



Lunch & Learn Speaker Bios

Advancing KOHA through Quality Improvement

March 16, 2023

Jayanth Kumar, DDS, MPH

State Dental Director, Office of Oral Health, California Department of Public Health

Dr. Kumar was appointed as the California State Dental Director in August 2015. He is a board-certified specialist in dental public health and a former director and president of the American Board of Dental Public Health. Before joining the California Department of Public Health, he was state dental director in New York where he held multiple positions. His role as program director and manager has been defined by a strong commitment to elevating oral health as a priority in the state's health agenda.

Shannon Conroy, PhD, MPH

Chief, Surveillance and Evaluation Unit, Office of Oral Health, California Department of Public Health

Dr. Conroy provides epidemiological leadership to the California Office of Oral Health and contributes to understanding oral health disparities in California. She has extensive experience in advanced epidemiological methods and applied biostatistics for population-based public health surveillance efforts and research projects, with a focus in chronic disease prevention, modifiable risk factors, and neighborhood contextual factors. Dr. Conroy earned her doctoral degree in epidemiology from the University of California (UC) Davis. She also completed four-years of postdoctoral research training in cancer epidemiology with internationally recognized research programs. Previously, she served as a Research Specialist with the UCSF Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics and member of the UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center. She has served as the Surveillance and Evaluation Unit Chief for the Office of Oral Health for almost four years (as of June 2019).

Katie Conklin, RDH, MS, MPH Candidate

COHTAC, UCSF School of Dentistry

Katie Conklin is with the UCSF COHTAC team. Her role supports Results-Based Accountability and the Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment. She started in oral health as a dental assistant 23 years ago as a volunteer for her uncle and later when on to become a dental hygienist.

Sandra Velasco, MBA Candidate

Program Coordinator II, Riverside University Health System, Public Health, Oral Health Program

Sandra Velasco has over 12 years of experience in the medical field. Sandra has been a health educator for Riverside County Public Health for over four years. Sandra has valuable experience in pharmacy, injury prevention services, community outreach, health education, and oral health. She is the Program Coordinator for the Riverside County Oral Health Program and an advocate for health equity.

Natalie Florencio Mendoza, MHA

Health Education Assistant II, Riverside University Health System, Public Health, Oral Health Program

Natalie Florencio Mendoza has five years of experience in the health care industry. She joined the Riverside County Oral Health program as a Health Education Assistant II in April 2022. She obtained her Master's in Health Administration with the aspiration of improving the community's health and health care system.

Melissa Cardenas, RDH

Community Dental Hygienist, Riverside University Health System, Public Health, Oral Health Program

Melissa Cardenas has over 6 years of experience working in clinical dentistry as a registered dental hygienist. She has always had a passion for public health, and recently joined the Riverside County Oral Health Program in October 2022 as their Community Dental Hygienist. She enjoys working in both positions simultaneously, leveraging her expertise to improve dental health outcomes for her patients.

Nancy Starr, RDH, MPH

Program Director, County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Public Health Services, Maternal, Child, and Family Health Services, Oral Health Programs

Nancy Starr is a registered dental hygienist with a Master's in Public Health and has over 20 years of experience focusing on oral health. She has worked as a clinical hygienist and currently is the program director with the Local Oral Health Program for the County of San Diego.

Christy Lopez, MPH, CPH

Epidemiologist, County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Public Health Services, Maternal, Child, and Family Health Services

Christy has provided evaluation support to public health programs promoting chronic disease prevention and addressing health disparities in San Diego County for almost 10 years. She has previously worked on programs focused on increasing healthy eating, active living, and smoke-free environments through policy, systems, and environmental change approaches. Current projects include evaluations of CDC grant-funded programs for heart disease and stroke prevention and for addressing COVID-19-related health disparities. She has supported evaluation for the County of San Diego Local Oral Health Program since 2019.