

Psychology PhD Student Selected as Health Policy Research Scholar

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09/15/2021



Mary Phan

Mary Phan, a second-year student in the Utah State University Department of Psychology's School Psychology PhD specialization, has been selected as a Health Policy Research Scholar.

The Health Policy Research Scholars program is supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and lead by Johnson Hopkins Bloomberg School for Public Health. Health Policy Research Scholars supports doctoral students from diverse disciplines and backgrounds in their work to develop policies that advance equity and health while building a diverse network of leaders who reflect our changing national demographics.

Phan explained the importance of this opportunity to make a difference to those most affected by limited access to healthcare. "Disparities in healthcare access continue to exist despite initiatives at local, state, and federal levels," she said. "Many of the leaders, researchers, and policymakers who play a key role in this issue do not represent the perspectives of the Americans most affected by these disparities. I love that HPRS allows doctoral students to apply their research to build healthier and more equitable communities. I want to be a part of the generation of diverse leaders that will address these barriers through research and policy."

Health Policy Research Scholars are supported with an annual stipend of up to \$30,000 for four years. They also receive additional training in policy and leadership

development while establishing and strengthening professional ties to public health and policy leaders.

Phan expressed her excitement for this policy and leadership training, which will ultimately allow her to advocate for systemic change. "I am also thrilled to meet and network with other scholars from similar underrepresented backgrounds that share the same passion," said Phan. "Receiving this fellowship has allowed me to accelerate and distinguish my research while giving me additional training in health policy translation, dissemination, and communication, as well as health equity and population health. I cannot wait to gain the essential tools and knowledge to make a positive impact in our world."

In addition to her professional passions, the standard workload of a graduate student, and her new role as a Health Policy Research Scholar, Phan is a member of the Utah Psychological Association Diversity Committee. Her work with the committee was recently published in the *Salt Lake Tribune* opinion article, [Commentary: Our nation's history is shaped by racism](#).

Phan plans to further pursue her career in academia following graduation and hopes to continue to promote social justice through policy change. She is primarily interested in implementing mindfulness-based interventions to underserved youth in public schools to improve mental health outcomes. "There's so much work that needs to be done," she said. "I don't think I can rest until we make major changes during my lifetime."