

Weekly Newsletter January 13-17, 2025

PQHS NEWS

UPCOMING EVENTS



**Research Methods Meeting**

**Wednesday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 10:00-11:00 AM**

**Title:** Transforming Medicine and Healthcare through Artificial Intelligence

**Presenter:** Yonghui Wu, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Health Outcomes & Biomedical Informatics, University of Florida, College of Medicine, Director of Natural Language Processing

**Description:** Recent progress in Artificial Intelligence (AI) has enabled a new “general” form of AI to transform the practice of medicine and healthcare, which is not observed in previous generations of AI, approaching human-level language processing. This talk focuses on the recent progress of developing AI in the medical domain as an important infrastructure to facilitate medical research, enhance clinical data warehouse, and transform intelligent medicine and healthcare.

**Bio:** Dr. Wu is an Associate Professor with Tenure in the Department of Health Outcomes and Biomedical Informatics at the University of Florida (UF) College of Medicine. He also serves as the Director of Natural Language Processing (NLP) at UF Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI) and OneFlorida+ Clinical Research Consortium. Dr. Wu’s primary research interests include clinical NLP, machine learning, and Electronic Health Record (EHR) based drug repurposing. His work was supported by funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), and the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H).

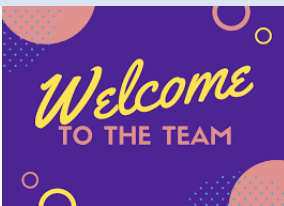
To join the meeting click [here](#).



**Thursday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2:00PM – 3:00PM**

**Tea Time** - On Thursday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, BIO invites you to tea time! Take this opportunity to connect with colleagues. We look forward to seeing you!

WELCOME TO PQHS



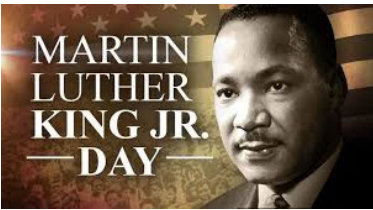
**Welcome to PQHS!** We are excited to announce that **Courtney DelaCuesta** will be joining PQHS as a Research Program Manager 1. Courtney will be reporting to Rosemarie Martin and will play a key role in supporting our research initiatives. We look forward to the contributions and expertise Courtney will bring to the team!

PQHS SHOUTOUT




[Adrian Zai MD, PhD, MPH](#) has been elected Chair for UMass Chan's Information Technology Committee until 2027.


## PQHS HAPPENINGS




### Join Us for a Day of Service in Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.!

The PQHS Diversity Action Committee (DAC) invites all department members to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy of service by volunteering together at the [Yes We Care Food Pantry](#).

 **Date:** Friday, January 31st

 **Time:** 11:30 AM – 3:30 PM

 **Location:** Belmont A.M.E. Zion Church, 55 Illinois Street, Worcester, MA

As part of the UMass Chan Volunteer Initiative, your service hours will be counted as **Paid Time Off (PTO)**. To participate, please:

1 **Register** using this form [here](#).

2 **On the volunteer date, open the email and confirm that you volunteered or did not volunteer.** The email will come from Microsoft Power Automate on behalf of the UMass Chan Government Relations.

2 **Record your time** as "VSL" in PeopleSoft after the event. OR, if you report your time with PQHS, let the administrative staff know that you used 4 hours of PTO on that date.

If you have any questions, please contact [Amy Borg](#) for assistance. Let's come together to make a difference in our community and embody Dr. King's spirit of service.

We look forward to serving with you!

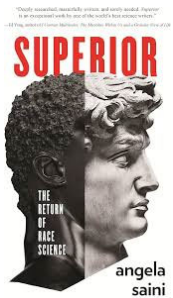
— **The PQHS Diversity Action Committee (DAC)**

## DIVERSITY DIGEST



*Would you be interested in being a part of the book discussion? If you would be interested in participating in a future discussion of this on other books, please know let us know.*

The DAC is reading the current book: **Superior: The Return of Race Science** by Angela Saini. *Superior: The Return of Race Science* by Angela Saini is a book that examines the history of race, from its origins to the present day, and argues that race is a social construct. The book explores how the belief in biological differences between populations is making a comeback in an age of identity politics and the rise of the far-right.



### "Starting the Year with a Little Luck"

With the new year underway, it's a great time to reflect on some of the traditions people around the world use to bring luck, prosperity, and a fresh start. Many of these customs, passed down through generations, symbolize hope for a better year ahead.

In the Southern U.S., **black-eyed peas, collard greens, and cornbread** are a staple New Year's meal. The peas represent coins, the greens symbolize cash, and the cornbread is said to bring gold — a trio of good fortune for the coming year. This tradition has roots in African and Southern history, with themes of resilience and prosperity.

In parts of Latin America, people welcome the new year by **burning effigies** to let go of past grievances. In Puerto Rico, throwing buckets of water out the window to cleanse away negative energy is common. And for those with a spirit of adventure, **Colombians carry empty suitcases** around their neighborhood to ensure a year filled with travel and new experiences.

Even in Europe, traditions are rich in symbolism. In Spain, people eat **12 grapes at midnight**, one for each chime of the clock, to ensure luck for every month ahead. Meanwhile, smashing a pomegranate at the doorstep in Greece is believed to bring abundance and success.



These customs remind us that, no matter where we're from, there's a universal desire to start the year with renewed hope and optimism. Whether through food, rituals, or symbolic acts, New Year's traditions bring communities together and offer a meaningful way to mark a fresh start.

It's never too late to invite a little luck into your year — and maybe next New Year's, you'll even try one of these traditions yourself!



**Lunar New Year** is a major celebration marking the beginning of the lunar calendar year, which usually falls between January 21 and February 20. It is one of the most important holidays in many Asian cultures, including China, Vietnam (Tết), Korea (Seollal), and others.

The holiday is celebrated with vibrant traditions and rituals, including family reunions, feasts, and the giving of red envelopes (containing money) to children and unmarried adults, symbolizing good fortune and prosperity. The Lunar New Year is also a time to honor ancestors through offerings and prayers. Homes are often

cleaned and decorated with red decorations, symbolizing luck and the expulsion of evil spirits.

Each year is associated with one of the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac, and people born in a given year are believed to share traits with the corresponding animal. The 2025 Lunar New Year marks the Year of the Wood Snake, a symbol of intelligence, wisdom, and transformation.

Lunar New Year is a time of renewal, reflecting hopes for good fortune, health, and happiness in the coming year. It is a celebration of family, culture, and community, and its observance spans several days, with the festivities culminating on the Lantern Festival, which falls on the 15th day of the lunar month.

New Year celebrations around the world are rich with unique traditions, each reflecting the culture and values of the region. New Year traditions around the world are unique and reflect cultural values:

1. **Spain:** People eat 12 grapes at midnight, one for each bell toll, to bring good luck.
2. **Scotland:** *Hogmanay* involves fireworks and *first-footing*, where the first visitor to a home brings gifts for luck.
3. **Japan:** *Oshogatsu* includes cleaning homes, visiting shrines, and eating traditional foods like *osechi* for prosperity.
4. **Brazil:** People wear white clothing and jump over seven waves at the beach to attract good fortune.
5. **Denmark:** It's customary to smash old plates at doors to bring good luck.
6. **Greece:** The *Vasilopita* cake is baked with a hidden coin, and the person who finds it is blessed with luck.
7. **Ecuador:** Effigies called *Año Viejo* are burned at midnight to banish bad luck.
8. **Colombia:** People walk around with empty suitcases at midnight to wish for travel and adventure.

These traditions highlight diverse ways of celebrating the new year with hopes for prosperity and happiness.



The day to honor Martin Luther King Jr, leader of the civil rights movement, is Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Here are a few ways to honor his work and legacy:


1. **Join the 40<sup>th</sup> MLK Jr Annual Community Breakfast on Monday, January 20, 2025.** The breakfast will be held at Assumption University - Plourde Recreation Center, 500 Salisbury St. Worcester, MA. Doors open at 7 AM, program begins at 8 AM. Follow the [link](#) for more information and to register in advance.


2. **UMass Chan Medical School's 37th annual tribute to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.,** will take place on January 27 at noon, 2025. Come to hear the keynote speaker


Embrace Boston President and CEO Imari K. Paris Jeffries, PhD, and presentations of the Chancellor's Award for Advancing Institutional Excellence in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Martin Luther King Jr. Semester of Service Awards. Follow this link for [in-person registration](#) the lunch and program in the Faculty Conference Room. Follow this link to register for [Zoom](#).

### 3. Join Us for a Day of Service in Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.!

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— **The PQHS Diversity Action Committee (DAC)**



**Blindness can occur at any age** from infections, accidents, genetic conditions and other diseases. In 2017, an estimated 1 million people in the United States were blind, and 6 million had vision loss. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) expects cases of visual impairment and blindness in the U.S. to double by 2050.

The main causes of visual impairments are cataracts, macular degeneration, glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy. (CDC)

Children who are blind not only have the educational disadvantage of not being able to see – they also miss out on fundamental parts of early and advanced education if not provided with the necessary tools. Children who are blind or visually impaired can begin learning pre-braille skills from a very young age to become fluent braille readers as they get older.

Here are some other statistics about blindness and vision loss in the United States, please consider *why* there are differences in prevalence:

- The prevalence of vision loss varies by state, from 1.3% in Maine to 3.6% in West Virginia.
- The risk of vision loss is higher for Hispanic/Latino and Black people than for White people.
- More than 1.6 million people with vision loss or blindness are under 40 years old.
- 20% of people over 85 years old experience permanent vision loss.
- More women than men experience permanent vision loss or blindness.

**World Braille Day** is an international day on 4 January and celebrates awareness of the importance of braille as a means of communication in the full realization of the human rights for blind and visually impaired people.<sup>[1][2]</sup> The date marks the birthday of Louis Braille, creator of this writing system

Braille is a tactile writing system used by people who are visually impaired. It is traditionally written with embossed paper. Braille users can read computer screens and other electronic supports using refreshable braille displays. Notice the Braille used in elevators, and other public places. Try feeling this with your fingers and decipher the meaning. It is interesting to note that loss of one sense often enhances the other senses to compensate.

*Braille*. (n.d.). Retrieved 12 30, 2024, from Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Braille>



International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, also known as international Holocaust Remembrance Day, is observed annually on January 27, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in 1945. The United Nations designated this day in 2005 to commemorate the six million Jewish victims and millions of other victims murdered by the Nazi regime. The day serves to honor Holocaust victims, promote Holocaust education, and prevent future genocides by raising awareness about the dangers of hatred, antisemitism, and religious intolerance. Commemorations worldwide include ceremonies, educational programs, and remembrance events that emphasize the importance of preserving

historical memory and promoting human rights.

For more information: <https://www.unesco.org/en/days/holocaust-remembrance>

#### UMASS CHAN REMINDER

#### Holiday Calendar for UMass Chan Medical School

##### Remaining Holiday Schedule for 2025:

- Martin Luther King Jr. Day – Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup>
- Presidents Day – Monday, February 17<sup>th</sup>
- Patriots' Day – Monday, April 21<sup>st</sup>
- Memorial Day – Monday, May 26<sup>th</sup>
- Juneteenth National Independence Day – Thursday, June 19<sup>th</sup>
- Independence Day – Friday, July 4<sup>th</sup>
- Labor Day – Monday, September 1<sup>st</sup>
- Indigenous Peoples' Day – Monday, October 13<sup>th</sup>
- Veterans Day – Tuesday, November 11<sup>th</sup>
- Thanksgiving Day – Thursday, November 27<sup>th</sup>
- Day After Thanksgiving – Friday, November 28<sup>th</sup>
- Christmas Eve – Wednesday, December 24<sup>th</sup>
- Christmas Day – Thursday, December 25<sup>th</sup>



*PQHS Weekly will be sent to all members of PQHS on Monday mornings. The intent is to provide a snapshot of what is going on that week in PQHS and to share our faculty and staff activities with the department. We depend on you to provide the items we need to share. Please send suggestions of events, faculty invited seminars & talks, honors, student thesis presentations, and news – new babies born! – to Kellie ([kellie.armstrong@umassmed.edu](mailto:kellie.armstrong@umassmed.edu)) & Sarah ([sarah.yeboah@umassmed.edu](mailto:sarah.yeboah@umassmed.edu)) by Friday each week.*