

Milkie Vu – Application to the Mary K. Beyrer Graduate Student Scholarship

Personal Statement

I am a PhD candidate in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Health Education at Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University. A social and behavioral sciences researcher by training, I have over seven years of experience conducting research on health issues of racial/ethnic minorities and migrants. To date, I have published 33 peer-reviewed manuscripts (with an additional six manuscripts submitted and under review), most of which focus on minority health and cancer prevention and control. I have presented or been co-authors on 36 presentations accepted at professional meetings. I am also the recipient of several awards and grants from my institutions and external professional organizations, including the F31 fellowship from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). My career goal is to become an academic professor and researcher, where I will focus on researching cancer health disparities among minority populations, develop health interventions addressing such disparities, and use this knowledge to inform policy and practice.

Throughout my career, I have committed to community-engaged research that promotes cancer health education, reduces risky health behaviors, and betters the lives and well-being of racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, and refugees. During my Master's degree at the University of Chicago, I worked on a project investigating mental health service utilization among Asian immigrants, which helped me to better grasp the reality of underused preventive services among Asian immigrants and inspired me to seek further training in public health. After completing my Master's degree, I worked for two years as a research specialist at the University of Chicago Hospitals, where I coordinated and conducted analyses on an intervention on mammography utilization for Muslim women in Chicago. This work experience solidified my commitment to research that engages community resources in promoting minority health.

Since I started my doctoral program at Emory in 2016, I have partnered with community-based organizations in Atlanta to conduct research on health issues of immigrants and refugees. In 2017, I was awarded the Field Scholar Award from Emory Global Health Institute for a project investigating tobacco use among children of immigrants from diverse origins. I collected survey data from 100 adults and 160 adolescents. The project has resulted in three published manuscripts and several ongoing analyses. Importantly, data from this project have been used by partner organizations to inform services delivery and future grant applications related to substance use prevention.

Moreover, from 2018 to 2019, I served as a co-Principal Investigator on a project that used qualitative interviews to understand sexual and reproductive health services (e.g., family planning, pregnancy and childbirth services, HPV vaccination, and testing for sexual transmitted diseases) utilization by refugee women in Atlanta. This project was funded by several sources at Emory (Jones Program in Ethics, Center for Reproductive Health Research in the Southeast, and Healthcare Innovation Program) as well as the Organization for Research on Women and Communication. I worked with partner organizations and interpreters to interview 26 refugee women and 17 healthcare providers who served them. The project has yielded valuable knowledge on facilitators of and barriers to use of sexual and reproductive health by refugee women as well as important information on healthcare

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providers' strategies to deliver culturally competent care to these populations. We have presented the findings at two conferences and currently developing manuscripts from the data. We are also disseminating findings and assessment tools to stakeholders (e.g., organizations serving refugees).

The Mary K. Beyrer Scholarship will support costs associated with the conduct of my dissertation research, which investigates U.S. Vietnamese parents' HPV vaccine uptake for their adolescent children. (The term U.S. Vietnamese refers to those living in the U.S. and identifying as Vietnamese). U.S. Vietnamese women have been documented to have higher cervical cancer rates compared to non-Hispanic Whites as well as several other Asian subgroups. HPV vaccine is a safe, effective method to prevent cervical cancer and other HPV-related cancers but remains underutilized among U.S. Vietnamese. Unfortunately, limited research has disaggregated the Asian-American population to examine mechanistic explanations for this disparity. Additionally, no prior work has examined multilevel determinants influencing HPV vaccine uptake among U.S. Vietnamese. My dissertation represents the first step in addressing this literature gap by leveraging a health services research framework – the P3 model (Bednarczyk et al, 2018) – and an explanatory sequential mixed-method design to examine multilevel determinants of U.S. Vietnamese parents' HPV vaccine uptake for their adolescent children.

My dissertation has two specific aims. To date, I have completed the first aim, which quantitatively examined practice-, provider-, and patient-level factors influencing U.S. Vietnamese parents' HPV vaccine uptake for their adolescents. I have conducted a national, cross-sectional, online survey with 420 U.S. Vietnamese parents with children aged 9-18. Preliminary results show that adolescent HPV vaccine initiation in this sample was 43.5%, which was much lower than general U.S. populations (68.1% documented in 2018 National Immunization Survey - Teen conducted by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention). Facilitators of HPV vaccine uptake included having access to clinic-based materials about HPV vaccine and receiving a doctor's recommendation for the vaccine. More U.S. Vietnamese parents of female children have gotten the vaccine for their child compared to parents of male children. In addition, parents indicated a very high degree of trust in vaccine safety, scientists who develop vaccines, and vaccine regulatory bodies.

I am currently conducting and seeking financial support for the second aim of my dissertation, which qualitatively examines why and how factors identified in the first phase shape U.S. Vietnamese parents' HPV vaccine decision-making and assess practice-, provider-, and patient-level strategies to promote adolescent HPV vaccine uptake. I am recruiting 32 participants who completed surveys in Aim 1 (stratified by vaccination status and child's gender) and conduct phone-based semi-structured interviews. Together, findings from two aims my dissertation research can be used to identify multilevel targets and inform health interventions to improve HPV vaccine rates among U.S. Vietnamese. It will advance health equity by exploring structural, social, and cultural barriers to HPV vaccine for a high-risk minority group.

I was selected for a F31 fellowship from the National Cancer Institute for this project, and the fellowship is supporting my tuition and fees, stipend, and attendance at professional meetings and conferences. For Aim 1, I

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was able to secure an American Psychological Foundation Visionary Grant and an American Association for Cancer Education Research, Education, Advocacy, and Direct Service to support translations, participant incentives, and software license. I am actively securing external funding sources to support transcription and translations for Aim 2. To date, I have been awarded \$5,000 from the Healthcare Innovation Program and \$2,500 from the Professional Development Support Funding at Emory University. The Mary K. Beyrer Scholarship will support an additional \$1,000 of costs associated with Aim 2 and will be critical to the conduct of this research.

In addition to my research projects, I have also actively participated in services and professional activities in my field. I have been a member of and have presented my research at annual meetings of several professional societies such as the Society of Behavioral Medicine, Society of Public Health Education, American Association for Cancer Research, American Association for Cancer Education, American Public Health Association, and Interdisciplinary Association for Population Health Science. Moreover, I have served as a reviewer for several journals in health education, including Sociology of Health and Illness, American Journal of Health Behavior, Health Education Research, Journal of Cancer Education, and Vaccine. I have also served as an abstract reviewer for several conferences (e.g., Society of Public Health Education, Society of Behavioral Medicine, American Public Health Association, and International Cancer Education Conference), in addition to participating in conference services, such as serving as a student volunteer, conference session moderator, or on the abstract selection subcommittee.

After completing my PhD, I will seek a postdoctoral position and subsequently a tenure-track academic position. Data from my dissertation project will serve as a foundation for later phases of my career where I can focus on developing and evaluating health interventions on HPV vaccine uptake of Asian immigrants. My central future goal as an academic researcher and professor is to advance knowledge of cancer health disparities among racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, and refugees. I will also apply this knowledge to develop evidence-based and culturally-relevant interventions addressing such disparities, while also leveraging research findings to inform policy and practice.

I am committed to a career in community-engaged research that promotes cancer health education, reduces risky health behaviors, and betters the lives and well-being of racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, and refugees. I believe my past and present activities in health education and promotion and my future career goals make me an ideal candidate for the Mary K. Beyrer Scholarship. The support of the scholarship will greatly benefit the conduct of my dissertation research as well as my career in public health.