Division for Regional and Local Health Operations, Texas Department of State Health Services.**

Linc Allen is the Texas Syndromic Surveillance (TxS2) Coordinator in the Division for Regional and Local Health Operations (RLHO) at DSHS. Before his current role he coordinated technical and informational projects in various roles for the Immunization Unit at DSHS for three years. Linc earned his bachelor's from the University of Texas at Austin, and his MBA from the University of Texas at Dallas.



**Jessica Romano, MPH, Epidemiologist**

Jessica graduated from University of Texas Health Science Center at the Austin campus in May 2016 with a MPH in Epidemiology. Her concentration in grad school and career as an epidemiologist has been in infectious diseases. She worked as an infectious disease epidemiologist at San Antonio Metro Health for almost 2 years before moving back to Austin for her current position. Jessica has been working in the TB/HIV/STD section at Texas DSHS as an Epidemiologist since May 2018, focusing on STDs. Her projects have been specifically on Syphilis this past year.



**Kelsey Sanders, MPH, Epidemiologist**

Kelsey graduated from UT Health Science Center in 2016 with a MPH in Epidemiology. She began her career working with the DSHS Newborn Screening Unit and started with the Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Branch at Texas Department of State Health Services in February of 2017. Kelsey is a member of the VPD Team for the past 2.5 years.



**Lacey Sanders, MPH, Infectious Disease Epidemiologist**

Lacey Sanders, MPH received her under grad in Public Health from American Military University and her Master's in Public Health from University of New England. Lacey started her public health career in the US Navy as a Hospital Corpsman Preventive Medicine Tech. She accepted a position as Disease Surveillance Coordinator with DSHS Region 7 in 2007 and worked in the Epi department until taking a Disease Surveillance Position with Bell County Public Health District in 2010 and eventually became the epidemiologist for BCPHD. In 2018, she accepted a position with Waco-McLennan County Public Health District as the Infectious Disease Epidemiologist and is currently working there enjoying all the Legionella she can handle.



**Kamesha Owens, MPH, Program Specialist**

Currently, Kamesha serves as Program Specialist for Texas DSHS Zoonosis Control Branch on the Epidemiology Team. Previously, she worked as an Epidemiologist and Flu surveillance coordinator for the local health department in San Antonio, TX. Kamesha received her Bachelor of Science degree in Biology with a minor in chemistry from the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff, 2009 and her Master of Public Health (Epidemiology) degree from Kaplan University, 2013.



**Katherine Rose Perez, BS, Epidemiologist**

Katherine has worked for the Infectious Disease Control Unit since April 2019. She was brought on to work for the Crisis CoAg and currently does most of her work with the Vaccine-Preventable-Diseases Team as well as the Invasive Respiratory Waterborne and Foodborne Team on occasion. Katherine has a Bachelor of Science in Public Health with a concentration in Environmental Health from the University of Texas at Austin. Prior to working at DSHS, Katherine worked at the Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio Texas and BCFS Health and Human Services as an Incident Reservist.



**Adrienne Fung, MPH, Epidemiologist**

Adrienne Fung works as an Epidemiologist II on the Foodborne Illness Team in the Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Branch (EAIDU) at the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). She has been on the Foodborne Illness Team since 2016 and is familiar with outbreak surveillance and response to well-known pathogens such as *Salmonella* and *Cyclospora*, to name a few. Adrienne holds a Master of Public Health degree in Epidemiology from The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and a Bachelor of Science degree in Microbiology from The University of Texas at Austin. She is also working toward her Master of Business Administration degree at St. Edwards University in Austin. While not juggling work, school, and other commitments, she enjoys running the trails at Ladybird Lake and discovering new hiking spots in town.





**Alex Daniels, MPH, Healthcare Associated Infections/Preventable Adverse Events, Healthcare Safety Team, EAIDU, DSHS**

Alex Daniels is currently an HAI Data Specialist with the HAI Data Team at DSHS. He joined the Emerging and Infectious Disease Branch in September 2018 after serving as the Healthcare Associated Outbreak Epidemiologist for the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources.

While in the Mountain State, Alex served as the subject matter expert for carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE) and other multi-drug resistant organisms (MDROs), led healthcare associated outbreak investigations, and coordinated Antibiotic Resistance Laboratory Network (ARLN) activities with the state and regional labs. He also served as part of the on-site response teams

for the 2017 National Scout Jamboree and the statewide hepatitis A outbreak.

**Rashandra C. Hayes, J.D., Attorney, Policy Department, Office of Chief Counsel, HHSC**

Ms. Hayes graduated from the University of Texas Austin with a B.A. in Computer Science and she received her J.D. in Law from the Thurgood Marshal School of Law at Texas Southern University. Rashandra is a policy attorney for the Texas Health & Human Services Commission (HHSC) and represents the Department of State Health Services (DSHS).



**Jennifer Q. Nguyen, J.D., Attorney, Policy Department, Office of Chief Counsel, HHSC**

Jennifer Q. Nguyen is a policy attorney for the Texas Health & Human Services Commission (HHSC) and represents the Department of State Health Services (DSHS). She is the primary policy contact for DSHS Regional and Local Health Operations, which includes dealing with regional and local health departments, Office of Border Public Health, and the Texas Center for Infectious Diseases (TCID).



**Jonathan Kolsin, MPH, Epidemiologist**

Jonathan Kolsin is currently an Epidemiologist with the foodborne illness team at Texas DSHS. Previously, he worked as an Epidemiologist for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Vector-Borne Diseases. Jonathan received his Bachelor of Science degree in Molecular Biology with a certificate in Global Health from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and his Master of Public Health degree in Epidemiology from Emory University.

**Cari Roark Sloma, PhD, D(ABMM), DSHS Laboratory**

Cari is a native Texan whose career led her up the I-35 corridor, and back down, with a few years teaching at an overseas medical school in between. She joined the DSHS laboratory in 2015 and now serves as the manager for the Serological Analysis Group within the Microbiological Sciences Branch. Cari's a board-certified clinical microbiologist, immunologist, educator, seamstress, and big fan of public radio.

**Robert Lewis, B.A., Microbiology, DSHS Laboratory**

Robert has been with DSHS Laboratory Services Section for 20 years. In that time, he has spent 13 years working in the Mycology/Mycobacteriology Lab and 5 years as a Quality Assurance Officer before moving to his current role in logistics. As the Microbiology Branch's logistics person, Robert handles a wide variety of duties. Some of those duties include pre-analytical specimen issues, customer service and reporting, Epi coordination with the lab, and data compiling and analysis. Robert received a BA in Microbiology from the University of Texas at Austin.



**Michael Fischer, M.D., MPH & TM, Antibiotic Stewardship Expert**

Fischer, M.D., MPH & TM has worked for the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) for over 7 years in the Infectious Disease Control Unit (IDCU) and has recently taken-on the role of Antibiotic Stewardship Expert for the Health Care Safety Group of IDCU, DSHS. Prior to taking on this role, Michael served as the epidemiologist and subject matter expert for prion disease surveillance in Texas.

Additionally, Michael has also served as a medical epidemiologist, during outbreaks involving high-consequence pathogens (West Africa Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in 2014) or events with elevated public concern (travel-related Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS-CoV)), providing consults to physicians, infection control practitioners, and healthcare facilities on appropriateness of testing, test results, prevention and control measures, and mechanisms of disease transmission.

As the Antibiotic Stewardship Expert, Dr. Fischer's primary role is to promote the implementation and enhancement of antibiotic stewardship programs in Texas across all healthcare settings.



**Michael Castro, MPH**

Michael Castro, MPH is the Western Hemisphere Product Manager of the Healthcare Water portfolio for Pall Medical, a manufacturer of specialty filtration for healthcare settings. His main responsibility is to deliver high-level, non-commercial educational programs across the USA through educational grants which allow local healthcare organizations to learn from and meet with internationally renowned experts. As a member of The Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC), American Society for Health Care Engineering (ASHE), American Society of Plumbing Engineers (ASPE) and American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), he has served as Pall Medical's liaison standards writing committees since 2013. Michael has over 19 years of experience consulting healthcare

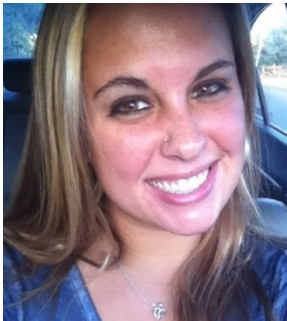
facilities, universities and manufacturing sites on risk minimization strategies addressing waterborne pathogens in both domestic and industrial water. Michael is a member of ANSI/ASHRAE Standard 188 - Legionellosis: Risk Management for Building Water Systems as a NVM Manufacturer Representative; a voting member of NSF's Protocol P376 for evaluation of Mechanical Water Filtration Systems for the Reduction of Bacteria and Fungi for Handwashing and Showering in Health Care Settings; a Technical Advisor to the California Department of Public Health Healthcare-Associated Infections Advisory Committee, Environmental Cleaning in Healthcare Subcommittee; as well as The International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials' (IAPMO) Legionella Task Group as they work towards developing new plumbing standards which balance the risk of scalding and *Legionella*. Michael is frequently called upon by healthcare facilities as a consultant to their water safety team during waterborne pathogen outbreaks as well as proactively to consult on minimizing risk within immunocompromised populations through nutrient and microbial reduction strategies. Michael has a Master of Public Health from Grand Canyon University and a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from Bucknell University.



**Tishara Coleman, MPA, REHS/RS, Texas Rapid Response Team Coordinator**

Tishara Coleman has been in the field of Public Health for 12 years. She is currently the Texas Rapid Response Coordinator at the Texas Department of State Health Services. She is responsible for developing policies, procedures, standards, and Response Operating Guide for use by all members of the TRRT. She has served on national Rapid Response Team workgroups to develop best practices. She also prepares final reports of various activities including After Action Reports and develop and implement improvement plans following an outbreak

investigation. Tishara holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology-Criminology from Ohio University, and a Master of Public Administration from Cleveland State University.



**Gillian Blackwell, BSN, RN, CIC, HAI Epidemiologist**

Gillian Blackwell is a nursing diploma graduate and earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Lubbock Christian University. She worked in pediatric ICU at Covenant Medical Center in Lubbock for 3 years, then worked at Joe Arrington Cancer Center in Lubbock for 1 year before joining the Texas Department of State Health Services in June 2017. She serves as the Healthcare Associated Infection Epidemiologist for DSHS Region 1. Gillian became Board Certified in Infection Prevention and Control in December 2017. She responded to 2010 Haiti earthquake and 2017 Hurricane Harvey.



**Susana Baumann, MPH, CIC, HAI Epidemiologist**

Susana Baumann is a Healthcare-Associated Infection (HAI) Epidemiologist for the Texas Department of State Health Services in Region 9/10. Susana was a Certified Sterile Processing and Distribution Technician for 2 years, and an Infection Preventionist in Austin area healthcare facilities for 3 years before joining DSHS as a healthcare data analyst, where she became Certified in Infection Control in 2017. Susana has a Bachelor of Science in Zoology from North Carolina State University and a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from the University of Texas in Austin. As a HAI epidemiologist who is Board Certified in Infection Prevention and Control, she works with facilities to address issues of MDROs, outbreaks, antibiotic stewardship and reduction of device-associated infections. She has special interests in environmental infection control, tribal epidemiology, and zookeeping.



**Gretchen Rodriguez, MPH, CIC, HAI Epidemiologist**

Gretchen Rodriguez received a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Biotechnology from the University of Puerto Rico and a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. She is Board Certified in Infection Prevention and Control and is expected to earn a Doctor of Public Health in Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences in 2020. Gretchen is a Healthcare Associated Infections (HAI) Epidemiologist with the Texas Department of State Health Services and serves as a subject matter expert performing senior-level epidemiological work related to the reporting, control and prevention of HAIs and outbreak response for Texas Public Health Region 8. Prior to her current position, she was employed as a Region Supervisor for Infection Prevention & Management Associates and an Infection Control Practitioner for Acuity Healthcare and an Epidemiologist for the San Antonio Metro Health District.



**Melba Zambrano, MSN-IC, RN, CIC, HAI Epidemiologist,**

Melba Zambrano is the HAI Epidemiologist for Region 11 with Department of State Health Services. Melba is responsible for the MDRO case load in her region which includes MDRA, CRE, and development of IP in LTCF, integrating new IP to the position in their health care facility, ICAR visits in Region 11 and Targeted assessments for prevention analysis in PHR 11. Prior to joining DSHS, Melba worked in an acute care setting as an IP director, and oversaw Infection Control, Occupational health, Work Injury, and Employee Advocacy Programs. Melba has extensive knowledge in hospital preparedness/ occupational safety. She has developed programs in facilities for surveillance and linkage to care for Hepatitis C patients. Melba has assisted LTCF in her area develop their antibiogram, enhance their IC programs in LTCF, and deliver evidence-based research into practice. Melba is a master's prepared registered nurse with an Infection Control Specialty that she earned from the American Sentinel University in Aurora, Colorado and is Board Certified in Infection Prevention and Control. Melba is an active member of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiologist (APIC). Melba has served as president, president elect, and chapter secretary for RGV-APIC chapter 105.





**Anna Nutt, MPH, CIC, HAI Epidemiologist**

Anna Nutt has coordinated infection prevention in acute care hospitals, long-term acute care hospitals, and surgical hospitals. Since 2016, she has been serving as the Department of State Health Services' Healthcare-Associated Infections (HAI) Epidemiologist for East Texas. She received a Bachelor of Science in Human Biology from the University of Texas at Austin and a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from the University of Texas Health Science Center in Austin and maintains Board Certification in Infection Prevention and Control. Anna has presented at various city and statewide conferences including the APIC East Texas annual conference and the annual statewide epidemiologist conference in Texas.



**Thi Dang, MPH, CHES, CIC, FAPIC, HAI Epidemiologist**

Ms. Dang is a Healthcare Associated Infection epidemiologist for the Texas Department of State Health Services. Thi has 10 years of experience as a public health epidemiologist with involvement in a variety of epidemiology investigations and responses in Texas, including foodborne outbreaks, the influenza pandemic, Ebola, hurricane responses, and various healthcare associated investigations in acute care hospitals, clinics, and long-term care facilities. She also worked as an Infection Preventionist at different acute care hospitals where she had experience with regulatory compliance surveys, infectious disease cluster investigations and many HAI prevention efforts. Thi has earned a Bachelor of Science in Health Studies from the Texas Woman's University and a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology. She is Board Certified in Infection Prevention and Control. Thi's current position combines her experience in epidemiology and infection prevention by assisting public health epidemiologists, infection preventionists, and other healthcare professionals in decreasing the number of healthcare associated infections. Thi is also actively involved in the Dallas/Fort Worth Chapter of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC). Recently, she has been designated as a Fellow of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (FAPIC). Thi has presented oral and poster presentations at various conferences and meetings throughout her career. Most recently, she presented at Council for State and Territorial Epidemiologists Conference and the 2018 APIC National Conference.



**Bobbiejean Garcia MPH, CIC, FAPIC, HAI Epidemiologist**

Bobbiejean Garcia attended the University of Texas at San Antonio received a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Master of Public Health in Health Promotion and Behavioral Science from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston School of Public Health. As a HAI epidemiologist, she is the subject matter expert on multidrug resistant organisms (MDROs) and infection prevention and control practices for a 16-county region, including all local health departments and healthcare facilities within those counties. She works with the DSHS HAI team creating education, public policy, performing surveillance of reportable MDROs and conducting and assisting with investigations of public health significance. Bobbiejean has a Certification in Infection Prevention and Control and is a Fellow of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (FAPIC).



**David Sweat, MPH**

David Sweat began his public health career as a field epidemiologist with the Texas Department of Health in 1993 after graduating with an MPH from the University of North Carolina School of Public Health. In his career he has worked in academia, non-profit health education firms, state and local health departments. Currently the Bureau Chief for Epidemiology & Infectious Diseases with the Shelby County Health Department in Memphis, TN, his bureau includes all the epidemiology services, HIV/STD/TB control programs and the Ryan White HIV Care program for the largest county in Tennessee.



**Vincent T. Covello, PhD**

Vincent T. Covello, founder and Director of the Center for Risk Communication, is a nationally and internationally recognized trainer, researcher, consultant, and expert in crisis, conflict, change and risk communications. Over the past twenty-five years, he has held numerous positions in academia and government, including Associate Professor of Environmental Sciences and Clinical Medicine at Columbia University. Prior to his joining the faculty at Columbia, Dr. Covello was a senior scientist at the White House Council on Environmental Quality in Washington, D.C., a Study Director at the National Research

Council/National Academy of Sciences and the Director of the Risk Assessment Program at the National Science Foundation.

Dr. Covello received his doctorate from Columbia University and his B.A. with honors and M.A. from Cambridge University in England. He is on the editorial board of several journals and is the Past President of the Society for Risk analysis, a professional association with over 2,500 members. Dr. Covello has authored or edited over 25 books and over 75 published articles on risk assessment, management, and communication.

**David Gruber, Associate Commissioner for Regional and Local Health Operations  
Texas Department of State Health Services**

David Gruber received his B.A. in Microbiology from Rutgers University and his Masters in Strategy from the U.S. Army Command and General Officer Staff College. He spent twenty-one years in the U.S. Navy serving as a pilot, Intelligence Officer, and, Chemical/Biological Warfare specialist. After retiring from the Navy, he was the Senior Planner for the Dallas County Health Department, Dallas, TX, followed by service with the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services as Senior Assistant Commissioner for Regional and Local Health Department Oversight, Emergency Preparedness and Response, the Office of Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and Director of the NJ State Public Health and Environmental Laboratories. Prior to returning to Texas, he was the Special Assistant to the NJ Director of Homeland Security and Preparedness. He is currently the Texas State Department of State Health Services Associate Commissioner for Regional and Local Health Operations.