

Epidemiology leadership team biographies



John D. Seeger
PharmD, DrPH,
Chief Scientific Officer

John D. Seeger joined Optum in 2001. In addition to this role, Dr. Seeger is adjunct faculty at both Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. Dr. Seeger received a PharmD from the University of Arizona, an MPH from the University of Michigan and a DrPH from Harvard School of Public Health. Trained as a clinical pharmacist, Dr. Seeger spent three years on the faculty of the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he also completed a residency in pharmacy practice. He also spent five years on faculty at Harvard Medical School, Division of Pharmacoepidemiology. Dr. Seeger's research interests are predictors of drug therapy and the application of research methods that incorporate these predictors. He has worked extensively with propensity scores and related methods that seek to mitigate confounding by modeling drug therapy. He has applied these methods to research involving a wide range of therapeutic areas, including diabetes and rheumatologic, cardiovascular, neurologic and gastrointestinal disorders, as well as in vaccine safety and drug effects in pregnancy. Most of this work has involved the application of health insurance claims data as a foundation for studies of post-marketing drug safety. However, the availability of new data resources (particularly electronic health records) has expanded the range of questions that can be addressed through observational techniques and correspondingly expanded the scope of Dr. Seeger's work. He has authored or co-authored more than 100 articles in peer-reviewed medical literature and is a long-term member, past President, and Fellow of the International Society for Pharmacoepidemiology.



Florence T. Wang
ScD, Vice President,
Epidemiology

Florence T. Wang joined Optum in 2007. She received a joint Doctor of Science in Epidemiology and Environmental Health in 2005 and a Master of Science in Epidemiology in 2001 from the Harvard School of Public Health. Her previous research focused on occupational surveillance, determinants of heavy metal burden, and environmental and genetic risk factors of cognitive decline, hearing loss and other health outcomes related to aging. Prior to joining the Epidemiology group, she was a post-doctoral fellow in the Department of Environmental Health at the Harvard School of Public Health. At Optum, Dr. Wang has led prospective and retrospective cohort studies, and nested case-control studies, as well as studies for signal detection, comparative effectiveness and case algorithm development. Her work at Optum has been in the areas of vaccines, cancer, cardiovascular disease, hepatic outcomes and developmental disorders.



Cheryl Enger
PhD, Principal Epidemiologist

Cheryl Enger is an epidemiologist and biostatistician with over 35 years' experience in clinical and pharmacoepidemiology research. Dr. Enger re-joined Optum in 2007, having been with the group from 1999 to 2003. She has managed several pharmacoepidemiology projects, including retrospective cohort studies and nested case-control studies, for a variety of products and diseases in the areas of cardiology, diabetes, hypercholesterolemia, multiple sclerosis, smoking cessation, immune thrombocytopenia purpura and psychoses. Dr. Enger has significant experience in designing and managing large-scale post-marketing drug safety studies using claims data. She also has extensive experience in the design and analytic conduct of epidemiological studies, especially in ophthalmology and HIV/AIDS. Her academic training includes a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics from St. Olaf College, a master's degree in statistics (Iowa State University) and a PhD in epidemiology from Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. Dr. Enger is the author or co-author of more than 100 peer-reviewed research articles and has published in journals that include *JAMA*, *American Journal of Cardiology*, *Pharmacoepidemiology and Drug Safety*, *Archives of Ophthalmology* and *Ophthalmic Epidemiology*.



Najat J. Ziyadeh
MPH, Director of Epidemiology

Najat J. Ziyadeh joined Optum in 2001. She earned both her Master of Arts in Medical Science and Master of Public Health in Epidemiology and Biostatistics from Boston University in 2001. Prior to joining the Epidemiology group, she conducted clinical research on the effects of angiogenesis inhibitors on human tumor growth and metastasis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and described the smoking, drinking and dieting behaviors of adolescents based on sexual orientation. Ziyadeh has extensive experience in the analysis and reporting of large-scale post-marketing safety research studies for the pharmaceutical industry using a variety of health insurance claims databases. Her work at Optum has been in the areas of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, female health and antibiotic use.



Rob Gately
MS, Director of Analytics,
Epidemiology

Rob Gately joined Optum in 2008. He received his Master of Science in Sociology from Florida State University. He has years of research, statistical analysis/SAS programming, consulting and leadership experience, including prior work with Florida State University, Florida Medicaid and Pfizer Health Solutions. Gately has experience in program evaluation, health prevention/wellness, disease/case management and outcomes research covering tobacco prevention and education, congestive heart failure, coronary disease, diabetes, hypertension, asthma, end-stage renal disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, frail elderly populations, and childhood obesity. At Optum he has contributed to pharmacoepidemiology research in the areas of childhood flu vaccination, pituitary cancer, benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), pde-5 inhibitors, nonarteritic ischemic optic neuropathy (NAION), multiple sclerosis, overactive bladder, anti-diabetics, concomitant use of statins and fibrates, idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), and Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies (REMS). He works with administrative health care claims, clinical electronic health record (EHR) and other ancillary data. He is currently responsible for the analytic portfolio of Optum Epidemiology including pharmacoepidemiology research studies, data product innovation, and development of data in support of research and public health activities. Gately is responsible for strategy and direction, scope and budget, and resourcing for analytic work and personnel.



Sherry Quinn
MA, Director of Operations

Sherry Quinn joined Optum in 2002. She has extensive experience with large, complex data resources and has worked as an analyst and project manager within Optum Epidemiology. In her current role she has operational oversight responsibility of all ongoing research work and manages the project management and research support teams. Quinn led the development of project management and budget tools that track the study execution and she manages the group's operational benchmarks across all work. Most recently she has overseen the operational integration of new data sources and associated project processes. Quinn earned her master's degree in sociology from Duke University, with a specialty in medical sociology.



Judy Wong
BA, Project Director

Judy Wong joined Optum in 2005 and has held various positions within the Epidemiology group. She led the research associate team and managed data collection efforts for patient and provider surveys, medical record retrieval, and abstraction studies. This work included oversight for development and maintenance of data collection tools and management of internal and external approval processes. Wong also managed contracts and partnerships with third-party vendors and consultants. She served as a project manager responsible for the operationalization of project timeline, budget and scope by collaborating with cross-functional teams to implement research protocols. In her current role she contributes to proposal development, subcontract operations, oversees all ongoing research work, and leads a team of project managers, providing operational leadership to mitigate risks and align project objectives. Wong holds a Bachelor of Arts from American University.