



From the Director

Dear Colleagues,

The winter quarter of 2026 brought remarkable energy across The CHOICE Institute. Our annual symposium, “The Value of Technology in Aging: The GenAI Era,” led by Prof. Jing Li, brought together leading voices to explore how artificial intelligence is reshaping aging, health economics, and caregiving. This conversation resonated deeply with our mission to generate knowledge that improves health outcomes and policy.

I am especially proud of our PhD candidates and HEOR fellows entering the job market this year. Their research spans drug pricing policy, causal inference, global pharmacovigilance, and the economics of aging—reflecting the breadth and rigor of training at CHOICE. Meanwhile, our faculty continue to shape national and global discourse. From Josh Carlson and Hui-Hsuan Chan’s collaborative modeling work on ICER’s smoking cessation report, to Jing Li’s insights on dementia and financial decision-making featured in Bloomberg, to Noemi Kreif’s keynote at Corvinus University and her recognition as Outstanding Reviewer by Value in Health—our impact is felt well beyond Seattle.

We are also excited to announce refreshed names for our certificate programs—better reflecting their focus on health technology assessment, market access, and real-world evidence—with new websites and applications launching this spring. And congratulations to Professor Emeritus Lou Garrison for his continued leadership on hepatitis C elimination, global drug access, and biosimilar policy at forums from Abu Dhabi to New Orleans.

As always, none of this would be possible without the dedication of our students, staff, and faculty. I hope you enjoy reading about their accomplishments in this quarter’s newsletter.

Warm regards,

Anirban Basu, PhD

*Stergachis Family Endowed Director, The CHOICE Institute
Professor, University of Washington School of Pharmacy*



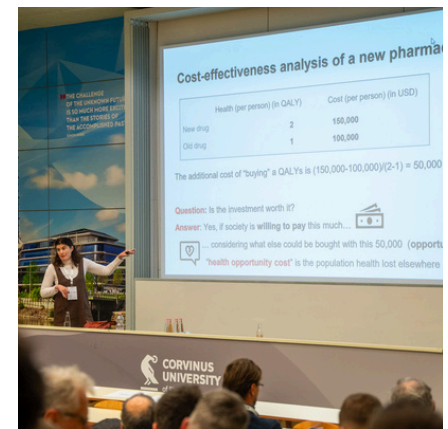
Exploring the Future of Aging in the GenAI Era

Our 2026 Annual Symposium, moderated by Associate Professor Jing Li, brought together experts to explore how AI, robotics, data science, and digital innovation are transforming the future of aging. Watch the full recording to revisit the discussions and insights.



Introducing our 2026 Job Market Candidates

Meet the rising scholars driving new ideas in health economics, outcomes research, and policy. Dive into the profiles of our 2026 job market candidates and see the impact they're already making as PhD students and postdoctoral industry fellows.



Noémi Kreif on How Evidence Can Strengthen Population Health Policy

In December, Assistant Professor Noémi Kreif delivered a keynote at Corvinus University's Neumann-Simon Conference, sharing how modern health economics and evidence-based principles can guide more equitable, effective population health policy.

THE LATEST FROM THE CHOICE INSTITUTE

New Names, Same Excellence for our Certificate Programs in 2026: We're excited to share that our certificate programs will debut new names this year! While the curriculum, online structure, and high-quality learning experience you expect will continue, the updated titles reflect each program's focus and application in today's healthcare landscape.

The Certificate in Health Economics, Health Technology Assessment (HTA), and Market Access

Formerly the Certificate in Health Economics and Outcomes Research (HEOR), this certificate maintains the strengths of our legacy HEOR program. Students will master the economic principles that guide healthcare decision-making, the analytic methods that underpin robust economic evaluation, and the diverse approaches used by HTA bodies and payer organizations around the world. The program renews the focus on HTA and market access, delivering practical, job-relevant training tailored for working professionals.

The Certificate in Data Science Methods for Real-World Evidence in Health

Formerly the Certificate in Health Economics and Outcomes Research (HEOR), this certificate maintains the strengths of our legacy HEOR program. Students will master the economic principles that guide healthcare decision-making, the analytic methods that underpin robust economic evaluation, and the diverse approaches used by HTA bodies and payer organizations around the world. The program renews the focus on HTA and market access, delivering practical, job-relevant training tailored for working professionals.

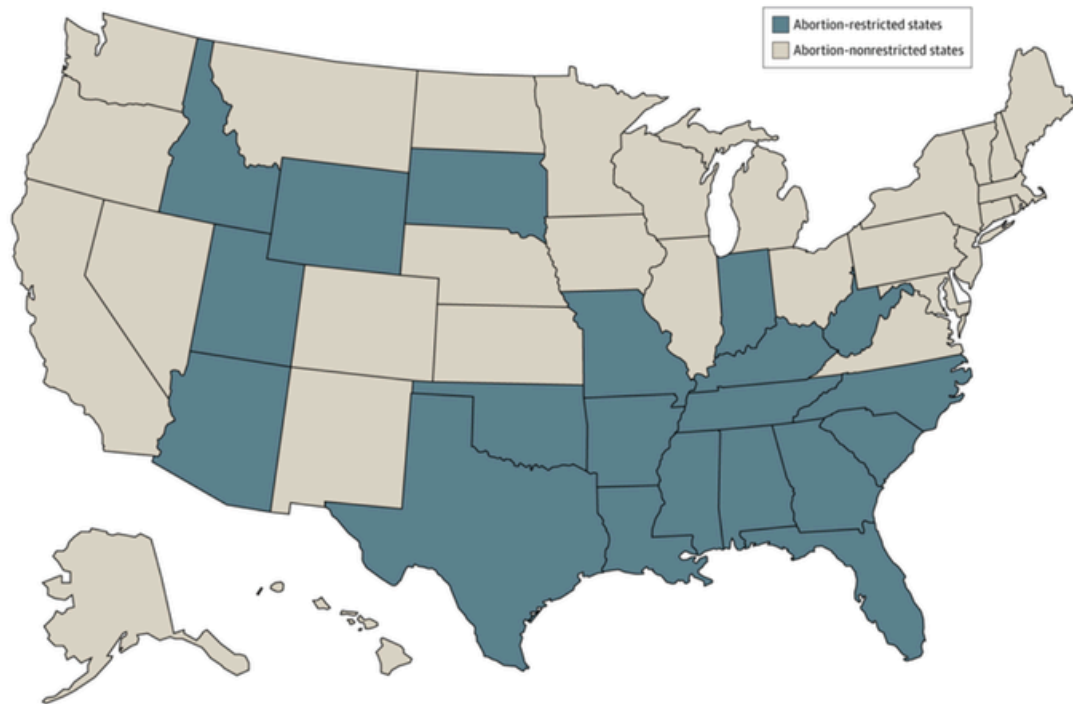
Stay Tuned

- New websites launch mid-March
- Applications open April 16
- Applications due September 16
- Programs begin September 30

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

How the Dobbs decision and abortion restrictions changed where medical students apply to residency programs

New research co-authored by CHOICE Director **Anirban Basu** shows that medical residency applications declined sharply in states that enacted new abortion restrictions after the Dobbs decision. Using causal methods, the study found reduced application rates across both male and female applicants, with the steepest declines in specialties tied to reproductive and emergency care. The findings highlight how state-level policy changes are already shaping where the next generation of physicians chooses to train. [Read more.](#)



By October 2022 — four months after the Dobbs ruling — more than a dozen states had tightened abortion restrictions. Those states are shown here in blue.

Congratulations to Endowed Associate Professor in Innovative Pharmacy Practice **Jennifer Bacci** who received a new HRSA grant through the UW Center for Health Workforce Studies to examine community pharmacy closures in the United States. Community pharmacies, once among the most accessible and trusted sites of care, are now closing at a rapid rate in the United States—reducing access to essential medications, routine health services, and trusted health professionals, particularly in rural communities. The annual rate of closures among community pharmacies has reportedly been increasing, which has contributed to a range of personal and professional impacts on the community pharmacy workforce, including decreased job opportunities and increased stress. Building on prior UW CHWS studies on the pharmacy workforce, this study aims to examine whether factors such as patient care services offered, payment models, and hours of operations influence whether community pharmacies remain open or closed using the National Council for Prescription Drug Plans (NCPDP) DataQ dataset and describe subsequent effects on the pharmacy workforce supply. [Read more.](#)



In February, ICER released its Final Evidence Report on cytisinicline (Achieve Life Sciences) for smoking cessation, with varenicline as the primary comparator. Smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S., underscoring the need for effective cessation therapies. ICER found cytisinicline to have similar efficacy to varenicline with less nausea. The Midwest CEPAC unanimously (14–0) concluded that cytisinicline provides greater net health benefit than behavioral support alone, while a majority (13–1) deemed current evidence insufficient to show superior net health benefit versus varenicline when both are combined with behavioral support. Although the panel did not vote on long-term value for money due to the absence of a U.S. launch price, ICER estimated a health-benefit price benchmark of \$1,900–\$2,700 per year. The report also highlights substantial unmet need and health-equity considerations in smoking cessation. Economic modeling was led collaboratively by teams from the University of Washington (**Josh Carlson, Hui-Hsuan Chan**), the University of Pittsburgh (Kangho Suh, lead modeler), and ICER (Marina Richardson). [Read the report.](#)

CHOICE PhD alum **Ashley Tabah** and Professor **Anirban Basu** recently led a study examining descriptive trends in hepatitis C screening, treatment, and costs following Washington State's HCV elimination initiative in 2019. Using All Payers Claims Database records from over 21 million individuals from 2017 through 2022, the team found that HCV screening *remained stable* after implementation of the Initiative, *but increased substantially after national guidelines came out in 2020*. Newly diagnosed cases continued to decline and use of contracted HCV drug increased slightly during this period. This collaborative effort, highlighted by a string academic-government partnerships, brought together researchers from across UW — including the Schools of Nursing and Medicine — alongside leaders at the Washington State Health Care Authority and Department of Health. The work was funded by Arnold Foundation and supervised by principal investigator Dr. Pamela Kohler at the Department of Child, Family, and Population Health Nursing, University of Washington. [Read the study.](#)



A new viewpoint article published in the Journal of Managed Care & Specialty Pharmacy examines how key provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 may unintentionally destabilize long-term care (LTC) pharmacies—providers that serve many of the nation's most vulnerable older adults. The analysis, authored by CHOICE PhD Candidate **Shiven Bhardwaj** and Associate Professor **Douglas Barthold**, Weston Schmutz (Schmutz Health Solutions), and Jonathan Watanabe (University of California, San Francisco) evaluates how the law's drug-pricing reforms could create significant financial and operational challenges for pharmacies operating in LTC settings. This work was supported in part by the Plein Center for Aging. [Read the article.](#)

CHOICE PhD student **Satoshi Koiso** has recently published two scholarly works. His book chapter, "[Pandemic Response in Low- and Middle-Income Countries](#)," in The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Disability (Palgrave Macmillan), examines how COVID-19 exacerbated inequities for people with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries and advances pragmatic public health and economic arguments for disability-inclusive emergency responses. His recent article in BMJ Open, "[Effect of Containment Strategies for Respiratory Diseases on Infections Imported via International Travel to the USA](#)," uses a compartmental modeling framework to evaluate pre-travel testing and mask-wearing strategies aimed at reducing respiratory disease infection importation among international travelers and airline/airport workers.



In November 2025, PhD candidate **Emma Cousin**, alongside CHOICE Professors **Sean D. Sullivan** and **Ryan Hansen**, published an article in JMCP predicting the 15 drugs to be selected for third round of negotiation. This work was also completed in collaboration with Kristi Martin MA, MPA and John Coster, BScPharm, PhD, who both formerly served at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). [Read the article.](#)

Further building on this work, in January, CMS released their list of [15 Part D and Part B drugs to be negotiated in the third round](#). The third negotiation round adds unique challenges as it expands to Part B drugs for the first time, which are reimbursed differently than Part D drugs, and implements provisions in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, signed into law in July 2025. **Emma Cousin** and her research team correctly identified 13 of the 15 products, 5 of which are covered under Part B. Notably, the provisions in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act excluded blockbuster products that were originally expected to be negotiated, such as Keytruda and Darzalex, making way for other products. [Read the article.](#)

ISPOR
Value in Health
Journal of the professional society for health economics and outcomes research

Outstanding Reviewer



Noémi Kreif
Assistant Professor
University of Washington

Assistant Professor **Noémi Kreif** was honored by *Value in Health* as an Outstanding Peer Reviewer for her exceptional contributions to the journal. In a featured Q&A, she discussed her focus on strengthening HEOR methods in emerging “hot topic” areas such as causal inference and machine learning, and offered guidance for early-career reviewers. When asked what advice she would give to young researchers completing their first peer review, Dr. Kreif emphasized the importance of clarity and utility: *“Try to assess the paper with the reader in mind and ask what’s missing to make it useful for its intended audience. It’s okay if the paper isn’t exactly how you would have done it — focus instead on whether the conclusions are supported and whether there’s enough detail for others to build on the work.”* Her insights reflect a commitment to rigorous, constructive peer review that advances both scholarship and practice in health economics and outcomes research.

[Read the Q&A.](#)

Associate Professor and Associate Director **Jing Li** was featured in a Bloomberg deep dive, [“Japan’s Dementia Money Problem Puts Trillions at Risk.”](#) The article examines the significant economic challenge posed by the roughly \$2 trillion in assets held by Japanese seniors experiencing cognitive decline. Drawing on her research on the financial trajectories of people with dementia in the U.S., Dr. Li provided expert commentary showing that impaired financial decision-making often begins years before a clinical diagnosis. Her insights underscore the urgent need for “universal risk” protections, such as structural safeguards and trusted financial contacts, to mitigate the long-run financial consequences of cognitive decline for aging populations worldwide. [Read more.](#)



CHINA
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清华大学
Tsinghua University

Dr. **Jing Li** also recently received a research grant as co-PI from the China Medical Board, a US-based foundation, to conduct the first randomized controlled trial on a home-based integrated care intervention to evaluate its effect on health and wellbeing among Chinese older adults and their caregivers in a residential community in Beijing. The study will also perform cross-country comparisons of integrated care models between China and the U.S. This project is in collaboration with a research team at Tsinghua University, China. Congratulations, Jing! We look forward to following this impactful research as the study progresses.

Professor **Andy Stergachis** is currently leading a Gates Foundation–funded landscape assessment on background incidence rate studies of adverse events of special interest across Africa, with a focus on vaccine related events. Working with the African Union Smart Safety Surveillance (AU-3S) program, the project includes a scoping review and interviews with key stakeholders to map currently available background incidence rates, identify major data gaps, and highlight ongoing efforts to address them. The findings will help establish a stronger evidence base to support the generation, standardization, and sharing of background rates across the continent. Ultimately, this work should enhance safety signal interpretation and strengthen regulatory decision making and regional collaboration, advancing the pharmacovigilance mission of the African Medicines Agency.





Professor Emeritus **Lou Garrison** co-authored a new [JAMA Health Forum article](#) calling for a coordinated national strategy to eliminate hepatitis C (HCV), highlighting how curative treatments and new point-of-care RNA testing make simplified, single-visit “test-and-treat” models both feasible and cost-saving. Despite highly effective cures, millions in the U.S. still live with HCV—many undiagnosed—and new infections continue to rise among underserved populations. The authors outline a national, multi-sector framework to expand equitable testing and treatment into community-based settings, emphasizing that implementation is now the biggest barrier to ending the disease. [Read more.](#)

In January, **Lou Garrison** spoke in two sessions at the ISPOR UAE Chapter 2025 meeting in Abu Dhabi. In his presentation, “Global Procurement Excellence & System Resilience: A Health Economics Perspective,” he highlighted substantial drug-access lags in the Middle East and North Africa region. Among the 460 medicines launched globally between 2012 and 2021, only 17% were available on average across 10 MENA countries, compared with 38% in Saudi Arabia and 41% in OECD countries. He recommended that countries in the region accelerate price negotiations through dedicated procurement units and more rapid HTA processes to improve access.



At ACCESS Forum US26 in New Orleans, **Lou Garrison** organized and moderated a session on free-riding, access lags, and global contributions to biopharmaceutical R&D and innovation. Joined by Richard Kane (PhRMA) and András Incze (Akceso Advisors), he discussed biopharmaceutical market design and the potential effects of the executive order on Most-Favored-Nation pricing. Kane presented PhRMA’s latest analyses on global access, pricing, and spending trends, including new proposals such as the GENEROUS, GUARD, and GLOBE frameworks. Incze shared research estimating the welfare costs of free-riding in Europe, emphasizing both short-term impacts and the longer-term implications for pharmaceutical innovation.



Andras, Richard, Lou

Lou also organized and moderated a second ACCESS Forum US26 session focused on improving the use of biosimilars in treatment pathways. Susana Guitara of Organon outlined manufacturer-side challenges in addressing the current “biosimilars void,” noting the need for updated formularies and clinical guidelines to improve patient access. James Chambers (Center for the Evaluation of Value and Risk) described U.S. payer experience showing greater biosimilar uptake and declining prices, while Amanda Cole (Office of Health Economics) emphasized applying a “Whole Life-Cycle Approach” to ensure biosimilars are optimally positioned within treatment pathways.



Lou, Amanda, Susana, James

STUDENT MILESTONES

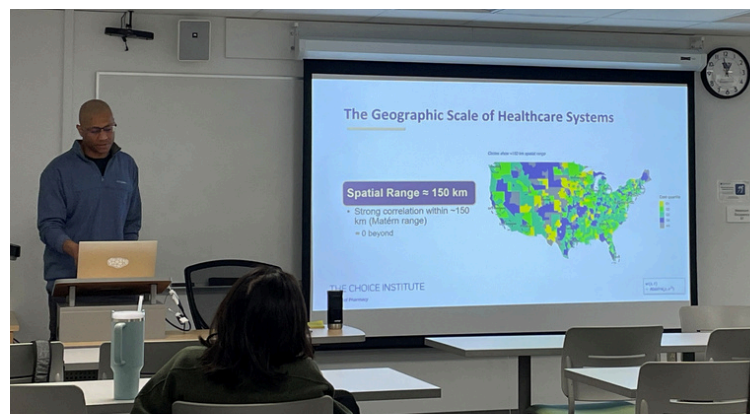
Congratulations to **Julia Fox** for passing her general exam and advancing to candidacy—an exciting milestone in her PhD journey. Her dissertation, *“Modeling Peer Referral Dynamics Among People with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)”*, explores how social networks and peer referrals shape treatment engagement. Julia’s research aims to estimate the impact of peer referrals on MOUD uptake and retention, examine homophily and reach within referral networks, and develop a network model of treatment referral dynamics. She will continue this important work under the guidance of her committee: Kyu Lee (Chair), Anirban Basu, Caleb Banta-Green, and Paul Fishman (GSR).



Congratulations to **Emily Callen**, who also recently passed her general exam and advanced to PhD candidacy. Her dissertation, *“Evaluating State HIV Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Drug Assistance Programs (DAP)”*, focuses on how state-level policy decisions influence access to HIV prevention. Her work will evaluate the effects of PrEP DAP programs on PrEP uptake and HIV incidence, examine how program design shapes disparities in access and outcomes, and assess the impact of these policies on out-of-pocket spending for PrEP and related services. Emily will continue this important research under the guidance of her committee: Ryan Hansen (Chair), Emmanuel Drabo, Susan Graham, Noemi Kreif, and Christine Khosropour (GSR).

Winter Quarter Seminar

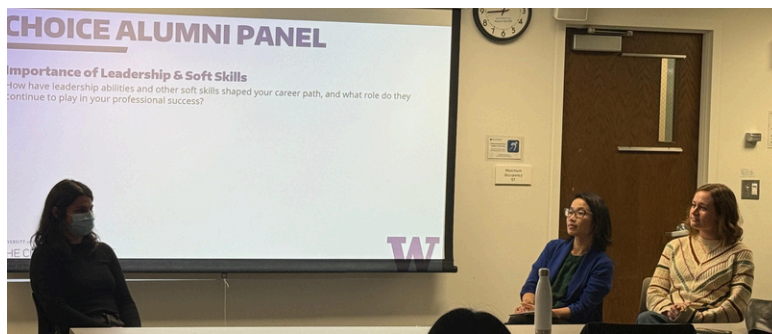
Some snapshots from two of our winter quarter presentations!



In February, PhD Candidate Ron Dickerson gave a mock job talk on aim one of his dissertation research, titled *“Recovering the Spatial Cost Burden of Firearm Injuries Using Bayesian Methods”*.



Graduate Program Manager, Marina Gano, led a session on the importance of cultivating leadership and soft skills in graduate training.



Marina’s session included an engaging alumni panel from Ashley Tabah ('24), Sara Khor ('24), and Lizzy Brouwer ('20).



CHOICE KUDOS

CHOICE Kudos is a space to celebrate the CHOICE community. If someone has made a positive impact—whether through a helpful gesture, organizing an event, offering support, or contributing to the culture of our program—we want to recognize it. If you'd like to acknowledge a colleague in a future newsletter, please share a brief note of gratitude by submitting a kudos to Marina Gano at mcgano@uw.edu.

Kudos to our graduate students who have done such a great job as TAs for our HECON and Data Science online Certificate programs - Ron Dickerson, Karris Jeon, Carlos Pineda-Antunez, and Preetika Banerjee - Beth Devine

Kudos to Julia for being a highly effective student rep, keeping open a flow of communication between faculty and students - Shiven Bhardwaj

Thanks to Noemi for leading the coffee chats and bringing goodies each time - Josh Carlson

Kudos to Marina for being the Chief Operating Officer of CHOICE and making sure that it runs like a well-oiled machine. - Shiven Bhardwaj

Thank you to Kathryn for hosting our weekly fellow calls and keeping us together! - Kevin Li

Kudos to Marina on all her amazing effort in organizing the CHOICE-Plein Research Symposium! - Jing Li

Thank you to Lijia, Sam, and Zilin for being part of the retreat planning committee and bringing great energy and positivity to our planning meetings! - Marina Gano



Kyu Lee catching up over dinner during a recent conference visit to UCSD with 2nd year CHOICE fellows Olivia Yip & Min Chung, CHOICE alum Mark Bounthavong, and his UCSD faculty colleague Zaid Yousif.



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