



Rachel Shelton, PhD

Biographical Sketch

Dr. Rachel Shelton is a social and behavioral scientist with expertise in implementation science, cancer prevention, and community-based intervention research. She is Assistant Professor of Sociomedical Sciences at Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health, where she is the Associate Director of Research for the Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion. She is also the Associate Director of the Community Engagement Core Resource at Columbia's Irving Institute for Clinical and Translational Research, and directs a new university-wide initiative on Implementation Science at Columbia. Dr. Shelton has been a member of SBM for 10 years and has been a member of the Cancer SIG. Recently she served on SBM's Executive Board for two years, on the Program Planning Committee for three years, and served as Program Chair for SBM's 2018 Annual Meeting with Past-President Dr. Gary Bennett, a meeting with record-breaking attendance. She has received awards for her leadership and mentorship at SBM, including the Early Career Mentorship Award through the Student SIG, and the C. Tracy Orleans Distinguished Service Award. Dr. Shelton has over 12 years of experience conducting mixed-methods research in both community-based and health system settings, with 60 peer-reviewed publications in journals including Translational Behavioral Medicine, Social Science & Medicine, American Journal of Public Health, Health Education & Behavior, and Annual Reviews of Public Health. In addition to her work on advancing the implementation and sustainability of evidence-based interventions in community and clinical settings (e.g. lay health advisor and navigator programs), she has published extensively on social and contextual factors that influence disparities in chronic disease prevention among low-income African American and Hispanic populations, including social networks, discrimination, and medical mistrust. Dr. Shelton has been consecutively funded as Principal Investigator for the past eight years, with funding through American Cancer Society, National Cancer Institute, and National Institute on Aging (NIA). Dr. Shelton is currently PI of a Research Scholar Grant for Health Equity through American Cancer Society focused on the sustainability of lay health advisor programs in under-resourced community settings and multiple-PI of a R01 grant through NIA focused on social stressors and resources related to behavioral

and epigenetic aging processes. Dr. Shelton developed and teaches one of the first courses offered in dissemination and implementation science (since 2013), is an author in the 2018 textbook on Dissemination and Implementation Research in Health, and has been an invited speaker and expert trainer nationally and internationally in the field.

Personal Statement

As an active member over the past 10 years, I have witnessed the critical role of SBM in providing a forum for advancing and sharing behavioral science across the continuum of prevention, diagnosis, treatment, disease management, and health promotion. The field of behavioral medicine has made tremendous advancements in developing evidence-based interventions and policies to promote health and prevent disease across a range of community and healthcare settings. But there is more to be done, and my vision for SBM is one of continued leadership, innovation, and impact both within and beyond the scientific community. Given my expertise in implementation science and community-engaged research, I see timely opportunities to nudge the field and leverage existing interest in efficacy trials (e.g. what works) with an understanding of the factors and strategies that support adoption and use of these interventions and policies in diverse populations and settings. My vision for the field is integrating implementation science and community engagement principles to advance the reach, impact, and uptake of our evidence-based programs and practices.

I was energized by GirlTrek's vision at last year's Annual Meeting, and their use of community-engaged research principles to create strong social networks and a social movement to promote health in African American communities. This innovation reflects SBM members' interest in actively engaging with and involving patients and community members, and I see many opportunities for the field of behavioral medicine to learn from community partners to identify and develop innovative solutions to address health. A focus on community in turn will lend itself to integrating innovative methodological approaches, including social network analysis and systems science approaches.

Importantly, I have observed and experienced first-hand the strong mentorship and training that SBM prioritizes as part of their mission. As Member Delegate, I would extend the focus on early-career development for junior investigators to include mid-level investigators who are in need of continued mentorship and career development at a time that can be challenging. A central part of this includes training and support for many of our members that are navigating careers outside of academia. Finally, I would continue to build momentum around communicating our science well and extending the reach and impact of behavioral medicine beyond our academic walls. Building opportunities for ongoing mentorship and training and skills in communicating our science to policymakers, community partners, and the public is critical in strengthening the impact and reach of our science.