



**M**arch madness, aka “The Big Dance”, is upon us once again. Let’s hope that the only “madness” this March relates to basketball and not COVID. This March also appears to be the start of the great “unveiling”—i.e. the rules about wearing masks outside of the hospital environment have been eased and we are starting to see entire faces again!

There have been so many topics to do research about during this pandemic—and, put on your thinking caps, there will be a lot of potential projects about the process of recovering from the pandemic and assessing its long term impacts, particularly with respect to social and behavioral functioning. Just think about the children born during the pandemic who have seen so few unmasked faces, except for the people in their home. How has this affected their socialization? How has the wearing of masks affected the comprehension of people with hearing problems? Just think about how many times your voice has been muffled because of a mask—and certainly no one can read your lips. Did face coverings prevent any skin cancers?

As we have already seen with the common cold and RSV, mask wearing has slowed the transmission of other infectious diseases. Are we in for a big increase in other infectious diseases in the years to come?

Clearly, the pandemic has changed the pattern of the fabric of everyday life. But, working together and facing each new opportunity as it comes, we can weave yet another beautiful pattern in the years to come.

*Please keep the people of Ukraine in your thoughts and prayers.*



*Dr. Susanna Szpunar*

Director, Biomedical Investigations and Research

[Susan.szpunar@ascension.org](mailto:Susan.szpunar@ascension.org)



## Fast Stats

### “Third Variables”—what are they and what do we do with them?

All of us have heard the term “confounding” or confounder variable. But, are you confounded about what confounding really means?

1. Confounders are a type of “third variable” that can interfere in our investigation of the relationship between an exposure and a disease. A confounder may inflate, deflate or negate any association between the exposure of interest and the disease.
2. To be a confounder, the variable must:
  1. be a risk factor (not necessarily a cause) for the disease; 2. be associated with the exposure under study; and 3. NOT be an intermediate step in the causal path between the exposure and disease.
3. The simplest way to assess whether a variable is a confounder is to do a **stratified** analysis. Assess the association between the potential confounder and the disease, stratified by the exposure of interest. After stratification, if the odds ratio for the association between the potential confounder and the outcome is 1.0 for each stratum, then the variable is a confounder.
4. When you do the stratified analysis, however, you may find that the odds ratio between the third variable and the disease is not equal to 1.0 and it is different in the different strata. This is an example of effect modification.
5. Effect modification occurs when the third variable has a different effect depending upon the level of the exposure of interest.
6. When a variable is a true confounder, we use statistical methods to remove the effect or “control for” the effect of that variable. When the third variable is an effect modifier, we design our statistical models to account for the synergistic effect of the exposure of interest and the effect modifier.

Still confounded? Contact Dr. Szpunar for further explanation!

## In Memorium



Last month, our long-time librarian, Karin Werner, passed away unexpectedly. Karin was one of the friendly, smiling faces of our library. She helped to improve the variety of electronic subscriptions to journals available to us, was of unfailing help to individuals who requested literature reviews and speedily assisted in obtaining copies of journal articles from journal articles that we do not currently have access to. Karin was an all-round wonderful resource and font of knowledge.

Debbie Cicchini, our other library superhero, has been doing the work of two people since Karin passed away. We are so very sad at the passing of our friend, Karin, but also so blessed to have Debbie to keep us moving along. Please keep Karin and her family, as well as Debbie, in your thoughts and prayers.

## Helpful Resources for Investigators

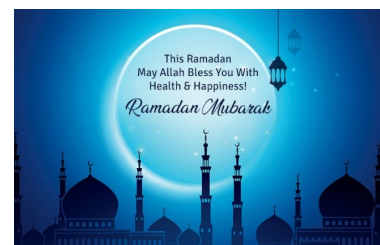
- ◆ NIH COVID-19 Resource Center: <https://covid19.nih.gov/covid-19-topics>
- ◆ OHRP's Frequency Asked Questions about Human Subjects Protections: <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/guidance/faq/index.html>
- ◆ The Belmont Report: <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/index.html>
- ◆ HIPAA Privacy Rule: <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/privacy/index.html>
- ◆ Office of Research Integrity: <https://ori.hhs.gov/>
- ◆ American Medical Association User's Guide the Medical Literature: <https://jamaevidence.mhmedical.com/Book.aspx?bookId=847>

## Attention Residents and Fellows Graduating in 2022!

- ◆ Residents need to have their manuscripts accepted by the Research Department in order to fulfill the scholarly activity requirement. Manuscripts are due 5/23/22.  
***Unaccepted manuscripts will delay receipt of your diploma.***
- ◆ Any active studies should be closed with the IRB or an amendment should be filed to transfer the project to another investigator. Try to do this **at least three weeks prior to your last day at St. John.**  
***Waiting to the last minute may delay receipt of your diploma.***
- ◆ Paper data collection sheets must be stored for the interval described in the research application. **DO NOT SHRED PAPER DATA COLLECTION SHEETS** as soon as the project is completed.
- ◆ Make sure you know who has copies of your electronic data file. These files must also be saved for the interval described in your study's research application.

## Recent Publications

- Aljundi L, Chaar A, Boshara P, Shiari A, Gennaoui G, Noori Z, Girard C, Szpunar S, Franco-Elizondo R. Incidence of bleeding in patients on different anticoagulants and antiplatelet therapies undergoing thoracentesis. *BMJ Open Respir Res.* 2021 Jul;8(1):e000874.
- Aref A, Alame A, Drelichman E, Hawasli A. Should local excision after neoadjuvant therapy be included in the national guidelines for the treatment of locally advanced rectal cancer? *Dis Colon Rectum.* 2021 Dec 23.
- Baracy MG Jr, Martinez M, Hagglund K, Afzal F, Kulkarni S, Corey L, Aslam MF. Minimally invasive hysterectomy for benign indications-surgical volume matters: a retrospective cohort study comparing complications of robotic-assisted and conventional laparoscopic hysterectomies. *J Robot Surg.* 2022 Jan 3.
- Bhargava A, Sharma M, Riederer K, Fukushima EA, Szpunar SM, Saravolatz L. Risk factors for in-hospital mortality from coronavirus disease 2019 infection among black patients - an urban center experience. *Clin Infect Dis.* 2021 Dec 6;73(11):e4005-e4011.
- Bhargava A, Zhao W, Sharma M, Szpunar SM, Saravolatz L. Six-month post-acute COVID-19: high self-reported morbidity among adults younger than sixty years and females. *J Clin Med Res.* 2021 Dec;13(12):567-571.
- Brady J, Hayward RD, Edhayan E. The association of psychiatric and neurological comorbidities with outcomes in traumatic injury patients. *Int J Psychiatry Med.* 2022 Jan;57(1):69-79.
- Fedorova T, Hagglund K, Hawasli A. The normohormonal primary hyperparathyroidism; a surgical dilemma pre and intra-operatively. *Am J Surg.* 2022 Jan 20:S0002-9610(22)00002-2.
- George J, Ganoff M, Lipari M. Corticosteroid exposure in the treatment of severe COPD exacerbations. *J Pharm Pract.* 2022 Feb;35(1):101-105.
- Green S, Staffileno BA. Favorable outcomes after implementing a nurse-driven sedation protocol. *Crit Care Nurse.* 2021 Dec 1;41(6):29-35.
- Kanitra JJ, Bjorklund RL, Clausen DJ, Hayward RD, Paxton RA, Haouilou JC. Protamine use in transcarotid arterial revascularization. *Vascular.* 2022 Jan 18:17085381211067047.
- Kanitra JJ, Power AD, Hayward RD, Haouilou JC, Edhayan E. Malfunctioning temporary hemodialysis catheters in patients with novel coronavirus disease 2019. *J Vasc Surg.* 2021 Jun;73(6):1881-1888.e3.





### Institutional Review Board

Ascension is rolling out a national standard eIRB system. eIRB will replace the current eIRB (called IRBNet). The go-live time is mid to late April 2022.

Ascension St. John Hospital, Ascension Providence, and Ascension Macomb/Oakland Hospitals will be included in the move to this eIRB system. The IRB will announce more detail regarding training sessions and resources soon.

what up,  
peeps?



### CME Update

- ◆ No upcoming seminars are currently scheduled.
- ◆ Contact Nancy DeRita for more information:  
[Nancy.derita@ascension.org](mailto:Nancy.derita@ascension.org)

### SEMCME Update

#### 44th Annual SEMCME Research Forum (virtual Zoom)

May 25, 2022, 8:00 am - 12:30 pm

Over 40 resident research presentations from the 13 SEMCME member hospitals, with a keynote lecture by Michael T. Osterholm, PhD, MPH. [Register here](#)

#### Research Workshop Series

Register to gain access to recordings [Register here](#)

#### Faculty Development - Residents as Teachers/MSU

February 11, 2022, 1:00 pm

Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88986990379>

#### Preparing for Practice Winter Series

February 23 and March 2, 2022 [Register here](#)

#### Chief Resident and Senior Workshop

April 20 & 27, May 4 & 11 [Register here](#)

#### Save the Date:

##### Pediatric Resident Research Forum

May 6, 2022

##### 7<sup>th</sup> Annual MI Summit on Quality Improvement

Patient Safety & High Value Care - May 18, 2022

For more information: <https://semcme.org/>

### Research and IRB Staff

<b>Susanna Szpunar, PhD</b>	Director, Biomedical Inv. & Research	<a href="mailto:Susan.szpunar@ascension.org">Susan.szpunar@ascension.org</a>
<b>Deborah Spampinato</b>	Administrative Asst. II	<a href="mailto:Deborah.spampinato@ascension.org">Deborah.spampinato@ascension.org</a>
<b>Lee Bowen, MPA, CIP, CHRC</b>	IRB Coordinator	<a href="mailto:Lee.booze-battle@ascension.org">Lee.booze-battle@ascension.org</a>
<b>Karen Hagglund, MS</b>	Clinical Scholar	<a href="mailto:Karen.hagglund@ascension.org">Karen.hagglund@ascension.org</a>
<b>Alice Mar, BA</b>	Clinical Scholar	<a href="mailto:Alice.mar@ascension.org">Alice.mar@ascension.org</a>
<b>Shelby Miller, MPH</b>	Clinical Scholar	<a href="mailto:Shelby.miller@ascension.org">Shelby.miller@ascension.org</a>
<b>Othuke Abada, MS</b>	Clinical Scholar	<a href="mailto:Othuke.abada@ascension.org">Othuke.abada@ascension.org</a>
<b>Natalie Smith, BA</b>	IRB Coordinator	<a href="mailto:Natalie.smith5@ascension.org">Natalie.smith5@ascension.org</a>
<b>Casey Hedman, BS</b>	Research Assistant	<a href="mailto:Casey.hedman@ascension.org">Casey.hedman@ascension.org</a>