PREVENTING CHRONIC DISEASE
PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH, PRACTICE, AND POLICY
Volume 23, E75 NOVEMBER 2026

EDITORIAL

From Students to Scholars: Building the Future of Public Health

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Accessible Version: www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2026/26_0724.htm

Suggested citation for this article: Jack L Jr. From Students to Scholars: Building the Future of Public Health. Prev Chronic Dis 2026;23:260724. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5888/pcd23.260724.

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Preventing Chronic Disease (PCD) is pleased to release this year's Student Paper Collection, featuring 15 peer-reviewed articles by high school, undergraduate, master's, doctoral, and postdoctoral students. This year, PCD also celebrates 15 years of publishing articles produced by future researchers, program evaluators, and practitioners. Although the submission requirements have changed over time, the 5 primary goals of the Student Paper Collection have remained the same (1):

- Provide students with an opportunity to become familiar with a journal's manuscript submission requirements and peer-review process.
- Help students apply their knowledge and training to produce high-quality research, evaluation, and practice-focused content that meets a journal's publication standards.
- Develop students' scientific writing skills so that they become producers of knowledge rather than only consumers of knowledge.
- Provide students with an opportunity to serve as the first author of a peer-reviewed article.
- Promote supportive, respectful, and mutually beneficial student–mentor relationships that strengthen students' ability to develop and submit scholarly manuscripts throughout their professional careers.

Since 2011, PCD has received several hundred student manuscripts, all of which have undergone careful internal and external review. These students and their mentors should be tremendously proud of submitting their work to the journal. It is especially important to recognize and thank the hundreds of mentors who meet with students, review and revise drafts, offer guidance on scientific writing, and celebrate students' efforts regardless of whether their submissions are accepted for publication. Special thanks also go to the journal's associate editors for leading the peer-review process and providing focused feedback to strengthen students' submissions, as well as to the hundreds of subject matter experts who have served as peer reviewers of student papers. We extend our sincere appreciation to the hundreds of peer reviewers who, this year and throughout the past 15 years, have provided timely, thoughtful feedback on student-authored manuscripts.

The 15 student articles in this year's collection are

- When Policy Exists but Practice Fails: Rethinking Cognitive Screening as a Public Health Delivery Problem (2)
- Implementing Culturally Tailored Diabetes Prevention in Hispanic Communities: An Integrative Review Using the RE-AIM Framework (3)
- The Role of Community Pharmacies in Creating Harm Reduction Infrastructure to Address the US Opioid Crisis (4)
- Extreme Weather as an Emerging Public Health Challenge for Youth Sports (5)
- Dance Instructors and Early Recognition of Adolescent Idiopathic Scoliosis (6)
- The Effect of Student Pharmacists as Peer Coaches on Implementation of Community Pharmacy Services (7)
- Qualitative Analysis of a Stool DNA-Based Colorectal Cancer Screening Service in a Federally Qualified Health Center (8)
- Higher Education Institutions: An Underused Setting for Addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (9)
- ACEs Aware: Translating Screening for Adverse Childhood Events and Trauma-Informed Care to Address the Noncommunicable Disease Epidemic (10)
- Technology Priorities for Diabetes Care in Rural Georgia: Findings of a Problem Discovery Workshop (11)
- Unlocking the Ability of Generative Artificial Intelligence to Improve Health Communication and Health Education (12)
- Intersecting Inequities and Solutions in Alzheimer Disease and Related Dementia Care in Connecticut (13)
- A Structural Equation Analysis of Body Image, Stigma, Depression, and Resilience Among Active-Duty Female Military Service Members (14)
- Regional Variation in Mental Health and Well-Being Among US Adolescents Aged 12 to 17 Years, 2019–2024 (15)

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- Training the Future Public Health Workforce: Reflexive Insights From an Undergraduate Needs Assessment Experience (16)

Article types represented in this year's Student Paper Collection include 8 Essays, 2 Original Research articles, 2 Research Briefs, 1 Implementation Evaluation, 1 Program Evaluation Brief, and 1 Systematic Review. In previous years, students were permitted to submit manuscripts in only 3 formats: Original Research, Research Brief, and GIS (geographic information systems) Snapshot. Last year, however, the journal recognized that not every student is primarily interested in research. Some students are drawn to other areas of public health, including evaluation, public policy, community engagement, health services, and public health leadership. Accordingly, PCD began welcoming student submissions for all PCD's article types, including Essays. Students were encouraged to submit essays that address persistent, pressing, emerging, or less-discussed public health issues. Student essayists not only identify these issues but also propose strategies for addressing them.

PCD celebrates students from around the world who submitted manuscripts for consideration, regardless of the publication decision, because preparing and submitting scholarly work is itself a meaningful step in professional development. Through this process, students learn to frame consequential public health questions, translate evidence into clear arguments, respond constructively to critiques, and communicate findings to scientific and practice-based audiences. These experiences help students build confidence, resilience, and the habits of inquiry needed to become thoughtful researchers, evaluators, practitioners, and leaders.

Five of the 15 peer-reviewed articles in this collection received the Editor in Chief's Editor's Choice recognition for demonstrating exceptional scientific, programmatic, or scholarly rigor on important and timely public health topics. PCD recognizes the following Editor's Choice honorees: Renee Banks (postdoctoral student) (14), Abigail Morgan (doctoral student) (7), Rachell Nguyen (doctoral student) (3), Kanhai Amin (undergraduate student) (12), and Sarah Zhang (high school student) (9).

Student achievement is never an individual accomplishment alone. Academic mentors and departments invest substantial time in strengthening students' analytical and writing skills, guiding them through revision, and creating the supportive conditions in which emerging scholars can thrive. Investing in student development therefore strengthens not only individual careers but also the future capacity of public health to confront complex and evolving challenges.

Looking ahead, PCD is pleased to announce its call for papers for the 2027 Student Paper Collection (17). The journal welcomes submissions from high school, undergraduate, graduate, and medical students, as well as eligible recent postgraduates, residents, and fellows whose work was completed under the guidance of a mentor or advisor. Manuscripts should address prevention, screening, surveillance, or population-based interventions for chronic diseases and may follow any of PCD's established article formats. Students are especially encouraged to submit essays that identify persistent or emerging public health challenges, assess existing approaches, propose innovative solutions, describe who may benefit, and envision the impact of putting those solutions into practice. Student applicants must meet first author and corresponding author requirements, adhere to the journal's ethical and editorial standards, and submit the required cover letter and advisor recommendation. The deadline for final manuscripts is 5:00 PM Eastern Time on March 12, 2027.

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