

# Front & CENTER

NEWSLETTER FROM THE **RUTGERS CENTER FOR STATE HEALTH POLICY** WITHIN THE  
INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH, HEALTH CARE POLICY AND AGING RESEARCH

## Appearances & Accolades

### Cantor & Nova Receive Rutgers Health Chancellor's Awards



**Awardees Left to Right:**  
Jose Nova, Joel C. Cantor, Greta Bushnell & Karen Connaughton

CSHP Director and Distinguished Professor, [Joel Cantor, ScD](#) and Associate Director of Data & Analytics [Jose Nova, MS](#) are both recipients of a 2025 Rutgers Health Chancellor's Award. These awards were established to recognize and highlight the extraordinary work of faculty and staff. Dr. Cantor has served as CSHP's director since its founding in 1999 and received the Lifetime Faculty Distinguished Achievement Award for his leadership and research record which has advanced the mission of Rutgers Health.

Since joining CSHP in 2004, Mr. Nova has contributed to growing the Center's and Rutgers Institute for Health's data analytic capacity and received the Staff Sustained Service Award in recognition of his work. Rutgers Health Chancellor Brian Strom presented their awards during a celebration at The Rutgers Club on October 30th. Learn more about this year's awardees [here](#).

### CSHP Faculty Receive Career Development, Research Recognition

CSHP Assistant Research Professor [John S. Palatucci, PhD, MPA](#) is among the second cohort of [Learning Health System Science Scholars](#) with the Learning Health System Scientist Training and Research Center of New Jersey.

CSHP Associate Research Professor [Ann Nguyen, PhD, MPH](#) was recently selected as one of the North American Primary Care Research Group's [Phillips Futures Fellows](#).

CSHP Instructor [Dan Treglia, PhD, MPP](#) has been elected as a member of the [National Academy of Social Insurance](#)'s 2026 class, joining more than 1,300 of the nation's leading experts on social insurance policy, practice, research, and innovation.



**John S. Palatucci**  
Assistant Research  
Professor



**Ann M. Nguyen**  
Associate Research  
Professor



**Dan Treglia**  
Instructor

### New Face at CSHP



**Geeta Kersellius, MPH, MBS, CPH**  
Research Project Manager  
*NJ Medicaid Office of Business Intelligence within the  
Division of Medical Assistance & Health Services*

# Institute for Health Celebrates 40th Anniversary

On Thursday, October 9th, the Rutgers Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research marked its 40th anniversary with a reception and dinner at the Zimmerli Art Museum in New Brunswick. Faculty, staff, and leadership from Rutgers Health came together to reflect on the Institute's four decades of supporting multidisciplinary and translational research focused on improving population health.

Dr. David Mechanic, who founded the Institute in 1985 and served as its inaugural director, was in attendance alongside current Institute Director Dr. Tobias Gerhard and Brian Strom, the chancellor of Rutgers Health. A brief recap of the evening is [available here](#).



Rutgers Health Chancellor Brian Strom  
Photo Courtesy of Nicole Swenarton

## Insights & Commentary

### Blog Explores How States Are Insuring Immigrant Children

Part of an ongoing collaboration with the Milbank Memorial Fund, CSHP Assistant Research Professor Mandi Spishak-Thomas, PhD, MSW, LCSW co-authored a new blog post with Research Coordinator Allison Oh, MPH. The post examines how state policymakers have sought to close gaps in children's health insurance coverage, particularly among the children of immigrants.

“While federal Medicaid and CHIP programs continue to exclude undocumented individuals,” they explain, “state-funded initiatives have responded to longstanding evidence that insuring children, regardless of immigration status, improves access to preventive care, reduces uncompensated care costs, and enhances long-term health outcomes.” Read the [full post](#) on the Milbank Blog.



Mandi Spishak-Thomas,  
Assistant Research Professor



Allison Oh,  
Research Coordinator

### Article Highlights Impact of Heat on U.S. Workers



Mara Getz Sheftel, Instructor

CSHP and Rutgers School of Public Health Instructor Mara Getz Sheftel, PhD co-authored an article for the Generations Journal, a publication of the American Society on Aging. The article includes a preliminary analysis of work disability and occupational heat exposure which shows that men, Black, and Latino workers above age 50 are more likely to work in heat-exposed occupations and report a work disability.

These results, they explain, “show stark gender, nativity, race/ethnicity, and educational differences by [heat sensitive occupation], providing evidence that specific subgroups may be at increased risk of health impairment due to exposure to extreme heat at work.” You can read the full article [here](#).

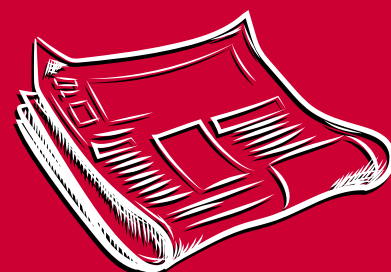
## CSHP in the News

Medicaid Work Requirements Set to Leave Millions Without Insurance | AJMC

Medicaid Cuts Could be Dangerous for Cancer Survivors | The Seattle Times

Health Care Systems Are Treating Housing as a Public Health Issue | WHY

U. study links increased risk of work disability to older, minority workers | The Daily Targum



# Thoughts & Reflections from Christopher F. Koller

## Retired President, Milbank Memorial Fund



Christopher F. Koller, Retired President, Milbank Memorial Fund

In November 2025, the [Milbank Memorial Fund](#) bid farewell to its president, [Christopher F. Koller](#), after more than a decade of accomplished leadership. We caught up with Mr. Koller, who also serves on CSHP's [External Advisory Committee](#), and asked him to reflect on his career in state health policy as well as his time and work leading the Fund.

**Prior to joining the Milbank Memorial Fund, you served as the country's first health insurance commissioner in Rhode Island, where you played a pivotal role in the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. What is a "must have" quality to be an effective leader?**

There was a team of us working to implement it. The governor had asked the lieutenant governor to coordinate the work. Our office's role was to obtain some of the initial federal funding and make sure our insurance rate review process was in accordance with the new federal laws. Some leadership traits that were important for all of us included excellent communications – both internally and externally – and the judgement to prioritize and move along very complex issues.

**How has your experience working in different sectors, including in a health plan, in state government and now at a foundation, shaped the way that you engage with stakeholders to address policy challenges and solve problems?**

Very early in my career someone told me that one of the most important jobs of a leader was to ensure everyone had a common view of reality. I did not appreciate how wise that was – doesn't everybody see things the way I do? As I moved into policy work, that started with trying to see if everyone could agree on the problem we were working on. It turns out that the first step – agreeing on the problem – is foundational, and lots of ink is spilled and time wasted when one does not do that.

**You are an active and loyal member of the Center's External Advisory Committee (EAC), providing the Center with strategic guidance and helping set priorities. What do you think has been the Center's most significant accomplishment to date?**

The Center, thanks to the team of Joel and Margaret, is very well respected nationally for the way it produces high quality, policy-relevant scholarship. I continue to be impressed by the Center's commitment to being of use to New Jersey's state government and its citizens – it really grounds the work. The Integrated Population Health Data Project is a great example.

**Reflecting on your distinguished career, can you identify your greatest professional success and one instance when you really wish you had a "do over"?**

Great question! I am proud of how we at the Fund confronted our 35-year-long financial support of the study of untreated syphilis in Tuskegee and Macon County ("The Tuskegee Experiment") with a public apology, reparations and a partnership with the descendants of the victims. I am deeply sorry it took a pandemic and a national racial reckoning to bring us to that point – six years after I had learned of our involvement.

**If you had one piece of advice for a recent college graduate interested in a career that uses evidence and research to improve population health, what would it be?**

Know what drives that interest and how to nurture it in oneself. Good research and analysis skills - and the evidence they produce - are necessary but not sufficient for policy impact. One also needs motivation, hope, and political power. That starts with knowing your own "why," cultivating it with experiences and reflection, and finding others who share the same passion.

# iPHD Governing Board Approves New Projects



The iPHD Governing Board met on Friday, November 21st to consider applications from the sixth Request for Applications. Twelve applications were received during the spring cycle, and seven were approved for data access. The research teams represent several New Jersey institutions, including Rutgers, Rowan, and William Paterson Universities, as well as UCLA in California.

The approved projects address four of the five iPHD [research priorities](#), including various aspects of maternal and child health and the role of homelessness in health outcomes. More information about these and previously [approved projects](#) is available on the project's website.

## CSHP Hosts Research & Planning Meeting

On Monday, October 20th, CSHP convened a research and planning meeting for the iPHD Project. The hybrid event included a lunch for in-person attendees and was followed by presentations of ongoing research using iPHD data and a panel discussion of works in progress.

The meeting brought together data users and interested parties, including prospective applicants and state agency representatives, to highlight the research and relationships which support the iPHD. Attendees also received a briefing on the project's priorities for the new year. A recording of the event, as well as presentation materials, are [available now](#) on the project website.



Left to Right: Joel C. Cantor, Stephen Crystal (Rutgers IFH) & Fangzhou Xie (Rutgers IFH)

## CSHP Publications: Our Contributions to the Field

### Access & Coverage

- The Healthcare Affordability Crisis in NJ and Nationally
- From Churn to Continuity—Reforming Children’s Coverage | JAMA
- Providing Health Care to People Experiencing Homelessness: Strategies and Challenges for Cross-Sector Initiatives
- Physician explanation of Z-coded homelessness in medicaid claims
- Provider and Organizational Factors Impacting Routine Cancer Screening Among Older Medicaid Enrollees

### Population Health

- The Growth and Diversity of Older Undocumented Immigrants in the United States
- Breast, Cervical, and Colorectal Cancer Screening Among New Jersey Medicaid Enrollees: 2017-2022
- Treatment Initiation and Outcomes Associated With Receipt of Emergency Department-Based Peer Support Following Opioid Overdose

### Health & Long-Term Care Workforce

- Guiding Principles From Designing Disability-Inclusive Public Health Curricula

## New Grant Awards & Contracts

**Hospital Market Consolidation and Access to Quality Healthcare in New Jersey** – Joel C. Cantor, ScD – New Jersey State Policy Lab

**Impact of Homelessness and Housing Services on Maternal and Infant Health** – Dan Treglia, PhD, MPP & Mark McGovern, PhD - National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

**Can Implementing Continuous Medicaid Eligibility for Children Reduce Inequities in Academic and Developmental Outcomes?** - Erica Eliason, PhD, MPH – William T. Grant Foundation

**Loneliness and Inflammatory Markers as Biopsychosocial Pathways to AD/ABD: Analysis of a Rapidly Aging Segment of the US Population** – Mara Getz Sheftel, PhD – National Institute on Aging

**In Memoriam:**  
**Sujoy Chakravarty, PhD, MS – Associate Professor with Tenure**  
**Esteemed Colleague and Dear Friend**



**Associate Professor Sujoy Chakravarty**

Associate Professor **Sujoy Chakravarty**, a passionate scholar dedicated to advancing access to high-quality medical services for underserved populations, died on October 1, 2025, after a valiant two-year fight against glioblastoma. He was 53.

Sujoy joined the faculty at the **Institute for Health** in 2008, first as a member of the **Center for Health Services Research** and later at the **Center for State Health Policy** in 2011. In fall 2023, he joined the **Department of Health Sciences at Rutgers University–Camden**, where he was awarded tenure in April of this year and continued to collaborate with his CSHP colleagues.

A **distinguished health economist**, Sujoy was a leader in applying advanced analytic methods to assess the effectiveness of policies and programs designed to improve care for Medicaid beneficiaries and other high-need populations.

During his tenure at the Center for State Health Policy, Sujoy led the evaluation of innovations authorized under New Jersey’s Medicaid Comprehensive Waiver Demonstration initiative. His research, published widely in leading policy and health services journals, examined strategies to improve care for complex patient populations—such as individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and patients who frequently use avoidable emergency and hospital services.

He also explored the impact of health care financing reforms on patient outcomes and analyzed how trends such as hospital mergers and acquisitions influence health care costs and quality.



**Left to Right: Jose Nova (CSHP), Sujoy Chakravarty  
& Taiisa Kelly (Monarch Housing Associates)**

Professor Chakravarty was also a widely respected colleague, teacher and mentor, known for his patience, generosity, and commitment to nurturing the next generation of scholars. His guidance elevated both the rigor and relevance of his students’ and colleagues’ work.

Sujoy would want to be remembered as a committed scholar, dedicated mentor, and a kind friend. He was all those things and much more, and we will continue to honor his legacy by pursuing the kind of meaningful, impactful work to which he devoted his life.

Please join us in celebrating the life of Sujoy and in extending our deepest sympathies to his family including his wife Soma and his son Soham and his friends and colleagues. Gone far too soon but never to be forgotten.



**Left to Right: Sujoy Chakravarty, Michael Yedidia (CSHP, Retired)  
& Tobias Gerhard (Director, Rutgers IFH)**