



Society for Prevention Research  
29<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
June 1 – June 4, 2021

Hyatt Regency Washington, Washington, DC

### ***Addressing Racism and Disparities when Considering Biology and Context***

Within the context of a global pandemic and increased focus on public health and health equity across the world, the role of prevention science is of utmost importance. As such, this year's conference theme, *Addressing Racism and Disparities when Considering Biology and Context*, aims to highlight the significance of taking a more holistic view on prevention research. This challenges prevention scientists to think about how biological and contextual factors can be integrated within research focused on the promotion of human health, well-being, and equity. Integrating biology and context in prevention science has important implications at a number of levels, including designing prevention interventions, understanding individual differences in prevention programming effectiveness, and considering ethical issues. Purposely broad, biology in this call can mean a number of things including, but not limited to: genetics, epigenetics, neuroimaging, microbiome, metabolome, psychophysiology, etc. Context in this space is entirely focused on the environment and can range from the built environment (i.e., green space, neighborhood, air pollution) to acute contexts (i.e., pandemic exposure, natural disasters), to proximal social relationships (i.e., family, partners, peers, networks), to structural contexts such as poverty, racism, discrimination, historical oppression.

With advances in measurement and research in both biology and context, this is a unique time in prevention research wherein researchers are able to move the field forward and integrate both biology and context into their own research to help address disparities and racism.

## 2021 Special Conference Themes

Each year, SPR selects three special themes designed to highlight specific areas of research relevant to prevention science. These special themes guide the development of plenary sessions, symposia, and preconference workshops. The SPR Conference Committee encourages basic, applied, and developmental research submissions across the three special themes.

Consistent with this year's conference theme, *Addressing Racism and Disparities when Considering Biology and Context*, the SPR Conference Committee encourages special conference theme submissions related to: (1) Improving health equity, reducing disparities, and moving towards anti-racist prevention research; (2) Using biological and contextual data for screening in prevention research, and (3) Using biological and context data to understand mechanisms and outcomes in prevention research.

### **Special theme #1 Improving health equity, reducing disparities, and moving towards anti-racist prevention research with biology and context.**

Health inequities and disparities adversely affect populations of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles in accessing health care and prevention interventions based on their economic and/or social status. These inequities manifest within places such as neighborhoods, communities, cities, and regions. Health inequities have been linked to a person's racial or ethnic group, religion, economic status, gender and sexual identity, geographic location, mental health, disability or other characteristics historically linked to stigma, discrimination, racism or exclusion. The goals of creating health equity and improving health among groups that experience disparities require special efforts. Increased public, government, and private investments in prevention efforts have the promise to address these disparities and inequities.

New to the conference this year, the focus of this theme is anti-racist research that aims to understand and address the problems that result from racial

inequity and injustice. This is accomplished through evidenced based practice and policy development informed by an anti-racist framework.

The SPR Conference Committee seeks proposals that advance understanding of (a) risk and protective factors and resiliency across and within different populations, (b) the use of appropriate data to illuminate and help address health disparities, (c) prevention efforts that address health disparities and promote health equity, (d) policies that promote equity, health, and well-being, (e) systemic and individual racism that impacts health, housing, education, employment and equitable treatment of underrepresented populations (<https://www.preventionresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SPR-NPSC-Statement-Condemning-Racism-FIN.pdf>). One of the challenges these efforts face is the availability of appropriate measures and data to assess prevention needs and prevention program efficacy for the groups facing health disparities. Appropriate use of biological and contextual measures are essential for improving health equity, reducing disparities, and moving towards anti-racist prevention research.

### **Special Theme # 2: Using biological and context data for screening in prevention research**

Screening in prevention programming is commonplace, but the use of biological and context data within the screening process is significantly rarer. Screening, by definition, is the identification of individuals at risk through a variety of methods including surveys, biomarkers, census block designation, etc. Use of biological and context data in the screening process can introduce a number of ethical considerations that are essential to explore.

The SPR Conference Committee invites submissions under this theme that address issues such as: 1) development and testing of biological and context driven screening tools used to determine prevention program receipt; 2) ethical considerations related to the integration of biological and contextual data into screening procedures, including issues related to discrimination and disparities; 3) Use of novel data sources to determine who and what prevention programming should be used; 4) the scalability and

economic considerations as it relates to using biological and context driven screening tools.

### **Special Theme # 3: Using biological and context data to understand mechanisms and outcomes in prevention research**

Understanding the mechanisms through which prevention interventions exert their effects is essential to prevention science research and may inform efforts to reduce health disparities. Effective dissemination of evidence-based interventions cannot happen without a clear understanding of how interventions work. As such, this theme focuses on the use of biological and contextual data to understand how prevention interventions work, as well as how we can use biological and contextual data as an outcome measure.

The SPR Conference Committee invites submissions under this theme that address issues such as: 1) how to integrate biological data and contextual data to explore mechanisms within a prevention programming framework; 2) examples and opportunities for using biological data and contextual data as outcome measures; 3) the scale up, practical, and ethical considerations of using biological and contextual data to understand mechanisms and outcomes; and 4), communication of prevention program findings that utilize biological and contextual data as a way to understand change or as an outcome.

### **General Conference Themes: Advances in Prevention Research**

**Epidemiology and Etiology:** Submissions under this theme are focused on describing the distribution and patterns of injury and disease (e.g., cancer, cardiovascular disease, substance use disorders, depression, and HIV/AIDS) as well as on identifying risk and protective targets of preventive interventions, especially those with a developmental and/or lifespan approach, or that include neurobiological, genetic, or contextual factors.

**Development and Testing of Interventions:** Prevention interventions can be tested for efficacy under conditions of high quality assurance and strong research designs (“proof of concept”) and tested for

effectiveness under real world conditions in settings and systems. Submissions reporting the findings from efficacy or effectiveness trials (including pilot studies with preliminary outcome data) are welcomed, and those that combine the findings of such trials with one of the special conference themes are particularly encouraged.

**Dissemination and Implementation Science:**

Dissemination, implementation, and operations research bridge the gap between research and everyday practice through a dynamic, transactional process between the public health community and researchers. Submissions under this theme should advance the scientific understanding of dissemination and implementation, including cost-efficient sustainability of preventive interventions into systems. Presentations that focus on program dissemination and implementation outcomes, improve dissemination and implementation processes, or identify individual, provider, organizational, and/or system levels factors that contribute to dissemination, implementation, and effectiveness are encouraged.

**Research, Policy, and Practice:** Decision makers around the world emphasize evidence-based policy reform. New policy initiatives at the state and national levels require evidence to guide further policy change, such as changes in opioid prescribing practice guidelines and new approaches to improving the educational system. This theme encourages submissions that evaluate or estimate the outcomes of planned, new, or existing policies, that look at the impact of efficacious programs in emerging policy contexts, and that demonstrate how empirical research has been used to inform and guide new policies. In addition, research that describes and evaluates the processes by which policies have been formed, developed, and implemented are encouraged. A wide variety of content areas are welcomed, including emergent areas such as marijuana legalization or immigration policy, along with recurring areas of concern such as cancer screening, HIV antiretroviral therapy compliance, education policy, gun safety, obesity prevention, and anti-bullying laws and policies. Proposals focused on international research or comparative research across policy contexts and proposals that combine the findings of such research

with one of the special conference themes are particularly encouraged.

**Innovative Methods and Statistics:** “Cutting edge” studies and methodological analyses that address measurement, statistical, and design challenges to prevention science are invited. That includes studies of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches. Studies that use advanced methods but do not directly study a novel statistical, methodological, or design question should be submitted to one of the other themes. Presentations should highlight the challenges related to prevention science that these innovative design and statistical methods can address and additional benefits gained by using these techniques.

**NIDA International SPR Poster Session**

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is sponsoring an international poster session. Posters will highlight drug abuse prevention and/or drug-related HIV prevention research completed in international settings by international, domestic, and cross-nation teams of researchers. SPR will issue a separate call for submissions to this international poster session.

**Submission Deadline: November 25, 2020**