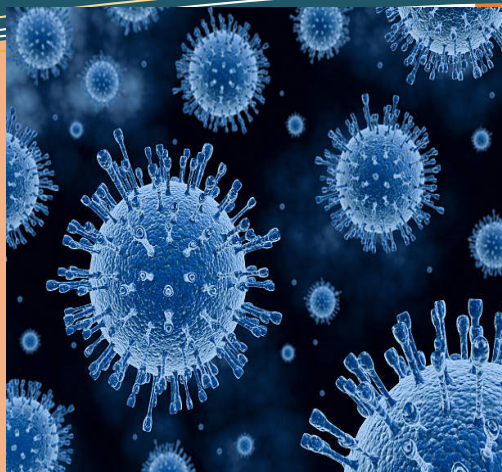


315 Washington Street

Oakland, CA 94607

510.451.1344

www.ceip.us



This issue:

- Celebrating Gretchen Rothrock's Public Health Journey
- Former Staff: Where are they now?
- New Staff

The Collection of Specimens for Influenza A Subtyping

Each respiratory season* CEIP works with clinical laboratories to collect residual specimens from persons hospitalized with influenza. These samples are tested at local and state public health laboratories to determine influenza subtype and better understand influenza hospitalization rates by influenza subtype.

During the 2024-2025 respiratory season, in response to the ongoing national outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) A(H5N1) viral infections in birds, poultry, dairy cattle, and other animals, with sporadic detection of human A(H5N1) cases, CEIP will be working to enhance this collection of residual specimens from persons hospitalized with influenza A. This expansion will assist ongoing state and local health department surveillance efforts.

*Respiratory Season – October 1 – April 30.

Routine annual influenza vaccination is recommended for all persons aged ≥ 6 months who do not have contraindications. For detailed recommendations, please visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/hcp/acip/index.html>



Celebrating Gretchen Rothrock and her Journey in Public Health



Gretchen Rothrock | San Francisco Department of Public Health—101 Grove St, San Francisco. Circa 1988

Gretchen Rothrock has spent her career dedicated to advancing public health, guiding critical projects at the California Emerging Infections Program (CEIP). As Associate Director of CEIP, she ensures Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) deliverables are met, manages budgets, and coordinates with partners like Kaiser Permanente, University of California, San Francisco, and Zuckerberg San Francisco General. With decades of experience, she knows how to navigate challenges, place the right people in key roles, and keep everything running smoothly.

During her undergraduate studies at Cal State Hayward, Gretchen wrote a paper about how Hispanic surnames and health were documented in medical records—a topic that sparked her passion for addressing health disparities in underserved communities and led her to choose a career in public health.

Her professional career began in 1988, when she was hired for a short-term contract with CDC and worked under the direction of University of California, Berkeley’s Dr. Arthur Reingold. In 1995, when the Emerging Infection Programs were established, her

commitment to public health deepened. The urgency to monitor, control, and prevent the broadening expanse of emerging infectious diseases weighed heavily upon Gretchen and many of her colleagues. There were finally some treatment options for AIDS patients in the developed world, but AIDS was still out of control in developing countries and newly emerging diseases were a reminder that surveillance needed to be active, accurate, and timely.

One of the most impactful moments in her career came during the AIDS epidemic, when Gretchen led a case-control study among HIV patients. She spent long hours interviewing patients who felt isolated. “They just wanted someone who understood them,” she recalls. Listening to their stories was both challenging and deeply rewarding.

Another career highlight was an intervention aimed at improving water quality through a specific filtration system. The study required participants to be unaware of whether they were using the filter, which posed challenges but ultimately succeeded thanks to Gretchen’s adaptability. She believes that flexibility is key in public health: “Nothing stays the same. We must always evolve.”

Looking ahead, Gretchen remains passionate about innovation in the field. She encourages newcomers to ask questions, stay open to new ideas, and build strong analytical and communication skills. Outside of work, she finds inspiration in swimming, a sport she took up over a decade ago, and especially enjoying open water swimming.

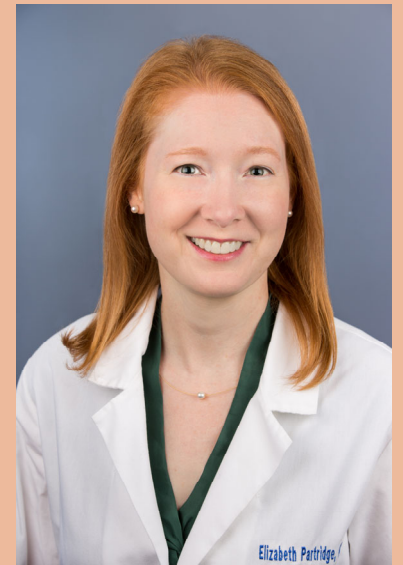
Reflecting on her journey, Gretchen offers this advice: “When things get tough, don’t quit. Take a step back, look at things from a new angle, and keep going.” Her perseverance and passion for public health continue to inspire those around her, and her impact will be felt for years to come.

Contributed by Anita Ogayemi-Agoh

CEIP 30th Anniversary | Where are they Now?

Elizabeth Partridge – Research Assistant 2005

Working as a research assistant at CEIP was my introduction to hospital epidemiology and hospital acquired infections. It was through CEIP that I gained an appreciation for boots-on-the-ground epidemiology work and its contribution to the overall safety of a healthcare community. Fast forward about 20 years...I'm an associate clinical professor of pediatric infectious disease at UC Davis Medical Center (UCDMC). In addition to clinical care, I have the opportunity to work with UCDMC's division of hospital epidemiology as medical director for infection prevention in the children's hospital. My work at CEIP both prepared and inspired me for my current work in preventing hospital acquired infections. When I'm not at the hospital, you can find me at home enjoying time with my husband and 2 year old son who, despite my work in infection prevention, seems to bring home every germ in the Sacramento area.



Judy Rees – *Cryptosporidium* Coordinator 1996

Judy Rees and her husband did a very methodical search: They looked for the best places to live and the top medical schools. They found the perfect intersection of what they were seeking at Dartmouth College's Geisel School of Medicine in Hanover, New Hampshire, where Judy is currently an associate professor in the Department of Epidemiology. Judy's job at Dartmouth College provided opportunities for conducting disease surveillance and establishing a registry for birth defects. Her experience with data collection and surveillance at CEIP gave her the background needed to create the registry. Initially, her colleagues wanted the registry to include a requirement for consent. Judy re-worked the parameters for this registry so that consent wasn't required and was able to maintain all essential features. Judy later ended up at the New Hampshire State Cancer Registry, where she developed guidelines for collecting high quality data and has been the Director since 2004. One success of the cancer registry was to add space for physicians to record incidental findings so they can follow up and monitor their outcome.



For fun and inspiration, Judy plays squash, plays the harp, and likes to swim in the ponds near her home.

Active Bacterial Core Surveillance (ABCs) Pathogens (sterile sites only)

Neisseria meningitidis, *Haemophilus influenzae*, Group B Streptococcus,
Group A Streptococcus, *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*

CEIP 30th Anniversary | Where are they Now?

Sarah New—Research Assistant and Surveillance Officer 2012

In 2012, I was offered two positions: one as a research assistant at the California Emerging Infections Program (CEIP) and the other as a public health administrator at a different organization. I recall thinking that if I accepted the position at CEIP, it would pave the way for a career in epidemiology, potentially leading to a PhD. That is exactly how things unfolded.

At CEIP, I gained valuable experience managing a CDC-funded study and conducting patient interviews, which led to my first role as an epidemiologist with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) in the STD Control Branch. My work on pertussis and influenza research at CEIP later enabled me to join the Immunization Branch, working on surveillance and informatics projects related to pertussis and other respiratory pathogens. Currently, I am a senior epidemiologist at the STD Control Branch, focusing on hepatitis C surveillance.

I have now worked in hepatitis surveillance for nearly a decade at CDPH. My motivation to work on this pathogen comes from lived experience, having grown up with a mother who was diagnosed with hepatitis C. Witnessing the stigma and barriers to treatment that she faced inspired me to dedicate my career to reducing such challenges for others. Outside of work, I often find inspiration while walking around the Bay Area, where the homelessness crisis serves as a reminder of the importance of my work. Having grown up close to similar circumstances, I empathize deeply with those experiencing homelessness or substance use disorders, and I hope my work as an epidemiologist contributes to improving their lives in California.



Respiratory Virus Hospitalization Surveillance Network (RESP-NET)

includes Influenza Hospitalization Surveillance Network (FluSurv-NET), Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Hospitalization Surveillance Network (RSV-NET), and COVID-19 Associated Hospitalization Surveillance Network (COVID-NET)

CEIP conducts surveillance for persons hospitalized with influenza, RSV, and COVID-19 infections.

CEIP 30th Anniversary | Where are they Now?

Sue Shallow — FoodNet Coordinator 1995—2004

Sue Shallow was the FoodNet Epidemiologist from approximately 1995 through 2004. She now lives outside of Nashville, TN, where she has lived for nearly a decade. Sue has stated that her job at CEIP was a ‘perfect fit’ for her after completing her MPH and utilizing her knowledge from working as a medical technologist in a clinical laboratory. She has been retired for many years, but recalls that after her work with CEIP, she was well positioned to apply for work at SFDPH, where she worked from 2005 through 2012 in the Communicable Disease department organizing surveillance for the hepatitis C registry. One of the most successful/rewarding experiences she had while working with CEIP was the relationships developed between multiple agencies while implementing FoodNet case-control studies, collaborating with health departments in other states and reporting results back to CDC.

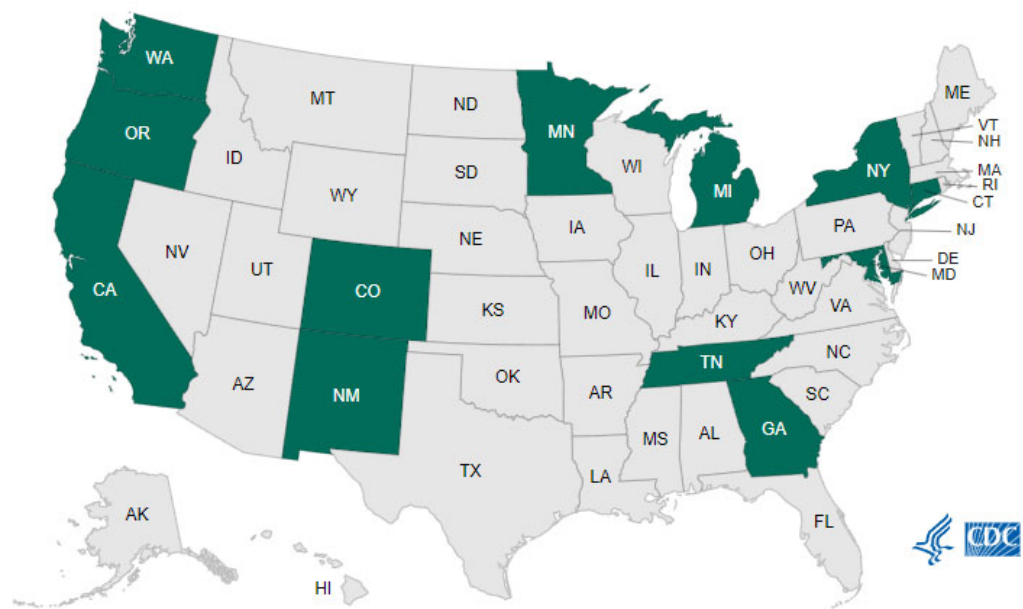


Sue’s current jobs are those of a person enjoying retirement: she is a dog walker and enjoys spending time with her grandniece and grandnephew. She is also involved with a national parks program checking birds’ nests for eggs and later rechecking and counting the number of successful hatchlings. Things that inspire her daily include watching butterflies and birds come to her garden.

When asked about other highlights about her job at CEIP, Sue responded, “You gave me fantastic opportunities by hiring me. It was a great combination of [working with] numbers and math”.

Did you know that there are Emerging Infections Programs in 11 other states?

<https://www.cdc.gov/emerging-infections-program/php/eip-sites/index.html>



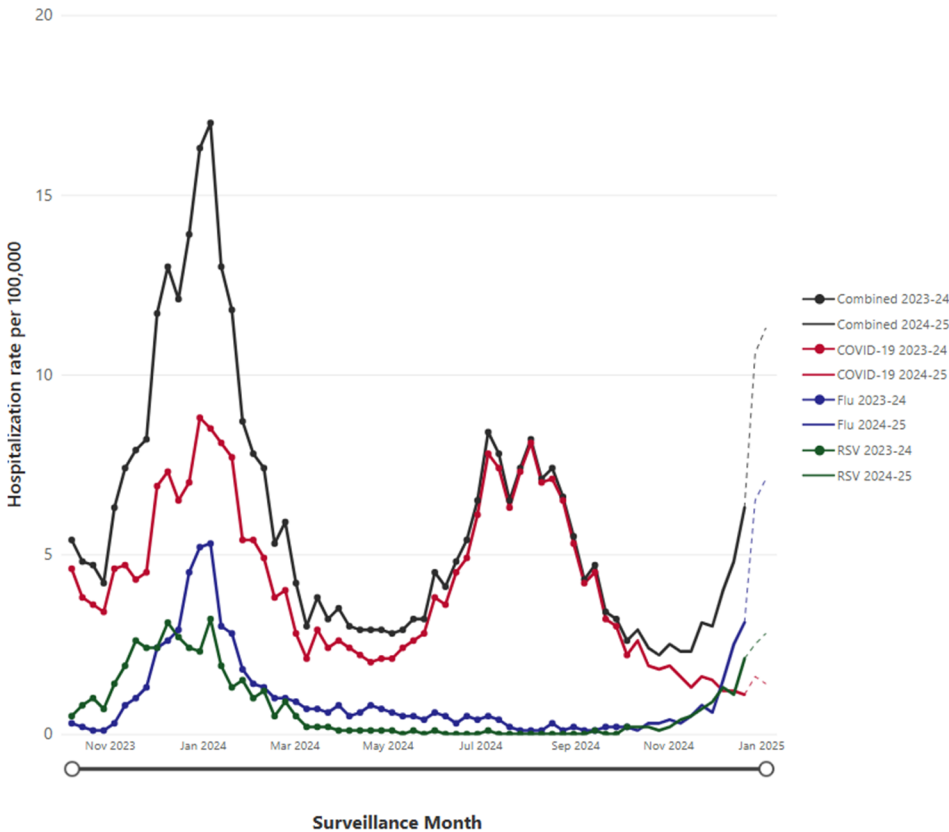
New Staff Introductions:

Garrett Jenkins—Informatics Supervisor | Data Modernization Initiative

Prior to entering this position, I worked for CDPH’s CalREDIE program, where I oversaw the collection of electronic laboratory data and the expansion of electronic surveillance and data storage. During this time I completed a graduate degree in the public health/prevention sciences. I look forward to contributing to data modernization for CEIP. In my spare time I can be found wrangling my three young children and my three old dogs!



Weekly Rates of Respiratory Virus-Associated Hospitalizations by Site



Weekly rates of respiratory virus-associated hospitalizations in Alameda, Contra Costa, and San Francisco counties starting with the 2023-2024 season. This graph was pulled from the [CDC’s RESP-Net Interactive Dashboard](#)

Healthcare-Associated Infections Pathogens

Invasive Staphylococcus aureus, Clostridioides difficile, carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales (E. coli, Enterobacter cloacae, Klebsiella aerogenes, Klebsiella pneumoniae, Klebsiella oxytoca), Candida cultured from blood, and invasive E. coli



The California Emerging Infections Program (CEIP), a program of Heluna Health, is a joint project of the California Department of Public Health, U.C. Berkeley School of Public Health, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in collaboration with the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, San Francisco Department of Public Health, Contra Costa County Health Services Department, and the City of Berkeley Health and Human Services Department.

Cover Image



Getty Images—Credit: Olena_T

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Directors

Arthur Reingold, MD

Professor of Epidemiology, School of Public Health,
University of California at Berkeley

James Watt, MD, MPH

Assistant Deputy Director, Center for Infectious Diseases,
California Department of Public Health

Subject Matter Expert

Shua Chai, MD, MPH

Science and Policy Advisor, Division of Communicable Disease Control
California Department of Public Health

Associate Director

Joelle Nadle, MPH

Health Program Manager

David Monticalvo, MPH

Informatics Supervisor

Garrett Jenkins, PhD

Viral Respiratory Diseases Project Manager

Pamala Daily Kirley, MT, MPH

Data Modernization Initiative Manager

Dani Fujino, MPH

Project Coordinators

Susan Brooks, MPH

Erin Parker, MPH

Maria Rosales

Kathryn Wymore, MPH

Erin Whitney, MPH

Anita Ogayemi-Agoh, MPH

Administrative Coordinator

Annette Sanchez

Project Operations Officer

Kimberly Gonzalez-Barrera, MPH

Surveillance Officers

Bianca Bruzzone, MPH

Cristina Curran, MPH

Orsolya Domiczi

Brenna Hall, MPH

Jane Lee, MPH

Rebecca Longson, MPH

Monica Napoles

Utsav Pokharel, MD, MBA, MPH

Tim Akito Rei, MS

Jeremy Roland, MPH

Lena Tayo, MPH

Eugenio Lopez

Paola Santos, MPH

Kiana Parkins, RN

Epidemiologists

Deborah Adeyemi, MPH

MJ Mocariski, MPH

Alice Yang, MPH

Microbiologist

Herschel Kirk

Nicole Chin

Research Assistants

Mharidhen Chea

Disha Palimar

Justin Ho

Allizah Lansang

Madeline Anderson

Vanessa Anguiano

Irma Parada

Sophia Escobar

Randy Parada