

Northwestern Department of Surgery

D.E.I. Committee Newsletter

Aug 2022

FEATURING: SOQIC

Welcome to the August Newsletter!

SOQIC launched an active DEI Sub-Committee in August of 2021 to the larger Department of Surgery DEI Committee. SOQIC welcomes both diverse ideas and innovative solutions from all faculty, staff, and trainees. Our strategic efforts seek to empower our diverse and exceptional personnel as they pursue improving surgical quality outcomes for all. Our center remains committed to solutions bringing us closer to greater healthcare equity, and subsequent policy change. We hope you enjoy learning more about our team and our recent activities in this month's edition.

Julie K Johnson, MSPH, PhD Scientific Director

Katie Hammond MBA, CCRP Administrative Director



SOQIC Hosts 1st Annual DEI Fellows Talk

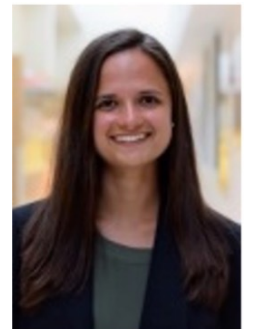


Dr. Michael Visenio
Visiting Post-Doc Scholar
University of Nebraska
Medical Center

In May, the SOQIC DEI sub-committee hosted a presentation highlighting research fellows' work addressing health care disparities in surgery. Research Fellow Dr. Michael Visenio with faculty surgeons Dr. Anthony Yang and Dr. David Odell as discussants, moderated the talk. Two research fellows, **Dr. Casey Silver** and **Dr. Gwyneth Sullivan**, presented their projects.

Dr. Silver presented a study titled ***"When the Homeless Are Hurt: Injury Patterns and Hospital Use in Undomiciled Adults."*** This project highlighted that trauma patients experiencing homelessness were more frequently victims of assault and were associated with a longer hospital stay. This study demonstrated the potential impact of housing status on health care outcomes and the need for targeted interventions to ensure safe and timely discharge for patients experiencing homelessness.

Dr. Sullivan's study was titled ***"Gap between understanding the social determinants of health and action among attending and resident surgeons."*** This project explored the utilization of ICD-10-CM Z-codes at a single medical institution — non-billable codes that indicate a patient experiencing hardships such as unemployment, access to food, and other social determinants of health (SDOH). These utilization data were analyzed along with surveys and interviews of attending and resident surgeons assessing understanding, perceived importance, and practices toward addressing SDOH with surgical patients. Overall, the data demonstrated that Z-codes are relatively underutilized. Moreover, surgeons perceive SDOH as important, though practices such as screening and referrals are currently limited.



Dr. Casey Silver
Visiting Post-Doc Scholar
Loyola University Medical
Center



Dr. Gwyneth Sullivan
Visiting Post-Doc Scholar
Rush University Medical
Center

Both of these presentations invited fruitful discussion on the importance stepping beyond the research and seeking effective solutions for these and other studies that demonstrate a health care disparity. The audience drew upon important topics such as engaging local stakeholders, conducting community-based participatory research and recognizing how institutional and systemic factors can affect health care outcomes.

Learn more about our research residents and their interests on our [fellow's webpage](#)

FEATURING: SOQIC

SOQIC Collaborates with IPHAM's Center for Community Health (CCH) on Lung Cancer Initiatives

This June, SOQIC welcomed Shawn Trimble to our team. Shawn comes to NU from Emory University and Pomona College where he specialized in cultural neuroscience approaches to community health.

Shawn occupies a joint role between SOQIC and CCH under the guidance of [David D. O'Dell](#), MD, MMSc and [Marquita Lewis-Thames](#), PhD, where he leads project coordination and qualitative data collection and analysis on projects related to both clinical and community-based lung-cancer care delivery.

Dr. Odell and his co-investigators with SOQIC, in partnership with Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center will be conducting the study, *"A User-Centered Approach to Improve to Treatment Outcomes in Early-Stage Lung Cancer"*. The study is focused on improving care for early-stage lung cancer patients by addressing quality gaps of cancer care coordination, treatment, and therapy. The study looks to develop a toolkit to produce effective evaluations of cancer patients and produce appropriate referrals for adjuvant treatment. Shawn will work with Dr. Odell and his team to design and conduct surveys, structured interviews, and focus groups with patients and health providers to inform and develop the toolkit. Finally, they will conduct a year-long trial to test the real-world implementation of the toolkit as a decision aid for clinical settings.



Shawn Trimble, MPH



David D. O'Dell, MD, MMSc

The **SYNERGY** study under the CCH looks to develop and test the feasibility and implementation of novel survivorship-care model that will embed a Community Health Worker in a clinical survivorship care team to help rural lung cancer survivors improve their timely follow-up care. Similarly, another ongoing project, the **CONNECT** study, is focused on the development and

implementation of a health management tool to improve the assessment and management of cancer related distress in older lung cancer survivors.

For both studies, Shawn and Dr. Lewis Thames will conduct individual semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, community members, and academic experts to inform the studies respective development. Interviews will be conducted over the telephone, via Zoom, and in-person. Small-scale pilots for the final products of both studies will be conducted to test their real-world applicability and inform future intervention.



Marquita Lewis-Thames, PhD

Let's Talk About It! Qualitative Methods within Surgical Research

SOQIC is dedicated to conducting research that is high quality, innovative and in a variety of different types of methods. Many of our faculty frequently design projects and grants with an active qualitative or mixed-methods aims. Several of our faculty focus on **Qualitative** methods by providing expertise in subject interviewing, focus groups, case studies, observational methods, and data visualization.

Qualitative research has a long tradition of taking place within indigenous communities, diverse populations and does not necessarily rely on mathematical data metrics. Qualitative methods allow for the intake of descriptive perspective that may not be captured in quantitative methods.

Monthly, members of our team meet on Zoom in a meeting called **SQUARES** to discuss both qualitative methodology and current grants in progress within SOQIC. Please reach out if you are interested discussing a qualitative methodology within surgical research.

Further Reading: Dr. Martha Ingram, former SOQIC fellow, had a first author paper this summer in JAMA Surgery focused on sex-based trauma disparities, [here](#). The work is a product of the Stey Lab, led by [Anne Stey](#), MD, MSc.