Director’s Update
by Dr. Jasjit S. Ahluwalia, Executive Director of the Center for Health Equity

The Center for Health Equity has had a busy spring season. Thank you all for your participation in making our Annual Symposium “Accelerating the Future: The Changing Face of Health in America” such a great success. We enjoyed co-sponsoring the event with programs who are strong advocates of health equity. There were more than 300 registrants for the event and more than 45 posters presented at the poster session. Awards were presented to undergraduate student Nora Ali, graduate student Olusola Adegoke, post-doctoral fellow Dr. Kate Goldade, faculty Dr. Carl Patow, staff member Kimberly Henderson, and community scholars Keith Allen and Dr. Ann Zukoski. More information about the speakers and the poster session can be found at http://www.med.umn.edu/che/acceleratingthefuture/index.htm. Thank you once again for your support.

We also were honored to host a visit by Dr. Devi Shetty, a world-renowned cardiovascular surgeon, philanthropist, innovator, and entrepreneur from Bangalore, India. Dr. Shetty arrived to a whirlwind of activities over four days including presentations to over 300 people from the broader Indian community at the Nath Auditorium Hindu Mandir; (continued on page 2)

Pictured top: Annual Symposium speakers, Drs. José Pagan and Lynn Blewett
Pictured above left to right: Drs. Kumar Belani, Devi Shetty, University President Robert Bruininks, John Finnegan, Jr., Jasjit S. Ahluwalia

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a meeting with University President Robert Bruininks; a dialogue with
over 150 University students, faculty and staff regarding “Affordable
Healthcare for the Poor;” a dinner meeting hosted by the Minnesota
Medical Foundation with the corporate community; an honorary degree
ceremony; and finally, dinner at Eastcliff. We would like to thank the
entire planning committee and especially Dr. Kumar Belani for his
dedication to planning these events and for bringing Dr. Shetty to us
from India.

In the upcoming months, we will
launch our Center for Health Equity
High School Summer Research
Academy, which will include 20
students from Minneapolis high schools
for a two-week paid research training
experience. The curriculum will
include presentations by health
disparities and research experts, visits
to University laboratories and
simulation centers, and morning
“Grand Rounds” on a health topic
in that day’s news. The two-week
academy will end with a graduation ceremony, including a short
presentation by Dr. Robert Jones, senior vice president for systems
academic administration.

This issue of Accelerating the Future focuses on the Community
Engagement Core and the projects led by Drs. Kola Okuyemi and
Kathleen Call.

As we grow, we hope you will join in our work to reach health equity. If
you would like to become more involved, get more information, or join
our listserv, e-mail us at umnche@umn.edu. I look forward to seeing you
soon – enjoy the rest of spring and beginnings of summer.

With kind regards,

[Signature]
Community Engagement Core

The primary objective of the Community Engagement and Outreach Core is to engage African American and African immigrant communities in the Twin Cities in efforts to improve minority health and reduce health disparities.

Community Engagement Core activities are guided by the principles of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and are a collaborative effort between the University of Minnesota, Stairstep Foundation (with a coalition of 32 African American churches in the Twin Cities), and WellShare International. Along with our community partners, we are developing, implementing, and evaluating innovative community engagement and outreach programs with the ultimate goal of reducing health disparities.

The Community Engagement Core is actively collaborating on two projects. The first project is a collaboration with Stairstep Foundation and is aimed at promoting fruit and vegetable consumption within a large network of African American churches in the metro area via a national health initiative called Body and Soul. The program begins in each church with a kick-off event that includes health screenings, a survey on fruit and vegetable consumption, and healthy food. Those who volunteer to participate in the program have the opportunity to work with a peer counselor who uses motivational counseling to encourage fruit and vegetable intake. The pilot phase of the program has been completed in one church, and the full program is now being implemented in five other churches for the first phase of the project. The program has been a great success as participation has been high. Stairstep Foundation Program Coordinator Helen Jackson Lockett-El, “this is a great opportunity to enhance and intentionally reinforce healthy choices in

Research Training and Education Core

CHE-URP: Congratulations to our 2011 Cohort of Undergraduate Research Scholars! The following students have been accepted into our program.

Joohee Han
Mohamed Hassan
Mahmoud Hatab
Mercy Konchellah
Abdi Jibril
Hassan Masroujeh
Hai Nguyen-Tran

CHE-ARP: Welcome to our new medical students who have been accepted to the newly launched Advanced Research Program! This program will commence for 8 weeks starting June 27th.

Benjamin Braus
Abraham Markin
Amy Silberschmidt
Erica Warnock
Emily Moody

A symposium guest (left) with Michele Allen and Kola Okuyemi at the Annual Symposium Poster Session

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Please visit our Web site for upcoming Works in Progress, Research Rounds, and Building Bridges seminars: http://www.med.umn.edu/che/seminars/index.htm

Also, researchers are encouraged to take advantage of an external grant review program prior to submission to a funding agency. This program is open to full-time University of Minnesota post-doctoral fellows, research associates, and faculty with an appointment at the Assistant Professor level or above from any University campus whose research proposal pertains to health disparities. Please see the Web site for complete details on eligibility criteria and grant requirements.

Community Engagement Core, continued
families in the community of faith. We know that many people want to start eating right but keep putting it off. However, having a designated time to make some changes and have the support of a peer counselor increases the probability for success.”

Our collaboration with WellShare International recently completed a program known as Young Achievers. High school students met on Friday afternoons to hear presentations on health and education-related topics from community leaders and members and closed with discussion among the students. WellShare is currently developing a project using focus groups and key informant interviews to identify attitudes related to smoking cessation in the Somali community with a focus on the use of nicotine and non-nicotine replacement therapies. Says WellShare International’s Executive Director, Diana DuBois, “We are very excited to be partnering with the University of Minnesota on this upcoming project as it builds on our current and past experience working on Somali tobacco issues, while tapping into the high-level expertise on tobacco smoking cessation that is available at the University. This project also builds on the positive working relationship that we have developed over the past several years working with the University on Somali youth programming.”

Mailing List, Events, and Opportunities

The Center for Health Equity sends out occasional e-mails of interest to our listserv. If you’d like to be included, please send an e-mail to umnche@umn.edu asking to be added. Check out our Web site for monthly events and seminars! www.med.umn.edu/che

Acknowledgement

This newsletter was supported by a grant from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (1P60MD003422) to the University of Minnesota Center for Health Equity.

Contact Information

Center for Health Equity
University of Minnesota
717 Delaware Street SE, Suite 166
Minneapolis, MN 55414
612.626.3378
umnche@umn.edu
www.med.umn.edu/che