



LGBTQ Research, Advocacy, and Support at Boston Children's

by Ari Tabaac, Ph.D.

Lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) research is a rapidly growing field, and Boston Children's Hospital (BCH) is one of the premier sites for LGBTQ medical and public health research in the United States. One example of this commitment to LGBTQ research is the "Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression" (SOGIE) Research Group, also known as **Team SOGIE**. Founded in early 2011 and housed jointly by BCH and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, this research group brings together a diverse gathering of faculty, post-docs, medical fellows, graduate students, research assistants, and other research staff across BCH and the Harvard Medical School affiliate network, and it often features researchers from other universities and research institutions.

Meeting biweekly, every Team SOGIE meeting provides an area for researchers and clinicians interested or involved in LGBTQ research to check-in on research goals, workshop project ideas, or present research findings. Researchers in Team SOGIE represent a wide array of specializations ranging from epidemiology and psychology to medical and biological research. For instance, Dr. S. Bryn Austin, the Director of Team SOGIE, conducts social epidemiology research on physical activity, nutritional patterns, and eating disorder risks in adolescent LGBTQ populations. Dr. Yee-Ming Chan, a pediatric endocrinologist at BCH and member of Team SOGIE, studies delayed puberty, disorders of sex development, and transgender youth using a combination of clinical and human genetics research approaches.

Team SOGIE also has post-doc members who are involved in a variety of LGBTQ research topics. Dr. Ari R. Tabaac, a post-doctoral health psychologist in the Division of Adolescent Medi-

cine and the Center for Gender Surgery, researches the sexual health disparities of LGBTQ people as well as the psychological and physical wellbeing of transgender youth undergoing medical treatment. Dr. Alexa Solazzo, another post-doc with the Division of Adolescent Medicine, is a sociologist and studies cancer prevention and sexual health in LGBTQ people. Dr. Stella (Juhyun) Lee is a post-doc health communication researcher at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Harvard T.H. Chan School of public health, and she studies tobacco messaging and behavior change with LGBTQ people.



Ariella Tabaac, PhD and Alexa Solazzo, PhD

In addition to research, BCH is also host to a number of programs oriented toward supporting LGBTQ-identified faculty, post-docs, and staff, like the **Rainbow Consortium on Sexual and Gender Diversity**. The Rainbow Consortium, which meets monthly under the direction of Dr. Sabra Katz-Wise, provides a space for faculty, clinicians, post-docs and medical fellows and other staff employed at BCH to engage in LGBTQ advocacy that affects the hospital. For

JUNE 2019 PRIDE EVENTS

- LGBTQ Pride Flag Raising Event. Monday June 3, 11:30-12pm, Outside Hunnewell Building
- Annual Pride Celebration, Friday June 7 from 12:30-1:30pm in Folkman Auditorium
- Boston Pride Parade, Saturday, June 8 from 11-3pm. Email lgbt@childrens.harvard.edu if you are interested in marching with BCH!

example, the Rainbow Consortium helped develop the Safe Zone trainings at BCH, which help staff learn valuable communication skills for interacting with LGBTQ patients, families, and colleagues. The Rainbow Consortium has also been involved in local advocacy efforts, like raising awareness about the 2018 “Yes on 3” Campaign, which involved protecting the civil rights of transgender people across Massachusetts. Another program at BCH, LGBTQ & Friends, is a monthly support group for both LGBTQ patients as well as staff at BCH. LGBTQ & Friends is also engaged in local advocacy work and has a history of involvement with the Boston Pride Parade and organizing Pride events at BCH.

If you’d like to learn more about LGBTQ resources at BCH, you can head over to the **LGBTQ@BCH** page on the BostonChildren’sToday internal website (<http://web2.tch.harvard.edu/lgbtq/index.html>) or email lgbt@childrens.harvard.edu.

To find out more about Team SOGIE, you can find their website at: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/sogie/>

An Interview with Jessica Halem, LGBT Program Director at Harvard Medical School

by Ari Tabaac, Ph.D.



Harvard Medical School (HMS) is the first medical school in the U.S. to have an LGBTQ Outreach and Engagement Director. This role belongs to **Jessica Halem**, who leads the Harvard Medical School Sexual and Gender Minorities Health Equity Initiative.

AT: How did you come into your role as LGBT Program Director at Harvard Medical School, and what does this role entail?

JH: In 2011, the LGBTQ students of HMS presented a well-researched, evidence-based argument for why they needed more resources. The faculty council created a task force to deepen their own understanding of the field of LGBTQ health and pressing student needs. By 2014, I was hired! At its core, my goal has been to deepen the connections between the career success of LGBTQ faculty, students, postdocs, trainees, and staff and improved LGBTQ patient care and health equity. We cannot achieve one without the other.

AT: What have you learned from this experience as LGBT Program Director (or what has been most rewarding)?

JH: The current first-year class at HMS includes 11% LGBTQ students who self-disclosed on their applications. This is up from 4% when I started at HMS. To me, this is a clear indication that we are on the right track in creating an inclusive and welcoming environment in medicine and at Harvard. We still have a lot of work to do to live up to the promises we have made to each other. But, the numbers help me make the case that LGBTQ people are here and ready to become the next generation of leaders in medicine.

AT: What improvements have you seen in recent years regarding Harvard’s dedication to LGBTQ inclusion and support both within the HMS network greater Boston community?

JH: One way to understand our LGBTQ inclusion work at HMS is appreciating the symbiotic relationship between the workplace and health equity. A more LGBTQ inclusive and friendly climate in our day-to-day lives can alleviate the mental and physical health disparities faced by the LGBTQ community. So, when we build more all-gender bathrooms; or we ensure LGBTQ staff have access to creating their own families; or we

cover transgender medicine in our health insurance; or we rewrite our dress codes for diversity of gender expression – we tell every researcher, provider, administrator, and patient – we are here, we matter, we have real needs.

AT: You have done a lot of work with cultural competency and medical education. Do you have any advice for clinical fellows who would like to get more experience working with sexual and gender minority populations?

JH: This June is the perfect time for everyone to get grounded in the rich and long history of LGBTQ people. We are honoring the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots. Now is a perfect time to learn more about the ways medicine and the medical community have been on the wrong side of history for LGBTQ people. From conversion therapy, to gatekeeping in transgender health, to mistreatment of people with intersex conditions, to dictating who can be at our bedside in a hospital – medicine has to keep evolving and growing in understanding our people and their needs. Learn more so we can teach more.

AT: Do you have any advice for sexual and gender minority postdocs and allies working at Harvard Medical School or its affiliates (like Boston Children's Hospital) who need support or would like to be more engaged with patient, medical, or community advocacy?

JH: I know it's hard when you are the only queer or trans person around and you often become the go-to person around our people's issues and needs. So, my advice to you is to take the time you need to heal your past and pains and get comfortable with your story because you may be a powerful force for change inside of your organization. But we can't do that work well or not be harmed by it if we don't heal our own traumas first. Fueling this work with optimism and hope takes real personal change first. I am an optimist not because I have on rose-colored glasses but because I see myself as an agent of change!

Honoring the 50th Anniversary of the Stonewall Riots



The Stonewall Riots were a series of protests that began on June 28th, 1969 in New York City in response to police harassment at the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar frequented by many gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender patrons. During the five days of protests, LGBTQ civil rights issues entered the public eye and sparked LGBTQ civil rights activism. Today, these events are a symbol of resistance against discrimination. To honor the 50th anniversary, NYC Pride and WorldPride will host the world's largest Pride celebration throughout New York City in June. See information at <https://2019-worldpride-stonewall50.nycpride.org/>

Creative Corner



Postdocs are also artists! This new section is dedicated to show that you have gold in your hands.

For this edition, **Christiane Burton** drew a portrait of her friend.



Dr. Christiane Sarah Burton's friend Dr. Salma Al-Karmi, PhD in Chemistry.

To learn more about the beautiful story behind the drawing, please visit Christiane's Instagram page: [instagram.com/christianesarah1990](https://www.instagram.com/christianesarah1990)

Do you also have a creative side and want to share your scientific (or not) picture, art, drawing, comic, cartoon? Please send it to postdoc-publicaffairs@childrens.harvard.edu

BCH Postdoc Achievements!

If you recently published a paper or won an award and want to share it with us, contact us at postdoc-publicaffairs@childrens.harvard.edu (provide your full name, lab, title and journal for publications and information on sponsor for awards). Congrats to the authors and awardees!

Publications from BCH Postdocs

Yunhao Tan, Kagan lab: "Innate Immune Signaling Organelles Display Natural and Programmable Signaling Flexibility", Cell ([PMID 30853218](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30853218/))

Henry Hing Cheong Lee, Hensch lab: his research was featured on the Croucher Foundation webpage, shorturl.me/CPqO

Guoli Zhao, Schwarz Lab: "Kinetochore Proteins Have a Post-Mitotic Function in Neurodevelopment", Developmental Cell, ([PMID 30827899](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30827899/), Children's Vector Blog: shorturl.at/dnswY)

Nicholas Chadi, Adolescent Substance Use and Addiction Program lab: "Understanding the implications of the "vaping epidemic" among adolescents and young adults", in Substance Abuse Journal ([PMID 30883295](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30883295/)) and "Depressive symptoms and suicidality in adolescents using e-cigarettes and marijuana: a secondary data analysis from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey" in Journal of Addiction Medicine ([PMID 30688723](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30688723/))

Hani Harb, Chatila lab: "Epigenetic Modifications in Placenta are Associated with the Child's Sensitization to Allergens" in BioMed Research International (shorturl.at/fpxEM)

Amos Gutnik, Schwarz Lab: "The light-sensitive dimerizer zapalog reveals distinct modes of immobilization for axonal mitochondria." in Nature Cell Biology ([PMID 31061466](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31061466/))

Arnab Rudra, Langer & Anderson labs: "Delivering the Messenger: Advances in Technologies for Therapeutic mRNA Delivery" in Molecular Therapy ([PMID 30846391](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30846391/), praised by the guest editor Dr. Katalin Kariko, [PMID: 30905578](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30905578/))

Awards to BCH Postdocs

Yang Lee, Chen lab: American Heart Association Postdoctoral Fellowship (2019-2020)

Sarah Hersman, Anthony lab: Harvard internal fellowship from the William Randolph Hearst Fund (2019)

Aram Ghalali, Zetter & Rogers labs: Swedish Childhood Cancer Fund fellowship (2019-2022)

Christiane Burton: inducted into the Council of Early Career Investigators in Imaging (CECI²), from The Academy.

Recent Events

- **LinkedIn Workshop**: March 6
- **Alternative Career Panel**: April 23

BCH PDA & HMS Game Night: March 21



Postdoc Spring Break-fast: April 24

Upcoming Events

Keep up to date on upcoming events with our calendar: <https://tinyurl.com/BCHPDACalendar>

- **Negotiation Workshop**, May 30, 5-6:30pm
- **BBQ with Longwood PDA**, June
- **Foundation grant applications panel**, June
- **Meet the Lawyers: Green Card Applications**, May 14 through June 13. *Find out about discounted pricing available!*

BCH 150th Anniversary Events:

- **Folkman Lecture**: Dr. Rakesh Jain, A.W. Cook Professor of Tumor Biology, HMS. May 23, 4:30-5:30 pm. Folkman Auditorium.
- **Stem cell Day**: Dr. Shinya Yamanka, 2012 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, Kyoto University. Oct 21, 9 am-5 pm, Martin Center.



Follow us to find out more about our great events and postdoc community!

Leaving soon? Send us your personal address at postdoc@childrens.harvard.edu to register as BCH Alumni and share your career path with the postdoc community!

