

# SHU ALTOP NEWS

*Updates from the Davis & Henley College of Nursing  
Sacred Heart University  
Alternatives to Opioids for Pain Grant*



DR. SUSAN L. DAVIS, R.N.  
& RICHARD J. HENLEY  
COLLEGE OF NURSING  
Sacred Heart University



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## From the Program Director's Desk

*By Dr. Susan DeNisco*

Alternatives to Opioids for Pain (ALTOP) is a HRSA funded project to help combat the opioid epidemic in Connecticut. Through the creation and support of academic clinical practice partnerships at two federally qualified health centers, family nurse practitioner students are gaining clinical training and experience in the appropriate use of opioids and alternative pain modalities, in primary care settings. This project directly benefits the medically underserved areas in Bridgeport.

Principal Investigator and Co-Project Director Susan DeNisco, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, FAANP, said, "Pain is one of the most common reasons for patient visits to a primary care provider. This project prepares the next generation of nurse practitioners with safe and effective prescribing patterns yet will be poised to integrate alternative pain treatment modalities to enhance patients' quality of life."

# WHO'S WHO



## Dr. Susan DeNisco

Principal Investigator and Co-project Director, Susan DeNisco, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, FAANP, holds a BSN from Western Connecticut State University, an MS/FNP from Pace University (NY), and a DNP from Case Western Reserve University (OH). A nursing professor since 1998, she received tenure in 2013. She is the founding director of the DNP program and has served in a variety of administrative roles at SHU including Executive Director, College of Health Professions, Center for Health and Wellness. She served as PD on numerous grants, including the APN-LEAD, Initiative, a HRSA AENT program awarded \$682,940.00 for AY2014-2016 and \$342,873 for AY2016-2017. She is the recipient of numerous awards and has published extensively on advanced practice nursing. Her research interests include at risk vulnerable populations, resilience and mental health issues. She holds a clinical practice in the internal medicine department at SWCHC.

## Dr. Kerry Milner



Kerry Milner DNSc, RN, EBP-C is the Co-project Director and Director of Quality Improvement Initiatives for the HRSA ALTOP Grant. As an Associate Professor in the on-ground DNP programs, she has been the project lead on more than 20 evidence-based quality improvement projects. She teaches both evidence-based and quality improvement courses to graduate students. She serves as an evidence-based practice/quality improvement mentor for the Helene Fuld National Health Trust Institute. She was also one of the first 50 in the world to earn an evidence-based practice certification (EBP-C) from the Fuld. She recently stepped down as Co-director for the QSEN National DNP Taskforce after 2 years of service. Dr. Milner is working in collaboration with the FNP/DNP ALTOP traineeship recipients and members of the federally qualified health center teams to improve appropriate prescribing practices for opioids for chronic pain and to implement best practices for managing chronic pain using non-opioid alternatives.



# WHO'S WHO



## **Dr. Sylvie Rosenbloom, Assistant Clinical Professor & ALTOP Academic Program Liaison**

Dr. Sylvie Rosenbloom is a full-time Assistant Clinical Professor at SHU DHCON. She obtained her doctoral degree at SHU in 2015 and both her bachelors' and masters' degree in nursing at Pace University. Dr. Rosenbloom is a board-certified Family Nurse Practitioner and a Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialist. Her pedagogical interests are interprofessional education and pharmacology. She has extensive clinical experience in the areas of emergency medicine, primary care, cardiology, and diabetes. Dr. Rosenbloom is the ALTOP academic liaison and has introduced the topics of opioids and substance use disorder to the DHCON Nurse Practitioner students.

## **Dr. Constance Glenn, Assistant Clinical Professor & ALTOP Wellness Champion**

Dr. Constance Glenn is a full-time Clinical Assistant Professor at SHU DHCON. She earned her DNP at Villanova University and her MSN at SHU with family nurse practitioner (FNP) certification. In addition to currently teaching in the BSN DNP program, her experience has involved working in hospital administration, clinical advisement in mental and obstetrical health, school, family/pediatric/adolescent health, global immersions, and with the underserved population, including community health as well. She is a FNP serving as Wellness Coordinator in her initial experience coordinating trainee education with patients at risk for and recovering from opioid and substance use disorders (SUD) for the ALTOP grant.



## **Elizabeth Constante, BS ALTOP Project Coordinator at Sacred Heart University**

Elizabeth Constante joined Sacred Heart University in October of 2019 as the ALTOP Project Coordinator. Prior to joining SHU Elizabeth was the Executive Assistant for two parishes within the Diocese of Bridgeport. Her main responsibility was to stream the parishes' end-to-end operational model and to identify areas of process improvement and optimization. Elizabeth enjoys learning new things and applying her previous experiences to contribute to meeting the ALTOP project goals.



## SUMMARY OF ALTOP PROJECT

The HRSA Advanced Nursing Education Workforce (ANEW) Program is a federal grant program whose statutory funding preference is for projects that substantially benefit medically underserved populations. The Alternatives to Opioids for Pain (ALTOP) project was developed to enhance existing academic-primary care practice partnerships that provide integrated primary and behavioral health care to those populations specifically at risk for opioid misuse. This project is a collaborative initiative between SHU DHCON,

Southwest Community Health Center, and Optimus Inc. The main project goals are to provide clinical preceptor training, support, recruitment, and retention; and to educate the next generation of primary care providers. Clinical preceptors and family nurse practitioner students will benefit from understanding best practices for evaluating and treating patients with non-cancer chronic pain. Students will lead quality improvement initiatives on alternatives to opioids for chronic pain for their doctoral scholarly projects.

## CLINICAL PARTNERS



Through the ALTOP project, SHU DHCON FNP traineeship recipients benefit from longitudinal clinical experiences in two community-based, federally qualified health centers (FQHC)—Optimus Health Care, Inc. (formerly known as Bridgeport Community Health Center) and Southwest Community Health Center —serving HRSA-designated urban Medically Underserved Areas (#00484 and #00485) in Fairfield County, Connecticut. These health centers are considered to be located in Health Professional Shortage Areas for primary care services throughout the city of Bridgeport. SHU DHCON has established cooperative partnerships with these two FQHC for over two decades. These partner FQHC are providing clinical rotations in women health, pediatrics, and internal medicine for the FNP traineeship recipients with the goal of having 6 rotations per year. Student trainees are selected for the FQHC rotations based on their plan of study and their interest in developing and implementing quality improvement initiatives related to the opioid crisis.

# CLINICAL AFFILIATE CONSULTANTS

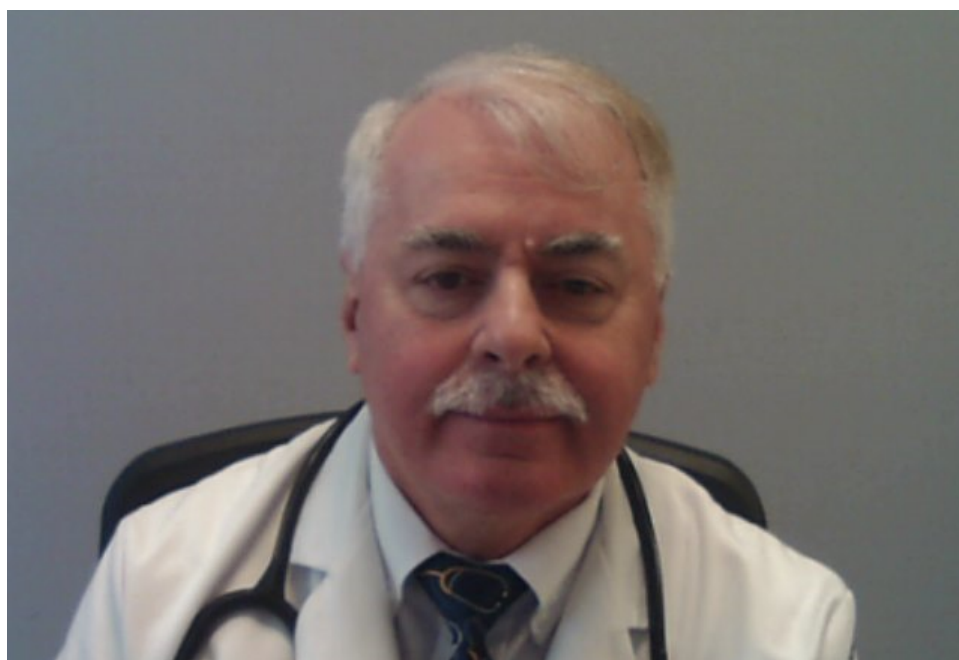
The clinical affiliate consultant is a healthcare provider or master's prepared designee in the partnering federally-qualified health centers who has agreed to be the facilitator for that center. Their role is to identify and prepare clinical preceptors, and to facilitate quality improvement initiatives related to chronic pain, opioid prescriptions, and alternative treatment modalities.



## Dr. Jose Latorre

Completed his Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from SHU in 2017. He leads practice transformation initiatives, as the Associate Medical Director at Optimus Health Care Center. His role includes collaborating with teams in improving resource allocations to influence outcomes consistent with the Institute for Health Care Improvements Triple Aim framework. Dr. Latorre is very motivated and passionate in serving vulnerable populations with new, innovative community health initiatives. He is a strong proponent of teamwork believing that successful programming is dependent on inter-professional and community collaborations. Dr. Latorre earned his BSN degree from the UCONN and MSN degree from SHU. He is board certified as a family nurse practitioner by the American Nurses Credentialing Center and board certified as an HIV Specialist by the American Academy of HIV Medicine.

# CLINICAL AFFILIATE CONSULTANTS



## **Dr. Gerard Abidor**

With over 18 years' experience, Dr. Abidor is a primary care provider, board-certified in internal and osteopathic medicine. Prior to going to medical school he was educated in chiropractic medicine and has expertise in the management of musculoskeletal issues and chronic pain. He is a Fellow in the American Academy of Disability Evaluating Physicians. As a senior physician practicing in the Internal Medicine Department of Southwest Community Health Center he is a proud preceptor for family nurse practitioner (FNP) students. He holds a courtesy faculty appointment at SHU DHCON and he lectures on a variety of primary care topics for FNP students. Most proudly he served in the US Navy for 8 years and most recently the US Army National Guard where he was a field surgeon in Afghanistan.



# CLINICAL AFFILIATE CONSULTANTS



## **Joan Lane, MPH SWCHC, Project Manager**

Joan received her MPH at Boston University while working in hospital ambulatory care. Her public health career spans many years, and diverse positions in a wide variety of settings, including health maintenance organizations, community health centers, a women's health clinic, the insurance industry, and several health education non-profits. She currently divides her work time between Southwest Community Health Center, where she coordinates the activities of 2 grants in collaboration with the nursing schools at SHU DHCON and Fairfield University; Naugatuck Valley Health District; and as an adjunct instructor at Southern Connecticut State University. Joan enjoys the challenge presented by the ALTOP grant, and its objective of exploring alternatives to opioids for pain management.

## **Pain Management Specialist Consultant**

Kim Testo, APRN, FNP-BC (SHU '11) is the Medical Director and owner of the New Solutions Pain Management Center in Orange. She contributes to the CT Opioid Education Initiative with the goal of training all CT providers on pain medications and safe prescribing practices. She is responsible for having each of the ALTOP traineeship recipients rotate through the pain management center to gain clinical competence in the various strategies for providing safe prescribing of opioids and alternative approaches to mitigate pain for patients suffering from chronic pain who are referred to the center. To date 13 of our traineeship recipients have completed a 16-hour clinical immersion experience at the pain management center.





## GRANT ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

- Sigma Theta Tau Mu Delta Chapter CEU Event 12/6/19: *"Marijuana and the opioid epidemic; myths, truths and realities implications for advanced practice"*
- Kim Testo FNP-BC, Pain Management Consultant presented to alumni/student groups on *"Pain Management: Responsible Prescribing Practices and Pain Management"*
- Dr. Rosenbloom presented *"Best Practices for Clinical Preceptors"* at SWCHC
- Joe Wasil from Scilexpharma presented "Using a topical Lidocaine patch for control of chronic pain" at SWCHC, 11/14/19
- Drs. DeNisco & Milner conducted focus groups with partnering FQHC providers on approaches to pain management and measured provider knowledge and competence related to the treatment of non cancer chronic pain
- ALTOP team collecting data on number of opioid prescriptions written per year, ICD-10 diagnosis codes, and patient and provider characteristics.



# DNP STUDENT PROJECTS AT FQHCS



**BRITTANY ZARRELLA, BSN, RN**  
Southwest Community Health Center

**Project Title:** Implementing Alternatives to Opioids for Pain in a Primary Care Setting

**Project Goal:** To improve provider awareness and prescriptions for nonpharmacological alternatives to opioids for pain.

**Methods:** Draft a new policy on alternatives to opioids for pain based on the best available evidence and resources at SWCHC. Implement the new policy and evaluate the use of alternative therapies by providers and patients.

**Significance:** The use of alternative therapies can provide safer, effective relief to patients suffering from chronic pain.

**REBECCA SCHWARTZ, BSN, RN**  
Optimus Community Health Center

**Project Title:** Implementing the Defense and Veterans Pain Rating Scale (DVPRS) in The Primary Care Setting

**Project Goal:** To improve the current pain assessment method in a primary care setting.

**Methods:** The DVPRS is a validated measure of pain intensity and functional impact of pain (sleep, stress, mood, activity). The DVPRS will be used to measure pain intensive and functional impact in patients with non-cancer chronic pain who complain of pain during visits.

**Significance:** The improved objective components in the DVPRS may provide greater insight into the treatment needs and effectiveness in this patient population.





## STUDENT TRAINEESHIP RECIPIENTS

**ADAMS, HOWARD**

**ALHARIRI, DANA**

**BISSONNETTE, AMANDA**

**BROWN, AMBER**

**BYRON, MARIE-REINE**

**CABRAL, AMANDA**

**CLARK, TODD**

**COLEMAN, KELLIE ANN**

**DIAS-JONES, SONIA**

**DOW, NATASHA**

**EVANS, KYRA**

**HAFFENDEN-MORRISON, CHADAE**

**HAYES, MONICA**

**MCCASLIN, AUSTIN**

**MCKENZIE, SHANEIKA**

**MICIAK, KATHERINE**

**MILLA, CARLOS**

**MILNER, ERIN**

**O'NEILL, TONIMARIE**

**PAULISIN, JENNIFER**

**QUAO, ANAICA**

**SCHAAKE, TAYLOR**

**SCHWARTZ, REBECCA**

**SEGALLA, JEAN-A'LAYN**

**VARGA, KAYLA**

**WHITE, KAITLYN**

**WOLFE, LATANIA**

**ZHANG, JENNIFER**

**ZHU, STEPHANIE**



# MAP OF BRIDGEPORT, CT

## HRSA MEDICALLY UNDER SERVED AREAS (MUAS)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



## Contact Us

Dr. Susan L. Davis, RN & Richard J. Henley  
College of Nursing  
5151 Park Ave – mailing address  
Fairfield, Connecticut 06825

Office Location:  
4000 Park Ave  
Nursing Suite 3rd floor  
(203) 365-7661 – office  
(203) 365-7662 – fax  
DeNiscoS@sacredheart.edu  
MilnerK@sacredheart.edu



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& RICHARD J. HENLEY  
COLLEGE OF NURSING

Sacred Heart University