AMCA YPs

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS SYMPOSIUM
CAREER PANEL & ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

Moderators: Drew Lysaker, Vilma Cooper, Kyndall Dye-Braumuller, Andrew Partin, Casey Crockett, Andrew Partin, Chloe Wang, Andrew Rivera

Symposium I TIME: 1:45 PM – 3:15 PM – MEETING ROOM: 201

Roles in Response: How vector-control professionals manage public health emergencies

Symposium II TIME: 4:00 PM – 5:30 PM – MEETING ROOM: 201

Career Roundtable Discussions

YPs Social* TIME: 5:30 PM – 6:30 PM – MEETING ROOM: 207

*All Young Professionals and speakers are welcome.

2025 AMCA Annual Meeting in San Juan, Puerto Rico

AMCA YPS SYMPOSIUM

Roles in Response: How vector-control professionals manage public health emergencies

YPS SYMPOSIUM I - CAREER PANEL
Wednesday, March 5
Time: 1:45 pm to 3:15 pm
Location: Room 201

YPS SYMPOSIUM II - CAREER ROUNDTABLES
Wednesday, March 5
Time: 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm
Location: Room 201

YPS SOCIAL*
Wednesday, March 6
Time: 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM
Location: Room 207

**All Young Professionals and speakers are welcome.

YPs Symposium Task Force
Drew Lysaker, Vilma Cooper, Chloe Wang, Kassidy Caride, Kyndall Dye-Braumuller, Andrew Partin, Casey Parker-Crockett, Andrew Rivera

eva.buckner@ufl.edu

Eva Buckner

Assistant Professor and State Extension Specialist at the University of Florida

EDUCATION

B.S. Biology

M.S. Ecology

Ph.D. Entomology

ADVICE

Always make an effort to network, because you never know when someone may serve as a valuable connection in the future. Also, don't stay in a job you are unhappy in.

CAREER CHRONOLOGY

My name is Eva Buckner and I am an Assistant Professor and State Extension Specialist at the University of Florida, specializing in Medical entomology. With a background in Biology, Ecology, and Entomology, I have dedicated my career to implementing extension activities to help enable Florida Vector Control Managers increase their program's capacity for performing insecticide resistance testing and vector surveillance . Currently, I focus on providing medical entomology extension to all stakeholders in Florida, specializing in guidance on vector-borne diseases, vector insecticide resistance, and integrated vector management. My lab conducts research on vector insecticide resistance and integrated vector management, working to address key challenges in vector control and public health. At the symposium, I will be presenting on Oropouche virus response in Florida, where I'll share insights into my my role in conducting ongoing Oropouche virus extension and research in Florida following the first travel-associated OROV cases in the state in 2024. Additionally, by serving on the Florida Department of Health's Interagency Taskforce, I help educate stakeholders on emerging or re-emerging vector-borne diseases in Florida, allowing them to make evidenced based management decisions. I also work to connect Florida vector control programs with needed resources after natural disaster.

etm10@psu.edu

Erika Machtinger

Associate Professor of Veterinary Entomology at Penn State University

EDUCATION

B. S. Wildlife Conservation and Ecology

M.S. Entomology

Ph.D. Entomology

ADVICE

Master vector ecology to understand disease transmission, collaborate across disciplines to develop effective control strategies, and stay engaged with professional networks to remain at the forefront of emerging research. Learn from psychology to communicate in ways that drive behavioral change, and always think ahead to anticipate the next invasive vector species and its public health impact.

CAREER CHRONOLOGY

My name is Erika Machtinger and I am a Associate Professor of Veterinary Entomology at Penn State University specializing in Veterinary Entomology and Vector Ecology. With a background in Wildlife Conservation and Ecology from the University of Delaware and Entomology from the University of Florida, I have dedicated my career to investigating the ecological relationships between vertebrates and their ectoparasites and other arthropod pests to facilitate the development of control methods and integrated pest management strategies. Currently, I focus on tick ecology and tick-host interactions where I investigates tick behavior and host associations and interactions to develop effective control strategies and improve personal protection against vector-borne threats., working to address key challenges in vector control and public health. At the symposium, I will be presenting on The host connection: From surveillance to solutions where I'll share insights into The increasing risk of tick-borne diseases, such as Lyme disease, is a significant public health challenge in North America. While several host-targeted tick management strategies have been developed, these efforts often overlook host ecology. Host-targeted interventions can influence host behavior, while host ecology—shaped by factors such as seasonal variations, competition, and social dynamics—can significantly affect success. How can we better align tick management strategies with the behaviors and ecological needs of key host species to enhance their effectiveness? By addressing the ecological blind spots in current practices, I will highlight the importance of aligning strategies with the needs and habits of the host species, ultimately contributing to more comprehensive and effective approaches to tick-borne disease prevention. In addition, my role as the Team Lead for the Vector-borne Disease Team at Penn State Extension and the Project Director of the VectorED Network, a CDC Training and Evaluation Center, our work plays a critical role in advancing tick management evaluation and public health education. This research is highly relevant to public health emergencies, particularly in addressing the growing threat of tick-borne diseases. By investigating tick ecology and host interactions, it enhances the effectiveness of control strategies that mitigate disease transmission risks. Understanding how host-targeted interventions influence host behavior and ecology improves the success of tick management programs, contributing to more comprehensive disease prevention efforts. Additionally, predicting interactions between native and invasive vector species is crucial for anticipating shifts in disease dynamics, as invasive ticks may outcompete native species, alter host preferences, or introduce new pathogens. By examining these ecological relationships, this research supports proactive surveillance and adaptive management strategies, ensuring timely responses to emerging public health threats.

selkashef@central.com

Samer Elkashef

Regional Sales Manager for Central Life Sciences

EDUCATION

B.S. Genetics

Ph.D. Genetics, Genomics, and Bioinformatics

ADVICE

There are many roles you can play in the realm of vector control; operations, industry, government, academia...the list goes on. Think about what you like to do, and what you are good at doing as you figure out how you want to be part of the vector world.

CAREER CHRONOLOGY

My name is Samer Elkashef and I am a Regional Sales Manager at Central Life Sciences, specializing in Mosquito Control. My background is a Bachelor of Sciences in Genetics from UC Davis. I then jumped into a Ph.D. program in Genetics, Genomics and Bioinformatics from UC Riverside. After I completed my education I did a brief stint in R&D at a start-up and then eventually found my way to mosquito control. I worked for the Sacramento-Yolo Mosquito and Vector Control District for seven years and then transitioned back into the private sector worked for Central Life Sciences in a sales role. In 2022, I was awarded the Presidential Citation from the Mosquito and Vector Control Association (MVCAC) for my work in Regulatory Affairs. I am an AMCA Master Trainer for Best Management Practices for Mosquito Control. I serve on committees for the AMCA, MVCAC and currently sit on the board of the Northwest Mosquito and Vector Control Association. Currently, I focus on managing sales of public health pesticides on the West Coast of the United States for Central Life Sciences. At the symposium, I will be presenting on How Industry can help you in a Public Health Emergency, where I'll share insights into how Industry plays a key role in vector control and can be of assistance to local jurisdictions in a public health emergencies. This assistance can come in various forms and my goal for this presentation is to illustrate that for people either looking to enter vector control or grow in their current roles in vector control. I see my role as an advisor and facilitator in public health emergencies. My work history combined with my connection to various agencies in my region allows me to be a resource for troubleshooting emergencies should they arise.

Latham.IVCC@gmail.com

Mark Latham

Previously Director of Manatee County Mosquito Control District

EDUCATION

B.A. Natural Science

ADVICE

Although you may have chosen a narrow field to focus on in your career in Public Health, do not lose sight of all the other aspects that make up Integrated Vector management. Make the effort to learn as much as possible about ALL these other aspects/methods so you can view and make decisions based on the whole picture. Although you may have chosen a narrow field to focus on in your career in Public Health, do not lose sight of all the other aspects that make up Integrated Vector management. Make the effort to learn as much as possible about ALL these other aspects/methods so you can view and make decisions based on the whole picture.

CAREER CHRONOLOGY

My name is Mark Latham and I am a retired director of Manatee County Mosquito Control District, specializing in MC Aerial Application (Primarily Adulticiding). With 40+ years in Operational Mosquito Control, I have dedicated my career to sharing my experience, ideas and findings through numerous presentations, cooperative projects and Guideline Documents with the MC community, Industry, Academia and WHO.

Currently, I focus on consulting to assist industry in new product trials, and translating US-based operational practices to Malaria/Dengue programs and research projects in other parts of the World, working to address key challenges in vector control and public health. At the symposium, I will be presenting on Moving From Operational Experience to Consulting, where I'll share insights into translating a career managing operational mosquito control into consulting advice for other programs, industry and research/demonstration projects. My work highlights the critical role of safe and effective Aerial Adulticiding which may be the only means to provide rapid vector control over large areas during public health emergencies.

eva.buckner@ufl.edu

Eva Buckner

Assistant Professor and State Extension Specialist at the University of Florida

EDUCATION

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M.S. Ecology

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Erika Machtinger

Associate Professor of Veterinary Entomology at Penn State University

EDUCATION

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M.S. Entomology

PhD. Entomology

ADVICE

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Kendra Dragg

US Army Medical Entomologist and PhD Candidate at the University of Florida

EDUCATION

B.S. Ecology and Evolutionary Studies

M.P.H. International Health Sciences

M.S.c. Control of Infectious Disease

Ph.D. Candidate

ADVICE

Never let the fear of rejection stop you from at least trying. The worst anyone can ever say is no.

CAREER CHRONOLOGY

My name is Kendra Dagg and I am a US Army Medical Entomologist and a PhD candidate at the University of Florida, specializing in vector management, insecticide resistance management, and toxicology. I have a BS in Ecology and Evolutionary Studies from the University of North Carolina in Asheville, MPH in International Health Sciences from Kobe University (Japan), MSc in Control of Infectious Disease from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and I am currently a PhD Candidate in the Entomology and Nematology Department of University of Florida. Notably, in 2023 I was a Program recipient for PhD studies from the US Army Long Term Health Education and Training. Currently, I focus on studying the impact insecticide resistance mutations have on the thermal tolerance and regulation of *Aedes aegypti* and toxicological study of insecticides with novel modes of action, working to address key challenges in vector control and public health. My work highlights the critical role of how US Army entomologists play a vital role in surveillance of key public health risks, not just limited to arthropod vectors, and research on new innovative strategies to monitor and manage vector populations. Additionally, we train troops and allied nations on proper preventative measures and increase awareness of critical public health threats. As Medical Service Corp. officers, we all closely coordinate with military and local medical services during a state of public health emergency to reduce disease risk for the troops and local population. US Army entomologists play a vital role in surveillance of key public health risks, not just limited to arthropod vectors, and research on new innovative strategies to monitor and manage vector populations. Additionally, we train troops and allied nations on proper preventative measures and increase awareness of critical public health threats. As Medical Service Corp. officers, we all closely coordinate with military and local medical services during a state of public health emergency to reduce disease risk for the troops and local population.

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Sierra Schluep

Medical Entomology Officer for the United States Navy

EDUCATION

M.S.

P.h.D. Candidate

ADVICE

The Navy can fund a Master or PhD program if required. If you have a graduate degree already, you can direct commission and explore service in the Navy as a Medical Entomology Officer. This career is multifaceted, allowing you to experience all aspects of public health: urban pest management, high level research (applied/basic), vector surveillance, conducting spray operations, head of pest management programs, supporting sailors, marines, and local civilians, policy development, etc. There is opportunity to experience the entire spectrum of public health entomology throughout your career with the various duty stations and their corresponding missions statements.

CAREER CHRONOLOGY

My name is Sierra Schluep and I am a Medical Entomology Officer for the United States Navy, specializing in Mosquito Research. I have been Promoted to Science Director at the Navy Entomology Center of Excellence overseeing Testing and Evaluation, Research and Development, and Global Health Operations initiatives. Currently, I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Florida researching larvicide resistance in *Culex* spp., working to address key challenges in vector control and public health. My work highlights the critical role of establishing and managing pest management programs on military installations relevant to warfighters, their civilian families, and the local communities (when overseas).
My role also focuses on research and working closely with academic and research institutions to secure government funding for novel research efforts.

brismosqpc@comcast.net

Priscilla Matton

Superintendent of Bristol County Mosquito Control Project

EDUCATION

M.S. Entomology

ADVICE

Don't turn down an opportunity to try something new and different, even if you think it is not what you want to do in the future. Remember there are multiple ways to get to your goal, not everyone's journey is the same.

CAREER CHRONOLOGY

My name is Priscilla Matton and I am a Superintendent at Bristol County Mosquito Control Project, specializing in operational vector control. In 2004 I received a M.S. in Entomology from Rutgers University with an emphasis on medical entomology. I have been with the Bristol County Mosquito Control Project in Massachusetts since 2005, first as an entomologist and currently the Superintendent. I have dedicated my career to Understanding the enzootic and epizootic cycle of Eastern Equine Encephalitis in Massachusetts.
Currently, I focus on Operational mosquito control and disease risk, working to address key challenges in vector control and public health. My work highlights the critical role of Eastern Equine Encephalitis public health emergencies.

Abelardo.Moncayo@tn.gov

Abelardo Moncayo

Director, Vector-Borne Diseases at the Tennessee Department of Health

EDUCATION

M.S. Biomedical Sciences

Ph.D. Medical entomology

ADVICE

Do not reject good opportunities when they come your way; they may take you to unexpected and wonderful places. Be flexible and adaptable.

CAREER CHRONOLOGY

My name is Abelardo Moncayo and I am the Director of Vector-Borne Diseases at the Tennessee Department of Health, specializing in Vector-Borne Diseases. I received my M.S. degree in Biomedical Sciences from Ohio University and Ph.D. in Medical Entomology from the University of Massachusetts. I completed my post-doctoral fellowship at the Center for Tropical Diseases and Department of Pathology at the University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston. I have dedicated my career to service and volunteering as President for the National Association of Vector Disease Control Officials, the mid-Atlantic Mosquito Control Association, and founder and current President of the Tennessee Mosquito and Vector Control Association (TMVCA). I have worked as Director of the Vector-Borne Diseases Program at the Tennessee Department of Health for over 20 years directing a multi-disciplinary program which included the epidemiology, laboratory and public health entomology aspects of the vector-borne diseases. My research interests include understanding the epidemiology and ecology of vector-borne diseases to identify risk factors and inform disease control and prevention measures., working to address key challenges in vector control and public health. My work highlights the critical role of grant writing and coordination of Zika outbreak response.

selkashef@central.com

Samer Elkashef

Regional Sales Manager for Central Life Sciences

EDUCATION

B.S. Genetics

Ph.D. Genetics, Genomics, and Bioinformatics

ADVICE

There are many roles you can play in the realm of vector control; operations, industry, government, academia...the list goes on. Think about what you like to do, and what you are good at doing as you figure out how you want to be part of the vector world.

CAREER CHRONOLOGY

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jessica.strange-george@mgk.com

Jessica Strange-George

Director of R&D at MGK

EDUCATION

B.S. Biology

M.S. Entomology

ADVICE

My best piece of career advice for young professionals is to never be afraid to fail. In industry, it's critical to take risks and build off what you learned from what didn't work.

CAREER CHRONOLOGY

My name is Jessica Strange-George, and I am the Director of R&D at MGK. I oversee a department of scientists, entomologists and a research laboratory and team. My background is in Entomology and Formulation Microbiology. I have dedicated my career to advancing technologies and products that help others manage and mitigate the negative impacts of arthropods. Our team is heavily involved in new product development and technology assessments in multiple areas of insect control including crop protection, professional pest control, consumer products, vector control and animal health/rural hygiene.

alg52@cornell.edu

Amelia Geiner Safi

Professor of Social and Behavioral Sciences and Public Health Practice at Cornell University

EDUCATION

M.S. Risk and Science Communication
Ph.D. Social and Behavioral Sciences

ADVICE

Learn as much about what effective engagement and communication looks like - this will make you more impactful - even if what you learn challenges some of what you have been taught. The more you know about the audiences you work with, what they care about and how to reach them, the more likely you are to have influence and trust.

CAREER CHRONOLOGY

My name is Amelia Geiner Safi and I am a Professor of Social and Behavioral Sciences and Public Health Practice at Cornell University in the Department of Public and Ecosystem Health and MPH Program, specializing in multilevel influences on health, strategic health communication and implementation science. I have a PhD in Social and Behavioral Sciences from the Department of Health, Behavior and Society at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and a Masters of Science in Risk and Science Communication from Cornell University. I have dedicated my career to 1) engaging in high-quality, mixed methods research on interdisciplinary teams, 2) translating research and theory into policy and practice for a wide range of public health, One Health and environmental health areas and 3) supporting students and partners in pursuing impactful, strategic work. Currently, I focus on about 50 different things, but that includes teaching social epidemiology and strategic public health communication to MPH students, training VBD partners in social and behavioral science methods, advancing VBD research and evaluation and training the VBD workforce in strategic communication, working to address key challenges in vector control and public health. My work highlights the critical role of identifying, reaching, engaging, motivating, partnering with and learning from impacted audiences in order to have impact.

ralvarado@prvectorcontrol.org

Raiza Alvarado

Vector Management Team Lead at Puerto Rico Vector Control Unit

EDUCATION

B.S. Animal Industry

M.S. Biotechnology

ADVICE

My advice is to stay curious, adaptable, and open to learning new technologies. Building strong networks and collaborating with peers will help you gain invaluable insights and make a meaningful impact in the field of public health

CAREER CHRONOLOGY

My name is Raiza Alvarado and I am the Vector Management Team Lead at the Puerto Rico Vector Control Unit, specializing in mosquito surveillance, rearing, and quality control. I have extensive experience in biological research related to mosquito-borne diseases, with a strong focus on controlling *Aedes aegypti* mosquito populations and contributing to research projects like the Wolbachia project aimed at disease control. With a background in biotechnology and animal industry, I hold a Master's degree in Biotechnology and a Bachelor's degree in Animal Industry. I have over 8 years of experience in vector management and agricultural practices. In my current role as Vector Management Team Lead, I am responsible for mosquito surveillance, insectary work, and quality control. Prior to this, I gained valuable experience working on agricultural research projects at Du Pont Pioneer and Monsanto, where I focused on crop development and pest management. I have dedicated my career to conducting mosquito surveillance and implementing vector control strategies for *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, with a direct impact on mosquito-borne disease prevention. I've also worked on source reduction efforts and field studies that improved mosquito control efforts and raised public awareness about mosquito control practices in local communities. I have contributed to the Wolbachia project in Ponce, Puerto Rico, playing an active role in biological research aimed at controlling mosquito populations. Currently, I focus on on overseeing mosquito surveillance and rearing activities, focusing on *Aedes aegypti* mosquito control. I contribute to biological research and molecular testing to support disease elimination efforts. I also manage mosquito trap maintenance and quality control within the insectary, using GIS technologies to track mosquito populations and document findings. Additionally, I engage with the community to educate and raise awareness about mosquito control practices. My work highlights the critical role of vector control in managing mosquito-borne diseases, particularly in preventing outbreaks of diseases like Zika, dengue, and chikungunya. My role is highly relevant to public health emergencies because through mosquito surveillance, control strategies, and biological research, I directly support efforts to prevent disease outbreaks and improve public health in local communities.

manuel@mosquitoden.com

Manuel Lluberas

Public Health Entomology Consultant and President of *Mosquito Den* LLC

EDUCATION

M.S. Public health & Livestock Entomology, International Diploma Humanitarian Assistance (IDHA)

ADVICE

To stay curious and adaptable, always seeking to understand the complexities of your profession and those of human/vector interactions, and look for solutions that are evidence-based, context-specific, and acceptable to the populations protected. But most importantly¸ never assume you have the right answer. Seek the advice of vectosaurs in the grey hair or no hair club. Only they have what no university can teach: Experience.

CAREER CHRONOLOGY

My name is Manuel Lluberas and I am a Public Health Entomology Consultant and President of Mosquito Dean LLC, specializing in national vector population management initiatives, and post-event emergency vector control interventions. With a background in military medical and livestock entomology, I have dedicated my career to designing, implementing, and advising national mosquito management and emergency vector control program managers across four continents during the past four decades, including the US President's Malaria Initiative, the Southern Cone Initiative against Chagas disease in South America, collaborating with major mineral extraction companies and luxury resorts, and post-event, emergency vector control interventions, including the Tsunami in Banda Aceh Indonesia and the earthquake in Port au Prince, Haiti that decimated those cities and killed over half a million people, Hurricanes Irma and Maria in portions of Puerto Rico. Currently, I focus on assisting UN agencies and luxury hotels fine-tune their mosquito and biting fly management interventions, exchanging ideas on the subject, cloning myself in the "new generation, and working to address key challenges in vector control and public health. My work highlights the critical role of preparedness, flexibility in combining interventions, tailoring them to local parameters and conditions, and mitigating the impact of vector-borne diseases in public health preparedness.

Latham.IVCC@gmail.com

Mark Latham

Previously Director of Manatee County Mosquito Control District

EDUCATION

B.A. Natural Science

ADVICE

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