As summer comes to an end, so do our 2012 Summer Undergraduate and Advanced Research Programs. Throughout the summer, we worked closely with the CTSI’s Education, Training and Research Career Development Core (EdTRCD) to host two terrific cohorts of 10 Undergraduate Research Program (URP) Scholars and 10 graduate and medical students in the Advanced Research Program (ARP). The fruits of their labor will be featured at the 2012 CTSI Research Conference. We are proud to announce that two Undergraduate Research Program (URP) scholars will continue their research with their mentor through the academic year: John Tarnowski and Danielle Meszaros-Swichtenberg, who are mentored by Drs. Julie Ross and Carol Peterson, respectively. Congratulations, John and Danielle!

This summer also brought the opportunity to co-host the revamped three-day program for medical students called Introduction to Urban Health Equity (IUHE). The Center, along with medical students and the CTSI’s EdTRCD core launched this program for incoming medical students to expose them to health equity issues around the Twin Cities and to provide a brief introduction to cultural awareness. As we work towards creating health equity, our hope is to expand cultural competency training for all students, faculty and staff at the University of Minnesota. The back page of this newsletter is devoted to IUHE and I encourage you to read more about the program.
This Fall, the Center will be collaborating with the CTSI and PHDR to host the Community Research Institute. The goal of this institute is to enhance the capacity of community organization staff in conducting health research. Participants will develop their skills in relevant research methodologies, develop an understanding of appropriate resources available to assist them with carrying out health research, apply these skills and knowledge to a real-world project, and network with other community-based and university-based researchers. To learn more about the Institute and to apply, please visit the website: www.med.umn.edu/che/

If you would like to become more involved, get more information, or join our listerv, e-mail us at umnche@umn.edu. I look forward to seeing you soon – enjoy what remains of the summer.

Kind regards,

University of Minnesota
Clinical and Translational Science Institute
Driven to Discover™

First Annual CTSI Research Conference

The conference, on September 12th, will showcase work by Center for Health Equity (CHE) and CTSI Undergraduate Research Program (URP) Scholars and Advanced Research Program (ARP) Scholars. We invite all University of Minnesota faculty members, staff, students, and community members who are interested in health equity and minority health research to register for the conference. To see the agenda and to register, visit: www.ctsi.umn.edu/events/2012ResearchConference/
The Scientific Writing Series garnered a significant interest and registration was filled shortly after opening. There were 135 unique registrants who signed up for at least one of the three sessions offered. The sessions covered overcoming writers block, writing for medical journals, and conducting peer review and responding to reviewers comments. The Center for Health Equity hosts workshops like the Scientific Writing Series throughout the year to support investigators across the university and community. For more offerings like this, please check out our newly designed website: www.med.umn.edu/che/

The University of Minnesota’s Center For Health Equity is conducting a research project named, Project STARS (Start Taking Action to Restrict Smoking), in partnership with NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center, Inc. The project focuses on the health effects of secondhand smoke on children. Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (SHS) early in life increases the risk of sudden infant death syndrome, asthma, and respiratory infections contributing to more than 5,000 premature deaths among children in the US each year.

Project STARS team (left to right) Meredith Schreier, Jill Ronco, Weenoka Chavers, Alysha Price, Winta Ghidei, Sara Cronquist and the project PI, Janet Thomas, PhD, LP. Co-Investigators not picture are: Drs. Ahluwalia, Hennrikus, Luo, and Susan Lowry.

The objective of Project STARS is to speed the translation of science from the “bench” to the “community” to reduce SHS exposure among African American children. The project builds upon prior work documenting high levels of one of the most potent known tobacco-specific carcinogens (NNAL) in the urine of children exposed to SHS. This discovery has raised substantial concerns within the public health community but this information has yet to be communicated directly to the smoking parents who expose their children to home SHS. We propose to address this deficit by providing culturally-sensitive biomarker feedback to the smoking parent/caregiver on their child’s exposure to tobacco toxins. We deliver biomarker feedback as part of client-centered motivationally enhanced counseling that is carefully designed to enhance autonomy, competence, self-efficacy, and self-determined decision making.

Participant recruitment began in June of 2011. To date, we have received over 1063 calls from community members and have screened over 800 potential participants. We are thrilled with the response of the community to our project. To date, 120 participants have been randomized. We have completed the baseline assessment on 23 additional homes and 44 participants have completed the week 26 final assessment. We are well on our way to meeting our targeted recruitment goal of randomizing 180 participants.
Introduction to Urban Health Equity (IUHE) is a three day program co-sponsored by the Center for Health Equity (CHE), University of Minnesota Medical Students, and the Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (CTSI). The goal of this program is to expose first year medical students to health equity issues around the Twin Cities and metro area, to expose students to urban research and volunteer experiences, and to provide a brief introduction to cultural awareness. It is a voluntary program that occurs before the start of the first year of medical school.

POVERTY SIMULATION

IUHE consisted of a mix of didactic and interactive activities constructed to enhance the appreciation for social determinants of health. The signature activity for the program was a poverty simulation experience. This three-hour learning tool has been created as a way to help people understand the realities of poverty. During the simulation, participants role-played the lives of low-income families. Some were Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients, some were disabled, and some were senior citizens on Social Security. Although play money was used, this simulation experience is not a game. It provided an opportunity to look at poverty from a variety of angles and then to recognize and discuss the potential for changes within our community. While debriefing after the simulation, students remarked on the incredible insight they gained into the real experiences of low income families.

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