We are pleased to share this Fall 2015 CHE newsletter with you, which highlights the activities of CHE this year. I became Director of the Center for Health Equity in May 2015, upon Dr. Jas Ahluwalia’s departure from the University of Minnesota. Jas left to become Dean of the Rutgers School of Public Health in New Jersey. A lovely celebration of Jas and the work he led at the University of Minnesota was held in April. We thank him for his outstanding leadership at CHE and wish him all the very best in his new leadership position at Rutgers.

The Center for Health Equity is funded by a P60 grant award from the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) at the NIH, and administratively housed within the U’s Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI). We are in the final year of funding for CHE, and even as the grant winds down, we are working to ensure that the mission and spirit of CHE in addressing health disparities and achieving health equity will continue on within the CTSI and at the University of Minnesota. We have maintained our monthly Works in Progress seminars, and have had a variety of really interesting talks from campus and community scholars, as noted on page 4. We also were pleased to support five undergraduate scholars in the CTSI’s Undergraduate Research Program this past summer. This program provides opportunities for outstanding undergraduates from backgrounds that are underrepresented in academic research to be immersed in a 12-week mentored summer internship to learn about the research process and conduct and present original research. Please see page 2 for more information about our 2015 CHE summer scholars. We were particularly pleased that one of these scholars, Jace Gilbertson, was selected for an award based on the poster presentation of his research at the poster session and reception hosted by CTSI in September for these scholars. We present an interview with Jace, and his summer research mentor, Dr. Andy Barnes, on pages 2-3. Congratulations Jace!

Finally, I want to mention one of the events that we are particularly excited about for the coming year. Mark your calendars now for a Midwest regional conference on health equity that will be held May 5-7, 2016 here in Minneapolis at the Commons Hotel. This conference, being planned by representatives from the Medical School’s Program in Health Disparities Research, CHE, CTSI, the School of Public Health’s Health Equity Work Group, the Department of Human Services and community stakeholders will showcase much of the work that has been accomplished here in Minnesota and in our region over the last 10 years in addressing health equity challenges. Stay tuned for forthcoming details on what promises to be an exciting conference!

CTSI Research Scholars Poster Session

On Thursday, September 17th, the 2015 CTSI Undergraduate and Advanced Research Program scholars concluded their summer research efforts by presenting posters of their work at a poster session and reception held for them at the University of Minnesota Campus Club. Highlights included awards for Outstanding Junior Mentor of the Year and travel awards for each of the programs. Undergraduate Research Program travel awardees were Jace Gilbertson and Jessica Pham, and Advanced Research Program travel awardees were Hyunjoon Kim and Kathryn Thomas. Congratulations to all for their successful summer research projects!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

1. CTSI POSTER SESSION
2. MEET THE SCHOLARS
3. INTERVIEW WITH 2015 TRAVEL AWARD WINNER & MENTOR
4. CHE EVENTS

Dr. Kelvin Lim and the 2015 Undergraduate and Advanced Research Program Scholars
We talked with Jace Gilbertson, a 2015 CTSI travel award winner, and his mentor, Dr. Andy Barnes, to find out more about Jace's award-winning work and his summer research experience, and the mentoring process that is so critical to research success. Here they share some insights on their experiences this year.

Jace Gilbertson

Tell us about your research project.

“My research examined the emotional health of adolescents who have experienced family homelessness in Minnesota. I had the opportunity to use data from the 2013 Minnesota Student Survey to evaluate the risk of negative emotional health outcomes among youth who have experienced family homelessness in the past year compared to non-homeless youth.”

Where do you plan on presenting your work, and what do you hope to gain from this particular conference?

“I will be giving a podium presentation on my work at the 2016 National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners Annual Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. My hopes for this conference are to make valuable connections with professionals who are interested in the same areas of nursing as I am.”

What was your biggest takeaway from this experience?

“My biggest takeaway from this experience was a new level of confidence in my academic and professional abilities. This was my first time being immersed into this highly academic culture and I did not know if I had what it took to be successful. The CTSI program and Dr. Barnes provided me with the support and encouragement to realize that if you are compassionate and dedicated about something, you have the ability to make it happen.”
What advice would you give to future interns?

“My advice to future interns is to pick a topic and a mentor that truly match your interests. Do not be afraid to be vocal about what you want out of the experience. It will make the product that you end up with at the end of the internship that much more rewarding. The final piece of advice that I have is probably one that you’ve heard way too many times. Network. Now that my experience is over, I feel that I have so many great connections with professionals who are on my side for future endeavors. The internship provides you with so many opportunities to meet high-caliber professionals within the University. Seriously, do it. Network, network, network.”

What advice would you have for undergraduates seeking research experience?

“I would pass along the excellent advice given to me by another of my many fantastic mentors, Bob Noll, PhD – ‘You happen to be at an outstanding academic institution with many people who are international experts in areas of interest of interest to you – so you should go speed-dating!’ … Take the time to meet MANY potential research mentors, and you’ll soon find out who’s the right fit for your temperament and personality, academic interests, and career goals.”

What do you look for in a mentee?

“Mentees who can articulate their goals for working together – maybe they want to go to grad school, for example. Then we know where we’re going and it shapes their objectives. As we do so, the more specific that mentees can get about their objectives, and how they’ll know if they’re meeting them, the better I can help them reach them. So, if the goal is “go to grad school,” one objective might be “present a poster of my research at a regional or national conference” and another might be “meet with professionals in the grad school whose research interests intersect with my project.” And those might be very different goals and objectives from someone who hopes to address or advance some aspect of an idea they’ve already been studying. Which would be different from gaining clinical experiences, and so on.”

Dr. Andy Barnes

What did you find most rewarding about mentoring in the summer program?

“It’s so fun to see a light bulb turn on, almost as if by magic, when a mentee discovers something they didn’t know before. The light bulb that means not only ‘eureka!’ but also ‘oh, now I see what all that background work and statistical effort was for!’ I will often focus on helping my mentees generate research questions and hypotheses of interest to them that we can answer using existing data… and I love it when they get that smile that tells me they’ve suddenly found out THAT’s truly the fun part!”
WORKS IN PROGRESS

Each year, CHE has hosted a monthly seminar series titled Works in Progress (WIP), which is devoted to discussing minority health and health disparities research topics. The purpose of these seminars is to give researchers a forum to freely discuss their research while still in the developing or formative phases in order to exchange ideas, obtain constructive feedback, and discuss issues that may be common to various projects. If you are interested in presenting your work, contact: Priya Balaji, balaj012@umn.edu.

Recent Seminars:


“Tools for “Going to Scale” with an Evidence-Based Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program: Business Plan, Research Agenda, or Both?” presented by Renee Sieving, Ph.D., R.N., P.N.P., F.A.A.N.

“Enhancing Motivation for Physical Activity in the Context of Aging” presented by Siobhan McMachon, Ph.D., M.P.H.

“In their own words: Dietary and physical activity behaviors and solutions to chronic disease among Somali, Latino, and Hmong families” presented by Chrisa Arcan, Ph.D., M.S., M.B.A., R.D.

“Serum Vitamin D, Race, and Cardiovascular Disease Risk” presented by Pamela L. Lutsey, Ph.D., M.P.H.

The November WIP seminar is cancelled for the Thanksgiving holiday, but will resume in December. Please check the CHE website for further details.

JOURNAL CLUB

On occasion, WIP uses a journal club format as a forum for discussion of timely research articles. As part of the summer research experience, four of our CHE scholars led an informative journal club discussion of 2 new articles on health disparities for our July WIP seminar.

- “Persistence of racial disparities in prescription of first-generation antipsychotics in the USA”
- “Widening Rural-Urban Disparities in Youth Suicides, United States, 1996-2010”

POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

CHE is pleased to be co-hosting the 2015 annual poster session and banquet, The Power of Partnerships, which will be held on Thursday, November 12 at the Center for Changing Lives in Minneapolis. This annual event celebrates our community-academic partnerships and highlights the research accomplishments of these partnerships that have been funded by various University of Minnesota grant programs. This year, community-engaged research ethics is the highlighted topic. It promises to be a fun and informative celebration.

Acknowledgements

Funding for this newsletter was made possible by the University of Minnesota Center for Health Equity, Grant 1P60MD003422 from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) as well as Grant 1UL1RR033183-01 from the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR) and by Grant 8UL1TR000114-02 from the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to the University of Minnesota Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI). The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services, NIMHD, NCRR, NCATS or NIH.