

News & Views

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University of Texas Medical Branch Students and Post-Docs Hold Health and Science Policy Workshop

By: Meredith Masel

Friday and Saturday, June 15-16; Galveston, TX.

Students and post-docs planned for months to host a variety of professionals from a bench scientist to a former state legislator for a two-day event where the entire University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) community was invited to learn about the intersection between science and public health policy. The event began on Friday afternoon with a keynote address from former director of the National Science Foundation, Neal Lane, Ph.D. Dr. Lane, a Senior Fellow in Science and Technology at Rice University, spoke to students, faculty, and staff about "Trends in U.S. Science Policy – Storm Clouds on the Horizon." He educated the group about current U.S. public health priorities and funding distribution for different areas of scientific research and called for an increase in the number of doctoral degrees earned in the United States by both native and foreign students. Dr. Lane's talk was an excellent overview of the federal funding and decision-making systems that shape public health policy and research and provided thought-provoking questions to discuss during the events on Saturday.

Saturday's program included several talks and discussion sessions led by former Texas state legislator, Patricia Gray, J.D.; Houston Chronicle Reporter, Dan Feldstein; Assistant Professor of Public Policy at UNC-Chapel Hill, Dr. Daniel Gitterman; Executive Director for Education and Public Policy in the Center for Biological and Environmental Nanotechnology, Dr. Kristen Kulanowski; Senior Program Officer of the Institute of Medicine, Dr. Janice Okita; Professor of Environmental Sciences at McNeese State University, Dr. Frank Phillips; and Principal Biologist at Mitretek Systems, Dr. Ron Porter. The subject of the talks included the scientist's role in legislative decision making, the re-vamping of WIC food packages, and funding for research for children in the United States. Workshop attendees were treated to a full day of expert panelists who answered challenging questions and hosted some lively debate.

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Meeting in
Philadelphia**



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President's Pen

George Karageorgiou, Chair APHA-SA

Now that we are in the middle of classes, midterms are over, and finals are well on their way, it is a good time to reflect on our purpose as public health students. Some of you are probably wondering if public health was a good choice (based on unsavory midterm scores), while others are enthralled in your studies—enjoying going to lectures and those long nights reading over notes and required readings. Whatever your personal experience, it is good to ask yourself, “Why did I choose public health?” Many of you have altruistic purposes driving you, while others want to fix “the system” or to really see if you can find secret money maker in public health.

Whatever you feel is your driving force, write it down. Every time you are feeling unsure of yourself, pull out that piece of paper and remind yourself of why you are pursuing this course of study. You may even want to ask your professor or other public health professionals that you may meet (like at the APHA Annual Meeting in December) of what their driving force is. Their answers may surprise you, as they may be very similar to your own.

As you continue your studies throughout the year, I urge all of you to actively participate in APHA and public health outreach efforts in your communities. The APHA Annual Meeting is a great place to network and attend scientific sessions related to your field of study. The APHA-Student Assembly can be a great resource to jumpstart your career. We offer opportunities to present your poster presentations, to hold national leadership positions, to organize conferences and public health events, to be mentored by a network of public health professionals, and to have a voice concerning the health of the nation and the world.

Whatever your driving force is, remember to take advantage of the opportunities that are available through APHA and the APHA-Student Assembly.

Addressing Employee Health Using Low or No-Cost Interventions

By: Beth McCallum

Worksite Health Coordinator, Maine Cardiovascular Health Program
MPH candidate at the University of New England, Maine

During September of 2004, the Maine Cardiovascular Health Program in collaboration with the Partnership for a Tobacco-Free Maine created a set of guidelines and materials entitled *Good Work! Linking health to the bottom line: Cost-effective strategies for a healthier workplace*. The kit was created to provide tools for Maine employers to improve employee health. The materials included in the kit address the link between healthy work environments and the bottom line, and identifies key elements of successful worksite wellness programs. *Good Work!* offers a wide variety of strategies to support physical activity, nutrition, and tobacco-free lifestyles, as well as prevention and control of health risks related to cardiovascular disease and stroke. Most importantly, the kit provides successful strategies currently being used by a variety of Maine employers.

The guide was developed from a Worksite Pilot Project, started in 2001. Funded through the Maine Cardiovascular Health Program, the pilot was created to facilitate the development of a wide variety of best practices, low or no-cost policy, and environmental strategies for Maine employers to use in supporting employee health and productivity.

The pilot project consisted of 42 organizations from various business sectors, including small universities and manufacturing, with as few as 17 employees and as many as 1,300. The sites were chosen because they met the following criteria:

- Ranked by need according to site-specific organizational assessment
 - Located in a region with high cardiovascular disease mortality rates
- Exhibited capacity for success factors such as: management support, physical space, demonstrated “early adopters” of environmental change and existing wellness committee or chairperson

Employers were encouraged to address screening for the biological risk factors for cardiovascular disease, such as blood pressure and blood cholesterol, as well as to address physical activity, nutrition, and tobacco use as the primary behavioral risk factors that lead to cardiovascular disease. With guidance from the MCVHP Worksite Health Coordinator, the employers followed a self-developed prescribed set of planning and implementation steps, participated in pre-project and post project surveys and provided feedback from their experiences that can be shared with other employers and health professionals throughout the state. From that experience came the development of the *Good Work!* resource kit. Statewide meetings were held with partnership directors, employers, and public health professionals to explore potential uses of the kit within their communities, including partnerships with Chambers and/or other member organizations that can reach large numbers of employers. Currently, 1026 *Good Work!* kits have been disseminated statewide and nationally. For more information, go to: http://www.healthymainepartnerships.org/MCVHP/resource_good_work_manual.aspx

NEWS & VIEWS

Have Something to Share?



We Want to Hear From You!

Email Submissions for the Newsletter to newsletter@phsc.org

Student Volunteers Provide Eye Exams for Workers Association

**By: Anna Schlesselman
Epsilon Psi Epsilon Public and Alumni Relations**

On Saturday, October 1st, 2005, twenty Ohio State College of Optometry students volunteered their time and talents to provide eye exams for members of the Mid-Ohio Workers Association. The students are members of Epsilon Psi Epsilon, a Professional Fraternity of Optometry, which funded the eye exams and glasses through its Vision Care Fund. The fraternity members work year round to raise money in order to provide vision care for those who do not have insurance and do not qualify for government assistance. For more information on Vision Care Fund through Epsilon Psi Epsilon, please call 614-292-9201.

The Mid-Ohio Workers Association (MWA) is a non-profit organization run and funded by volunteers. They represent the thousands of low wage earners in Central Ohio who are not covered by Union contracts or Federal Labor Laws. These include seasonal workers, domestics, and temporary workers who make up a large part of the workforce and receive no benefits. The MWA works to provide benefits for these workers which they normally cannot obtain, including medical and legal services, food, and clothing. The MWA is always seeking volunteers to help register new members, raise money, and help provide benefits. For more information on MWA please call 614-262-0567.

Epsilon Psi Epsilon would like to thank Cathi Steele of the Mid-Ohio Workers Association for helping to coordinate Saturday's Eye Exams. We would also like to thank Dr. Gil Pierce, Dr. Cynthia Heard, Dr. Kathryn Richdale, and Dr. Nidhi Satiani for assisting the students. The Epsilon Psi Epsilon student volunteers were Kate Gordon, Sarah Miller, Angie Andrich, Brian Hale, Bill Kress, Kevin Kurt, Erica Owen, Annie Rudick, Anna Schlesselman, Jennifer Schmelzer, Tracy Simons, John Stehulak, Corrie Ziegler, Alison Bolinger, Alicia Heller, Liz McVey, Ame Richards, Candace Seagraves, Ivy Tat, and Anita Ticak.

National Conference on Public Health Social Work

**by: Jamie Wyatt, MSW
Program Assistant, Boston University Dual-Degree MSW/MPH Program**

Dual-degree programs in public health and social work are increasing across the nation with approximately 20 programs reported to be in existence. Though social work's involvement in public health dates back to the early 20th century, today both fields complement each other in practice and theory, perhaps best evidenced by their shared mission of promoting social justice and community well-being. Dual-degree MSW/MPH programs are a primary tool through which integration and training of future social work professionals in the skills of prevention, social epidemiology, and health promotion are salient.

Currently more than half of all social workers work in health care-related employment, and the number is growing. Significant changes in the health care field have altered the roles and responsibilities of social workers, resulting in a new professional emphasis on community-based care, short-term interventions, prevention and health promotion. Jobs in the professional market specifically targeted for public health social workers still appear to be somewhat limited; employers need to know more about the benefits associated with professionals holding these complementary degrees.

Boston University's School of Public Health and School of Social Work have collaborated since 1981 to establish a program that has graduated nearly 200 dual-degree professionals who practice across the globe. In recognition of the program's 25th anniversary during 2005-06, a national conference on Public Health Social Work in the 21st Century is being held. It will bring together major stakeholders, including professionals, educators, academicians, employers, students, funding agents, and community members, to dialogue and collaborate on promoting the visibility, importance of public health social work. This conference builds upon more than five years of exploratory research conducted by Program Director, Betty J. Ruth, in collaboration with dual-degree researchers Sarah Sisco and Tinka Markham Piper at the New York Academy of Medicine, in an effort to help define and position public health social work in the contemporary workplace.

During the conference, a variety of research projects and findings will be highlighted relative to dual-degree programs in social work and public health. It will be an opportunity for stakeholders to come together to learn and to articulate a vision for public health social work. Formulating a national initiative and work plan to continue to expand upon Public Health Social Work in the 21st Century will be a primary task of the conference. This is an excellent opportunity for students to present research and studies to further illustrate their works and goals relative to the social and physical well being of the public's health, as well as to network with alumni and current professionals. For more information about the national conference to be held on May 19th, 2006, please visit the conference website at www.bu.edu/ssw/mswmp

DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER...



**American Public Health Association
133rd Annual Meeting**

**December 10th - 14th 2005
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

**To Register Please Visit
<http://apha.org/meetings/>**

Join the Diversity Committee

As you know, the American Public Health Association (APHA) Student Assembly has several committees. The ****DIVERSITY COMMITTEE**** is looking to recruit students to carry out our exciting campaigns.

So far, this committee has instituted its online "Public Health Workforce Campaign", which showcases the diverse faces of public health. This committee has also developed several fact sheets on diversity issues, which are made available to public health students across the nation.

The next campaign will be the committee's biggest feat! This campaign intends to get students in the pipeline earlier in their academic career thinking about public health. In order to do that, we need to reach them while they are in high school! This campaign will include contacting high schools throughout the U.S. with information on public health (brochures and ppt slides). We will encourage teachers and guidance counselors to make this information available to their students. However, in the cities where a Diversity Committee member resides, we will schedule a classroom presentation on public health careers. This is where we need YOU! If you want to help create, design and deliver these brochures and presentations, please sign up for this committee today. You can email your interest to diversity@phsc.org. We hope to have the campaign in full force by the Spring!

Maranda Ward and Michelle Silverio, Chairs
Diversity Committee
American Public Health Association Student Assembly
www.aphastudents.org <web>
diversity@phsc.org <email>

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Throughout the day, the workshop participants discussed the idea of the precautionary principle, a controversial way of guiding environmental policy. Panelists expressed their views in support of or against this new concept in law-making while students, post-doctoral fellows and faculty members waded through the different areas of discussion to determine their own opinion on the issue.

The second discussion session focused on distributive justice in American health care. The main question, “Is it an idealistic goal, or a realistic cause to advocate, either in research or as a platform for public policy” discussed whether this was an unrealistic goal, or something for which to strive as an advocate for scientific research or as a health policy maker.

The workshop provided a forum to discuss new and old ideas about the formation of science and health policy. It gave attendees a renewed energy and a set of goals to strive for on either end of the spectrum, from the laboratory to Capitol Hill. Dr. Kulanowski closed the day with some simple but excellent advice for anyone interested in acting as an advocate for change:

- Do your homework
- Know the voting record of your policy maker
- Link your agenda to the official’s interest
- Take advantage of timing, but do not visit your policy-maker only during a crisis
- Understand congressional limitations
- Be persistent
- Don’t attack the policy-maker
- Never underestimate the staffer
- Thank the policy maker when he or she has done something that pleases you - Everyone can use a little positive reinforcement sometimes!!

The Science and Public Health Policy was supported by the Office of the Dean of Medicine at UTMB, the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at UTMB, the Marie Hall Endowment, and the NIEHS Environmental Toxicology training grant held by the University. More workshops of its kind are recommended to Universities across the nation in order to energize the campus to inform public policy with good research and to advocate for more funding for scientific research at the state and federal levels.

Students Participate in a Free Clinic

By: Lena T. Williams

University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston- School of Public Health

Medical students at SUNY Buffalo have a unique opportunity to appreciate the role of public health processes in medicine at the Lighthouse Free Medical Clinic (LFMC). In 2001, the LFMC was started by five UB medical students and Dr. Chester Fox from the Department of Family Medicine. The clinic operates on a weekly basis through the coordinated efforts of a selected group of student managers. LFMC's clinic space is provided by the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Funding for the clinic also comes from the Evangelical Lutheran Church, as well as Buffalo's medical community, local businesses and biannual fundraisers.

The clinic was established to address the health disparities in one of Buffalo's most needy communities and to further medical education through volunteer work in an underserved population. In addition to providing this community service, an outlet was created in which students could gain the practical experience of clinic care while managing the healthcare facility under minimal faculty supervision. The LFMC has grown from evaluating 2-5 patients every Wednesday evening to 30 patients, plus others who were turned away due to staff limitations. In the last four years, over 500 medical students, volunteer doctors and other health-affiliated students have come together to volunteer their time and service to the clinic. The heart of the clinic stems from weekly teams of first and second year students who engage in the clinical encounters together and discuss their clinical findings with the UB-affiliated attending physician to determine appropriate diagnosis and treatment options. Third and fourth year students step into supervisory roles during the patient visits and assist the second years in their physical examination skills and assessment of the patients. Apart from providing medical care to the East Side community, the LFMC also provides a unique opportunity for pre-clinical UB medical students to enrich their education with exposure to the social and public health issues affecting patients of a low socioeconomic status.

The LFMC continues to grow and mature each year with new projects and challenges supported by grants from the AMA, AAMC and AOM. The clinic has successfully obtained funding for screening and prevention of hypertension and diabetes, and screening adolescents for sexually transmitted diseases from the AAMC and the AMA. Both projects are working towards the following goals: increasing awareness of specific public health issues among our patients and within the community, screening, diagnosing and treating patients with these health issues, and finally to increase our own education of these health issues. The hypertension and diabetes team has been working on establishing a monthly nutrition group. Current goals include organizing a support group for healthy eating, cooking and lifestyle changes. The STDs screening team is working with the local high schools in order to implement the educational component of the outreach service project. Plans include partnering with local student advocacy groups to address the current rising rates of Chlamydia and Gonorrhea in this age group.

Finally the Lighthouse Insurance Initiative, which started as a small project, has become a major component of the clinic's weekly operation whereby students have the opportunity to assist in an insurance registration project designed in collaboration with the AMA student chapter. Student volunteers are trained by a social worker from Univera Health, providing a service for the under-insured community while learning about the intricacies of Medicaid, Medicare, and Child/Family Health Plus.

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The LFMC has become an integral part of the SUNY Buffalo medical student experience and has grown to include other health-affiliated schools including the dental, chiropractic and social work schools. The tiered-teaching method provides an opportunity for students from all classes to participate throughout their tenure in school. Current projects addressing hypertension, diabetes, STDs and obesity are enabling our students to learn about medicine with a more pro-active approach and to consider different avenues for dealing with public health issues in underserved communities.

Students Address Binge Drinking on Campus

By: John Blosnich

“On a small fold-away card table, in the rain, at 12:30 in the morning” – these are not phrases normally attached to public health, but they described the situation when members of the West Virginia University Community Medicine Student Association (CMEDSA) worked to spread awareness about the hazards of binge drinking at their college through their annual “Angels on High Street” event. On the first Saturday night of the new Fall 2005 semester, CMEDSA members along with their faculty advisor passed out information and paraphernalia about safe drinking to their fellow students in downtown Morgantown, West Virginia.

From 10PM to 1AM, young people out for a night of barhopping were offered Guardian Angel Test Strips[®], a simple oral test that gives an estimate of blood alcohol content; it also inspired the name of the event. Women were offered Drink Safe Coasters[®] that test drinks for date rape drugs, and both men and women could take condoms, which were wrapped in a paper slip with gender-specific symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases and infections. CMEDSA members ordered the condoms, but wrote up the STD/STI symptom list themselves, and then individually wrapped each condom.

Just as the year before, the CMEDSA volunteers were well-received by their fellow students who were out for a night on the town. Some offered a quick thank you as they took a condom or a pack of test strips, while others stopped to chat and ask about the event.

Binge drinking on campuses continues to be a pervasive problem at many colleges and universities across the country, and the CDC’s Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System consistently shows that self-reported binge drinking is highest among respondents aged 18-24 years. Aside from the biological consequences of binge drinking, there are major public health concerns regarding the risky behaviors correlated with alcohol consumption, such as unprotected sex, violent behavior, and impaired vehicular operation.

Consequently, if it takes a late night in the rain and working off of a card table, the public health students at West Virginia University say, “So be it.”

Steps toward Understanding and Addressing Healthcare and Health Disparities in Mississippi

Submitted By: Binu Jacob, M.P.H., Research Associate; Anthony R. Mawson, M.A., Dr.P.H., Professor of Public Health., Director, Institute of Epidemiology and Health Services Research., and Principal Investigator, Center of Excellence in Minority Health; Issac Perkins, M.D, M.P.H., Interim Associate Dean, School of Public Health, College of Public Service; Marinelle Payton, M.D., Ph.D., M.S., M.P.H., Assistant Dean for Research and Development, College of Public Service; Gwendolyn S. Prater, Ph.D., Dean, College of Public Service, Jackson State University; Herman A. Taylor, M.D., M.P.H., F.A.C.C., F.A.H.A., Shirley Professor for the Study of Health Disparities., Professor of Medicine., and Principal Investigator, Jackson Heart Study.

This letter is to inform readers of the activities underway at Jackson State University to address health disparities affecting minorities and other underserved populations in Mississippi (MS). Our state ranks last among the 50 states in overall population health, having the highest rate of death from heart disease (338.9 per 100,000 population)¹ in the nation as well as the dubious distinction of having the highest rate of obesity in the country.² Particularly challenging are the high rates of premature birth, infant mortality, HIV/AIDS, and diabetes, with African Americans having significantly poorer health outcomes compared to whites.¹

Improved health education and awareness are vital for addressing disparities, but there is a shortage of public health professionals and especially minority professionals in Mississippi. Considering that African Americans comprise 36% of the population of the state, health disparities are a major concern.

In response to these needs, a Department of Public Health was formed within the School of Allied Health Sciences at Jackson State University in 1999. In 2003, the department was absorbed into the new School of Public Health within the College of Public Service. This is the first and only such school of public health in Mississippi and the first at a historically black college or university. Fall 2005 saw the opening of a Doctor of Public Health (Dr.P.H.) degree program in the School, and an onsite visit from the Council on Education for Public Health in preparation for seeking national accreditation.

Since June 2003, the School has begun to train, educate, mentor and empower a diverse population of students who will, in their turn, train, educate and empower the communities they serve, thereby helping to build the public health workforce in Mississippi and the nation.

The School of Public Health and its research centers, along with Jackson Heart Study and numerous health-related organizations and clinics, are housed in the Jackson Medical Mall—Thad Cochran Center, a formerly abandoned shopping center. The Jackson Medical Mall was a visionary idea of pediatrician Dr. Aaron Shirley, who also helped to develop the current network of community health centers in Mississippi. He remains Founder and Chairman of the Jackson Medical Mall Foundation, and the area of the Mall containing the School of Public Health has been named the Dr. Aaron Shirley Public Health Complex in his honor.

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The Jackson Heart Study is a single-site, prospective cohort study of cardiovascular disease in African Americans and represents a partnership involving Jackson State University, the University of Mississippi Medical Center, and Tougaloo College. Supported by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute and the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD), the Jackson Heart Study is an expansion of the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC) study, with up to 6,500 African Americans ages 35-84 scheduled for recruitment.^{3,4}

Conducting epidemiologic and health services research and promoting health literacy are major priorities in the School and its affiliated research centers—including the Institute of Epidemiology and Health Services Research, established in 2001 with a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Center of Excellence in Minority Health, supported by NCMHD.

Funds provided by the CDC have provided for the creation of a state-of-the-art Surveillance Laboratory, the sponsorship of faculty and student research projects, Summer Research Training Institutes, and a series of Annual Conferences on “Eliminating Health Disparities in Mississippi”. This year’s conference, “From Research to Action”, will highlight the health effects of Hurricane Katrina (August 29, 2005) and the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of residents of Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama.

In 2003, the Center of Excellence in Minority Health was established through a four-year, \$4.5 million grant (P20) from the NCMHD. Also known as “Project EXPORT” (“*Excellence in Partnerships for Community Outreach, Research on Health Disparities, and Training*”). The Center is proud to partner with the University of Mississippi Medical Center, the Jackson Medical Mall Foundation, and the University of Pittsburgh’s Center for Minority Health. The Center supports both bench and clinical research as well as community and population-based studies.

A Community Health Leadership Forum was held recently, to which representatives of major health-related agencies and community organizations were invited. The meeting served to inform the community about the Center, to invite suggestions on how the Center could assist other organizations (e.g., through community outreach activities, research, education, and training); and to discuss how all of our organizations could work together to address health disparities in our region.

The poor health statistics of our state provide a continuing stimulus and challenge to the School and to all of us to reduce and eliminate health disparities and to improve the health and health care of Mississippians and the nation.

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School of Public Health, Institute of Epidemiology and Health Services Research, and Center of Excellence in Minority Health can be viewed at our website: <http://www.jsums.edu/~cps/sph/sph.html>

About Our Organization

The American Public Health Association's Student Assembly is the nation's largest student-led organization dedicated to furthering the development of students, the next generation of professionals in public health and health-related disciplines. APHA-SA represents and serves students of public health and other health-related disciplines by connecting individuals who are interested in working together on public health and student-related issues.

Check us out on the web!
<http://www.aphastudents.org>

Student Assembly



**American Public Health Association's
Student Assembly
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Mission Statement

APHA-SA is a student-led international organization within APHA representing students of public health and other health-related disciplines. We are dedicated to enhancing students' educational experiences and professional development by providing information, resources, and opportunities through communication, advocacy, and networking.