

News & Views

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Spring/Summer 2010

Highlights:

- National Public Health Week
- Grassroots Social Change Group
- Help in Haiti

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Access to Quality Early Education Needed

By Catherine J. Woods, JD, MPH(c)
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Thirty-years of research shows the provision of quality education is critical to preparing children to be productive citizens who are able to compete in the workforce. The data also indicate that lack of access to quality early education presents a public health concern of epidemic proportions.

Human brain development occurs most rapidly and intensely during the first five years of life. During this period, over 700 new neural connections are formed every second. Later, these connections are reduced through a process known as "pruning". Pruning creates the foundation upon which complex brain circuitry is built. The brain prunes regardless of the original amount of connections formed. A child who enters the pruning stage with fewer connections will exit it effectively behind a child who receives appropriate and timely cognitive, emotional and social stimulation.

Our society must concern itself with the cognitive, social and emotional developmental disparities among children. Evidence suggests that lack of access to secure and stimulating environments during early childhood may result in higher healthcare costs and significantly impact our economy by depressing incomes.

Adverse experiences such as poverty, neglect and exposure to parental depression or substance abuse are all negative factors in a person's long-term health status. The number of adverse experiences that a young child is exposed to correlates to immediate development delays and to long-term health outcomes. Risk factors for adult heart disease are embedded in adverse childhood experience. A child who endures even five adverse experiences has double the risk of suffering from adult heart disease than a child exposed to one or no adverse experiences. Today, 75-percent of 17-to-24-year-olds are ineligible to enlist in the U.S. military. The three most common barriers to entry are failure to graduate high school, a criminal record and physical fitness issues, including obesity. All three of these issues are shown to be positively affected by access to high quality early learning environments.

As a matter of public health, it is important to reference the healthy development of children through the context of the benefits to the overall society. The U.S. is in a global competition for talent. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, if China and India successfully train even less than 10-percent of their populations, their skilled workforce will be almost equal to the entire workforce of the U.S. To remain competitive and to ensure our citizens' an industrialized standard of living, it is imperative that we produce knowledgeable workers. Research-based education during the most formative years of the brain is the foundation to build upon to avert the myriad national public health crises that we may face if we continue to ignore the nexus between education, health and well-being and national security.

President's Pen

Public Health Students,

Another semester has come to a close and for some of you this means the end of your academic career and the beginning of your career in public health. For others, it means a summer off before classes begin again in the fall. The APHA Student Assembly (APHA-SA) is working hard to make sure you have all the resources you need to move through your academic career and into your professional career. Our mentoring program, the opportunities announcements and the many opportunities to serve in a leadership capacity for APHA-SA can help you build your public health network.

The National Public Health Mentoring Program (NMP), open to all APHA-SA members, is a database of mentors available to students in need of advice and direction from an established and experienced public health professional. The NMP will match you with a mentor based on your interests. Visit www.aphamentoring.org for more information.

Another great benefit of being an APHA-SA member is the monthly internship, job and scholarship announcements in the Student Assembly Opportunities E-Mails. Please tell us about your current internship or job search experience and e-mail us your suggestions. Your advice and perspective could pave the path for future public health students. E-mail your stories, thoughts and advice to opportunities@aphastudents.org. If you can't wait for the next Opportunities E-mail, follow our opportunities committee on Twitter @aphasaopps!

Refresh your memory about the many resources available to APHA student members by visiting <http://www.apha.org/memborgroups/students/>. You will find many opportunities to become an APHA leader. We need your knowledge and creativity as we work to accomplish our goals. You can chair a committee, be a campus liaison, attend an APHA-SA event, or be a student liaison to your APHA section. There is no better way to enhance your public health network than becoming involved in the nation's largest public health student organization! E-mail chair@aphastudents.org for more information about how you can become involved. We hope to hear from you soon!

Have a happy, healthy and productive summer!

Mariza Hardin, MPH
Chair, Student Assembly
George Washington University



Check us out on the web!

<http://www.apha.org/memborgroups/students/>

National Public Health Week at Benedictine University A Success

By MPH Student Advisory Panel
Benedictine University

On April 5th, 2010 the Benedictine University MPH Student Advisory Panel (SAP) embarked upon their first grant-funded National Public Health Week "Health Advocacy and You!" five-day advocacy program thanks to APHA. The "Health Advocacy and You!" program was designed by the MPH Student Advisory Panel employing a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to educating students and staff on the efforts of the Congressional Budget Office in measuring cost-effectiveness through preventative health measures. The SAP used three main outlets to reach the target population: electronic and print media, as well as a table staffed by volunteers in high-traffic areas on campus.

As a newly-formed organization, the MPH SAP set out to create change and awareness among Benedictine University students and staff. Thanks to APHA and the A.C.T.I.O.N. grant, the MPH SAP was successful. On Monday, April 5, the first official day of National Public Health Week, the SAP embarked on an exciting venture...to learn what Benedictine Students really know about National Public Health Week via a campus-wide survey. Out of 6,000 students and staff, 56 responded to the on-line survey. Although a poor survey turnout, the SAP learned that 83.6-percent did believe advocacy was an effective way to make a difference, yet only 46% had ever actually practiced any form of advocacy. Additionally, 52% of the respondents weren't even sure their efforts even made a difference.

From these results, the Benedictine MPH SAP planned a successful, week-long event focusing on the importance of advocacy. During NPHW, we sent out e-mails and Facebook correspondence campus-wide on topics ranging from the "Importance of Advocacy for Better Health" to "Fighting for the Right to Primary Prevention." An article posted in the campus newspaper advertising the event and a spot on the campus TV station were also incorporated into the "Advocacy and You!" event.

On Tuesday, April 6, the MPH SAP hosted a student APHA table educating students about APHA. The table included literature about APHA, educational pamphlets and give-a-ways. On Wednesday, there was an exciting and important interview session focused on health care reform with former Attorney General Jim Ryan, who is known for taking down the tobacco companies with the largest litigation win of \$9.1 billion dollars. Thursday offered a Roundtable Discussion featuring keynote speakers Kim Reid, Issues VP for the League of Women Voters of IL., Jonathan Lackland, Executive Director for the Illinois Minorities in Government and Steve Sullivan, Health Care Resources Coordinator for the Health Justice Campaign.

The closing event, "Advocacy and You!" advocacy fair took place at the end of the week. With the assistance of the American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, DuPage County Health Department and MPH SAP, the advocacy fair was a big success. With over 100 student and faculty guests, the advocacy fair allowed for students to submit personal cancer stories to their state representatives via "Picture a Cure," learn about all of the free services provided by the DuPage County Health Department and learn how the ALS is making a difference on the steps of Washington. With the \$500 A.C.T.I.O.N. grant, the SAP was able to pay for all print advertising, t-shirts identifying all SAP members, gift cards for every volunteer and guest speaker, an Apple iPod raffle prize and all refreshments needed during the week-long event. Had it not been for APHA, none of this would have been possible.

The post-event survey results indicated that 77-percent of the Benedictine student population felt it very important to advocate, 83-percent had never written a letter to their state representative, 83-percent were encouraged to know a day was designated specifically for students and 53-percent felt it very important that National Public Health Week was made possible at Benedictine University. Overall, the main success was the ability to educate and facilitate such an important event. The SAP felt it was able to reach out to a large population utilizing several communication modes. The MPH SAP can improve the planning of this event in the future by including earlier designation of guests, including media earlier in the planning process, earlier event advertisements and lastly, more student involvement/partnerships. On the whole, Benedictine University students and staff were well educated on the importance of advocacy and the SAP hopes to make this an annual event.

Sponsored by the **APHA A.C.T.I.O.N. Grant**



Walden International Corps – Social Changers without Borders

By Elisabeth Ukandu and Marcia Castano
Walden University

In recent years, we have seen Doctors Without Borders, Lawyers Without Borders and a whole host of international corps set up to respond to emergencies and events around the world. The Haitian disaster was a prime example of where we as students and faculty of the public health profession could have contributed our expertise as an organized body. The need for an organized body was filled when Elizabeth Ndubisi-Ukandu, a student member of the Walden University Public Health Doctoral program founded the Walden International Corps – Social Changers Without Borders (WICorps).

WICorps for Social Change is a brilliant and innovative self-organized grassroots community with a mission of implementing positive social change across the globe, through mentoring, capacity building and community collaborative initiatives. Walden International Corps will provide opportunities for international work experience and afford opportunities for volunteerism, as well as practical experiences in public health intervention, epidemiology research, mental health counseling, education mentoring and many more special interventions. This summer, WICorpsers will be traveling to Haiti to join in the rebuilding efforts. This trip is open to every student of public Health and all other disciplines. Later in the year, WICorpsers will support a medical mission to West Africa.

I am inviting you to consider joining this initiative, Walden International Corps – Social Changers without Borders (WICorps), which is intended to facilitate social change around the world. We already have more than 240 student members from all disciplines, more than ten faculty members and would like to welcome more members. WICorps has 50 state chapters, as well as international outreach in other countries. You can join us at <http://waldenics.ning.com>.



Public Health Students in Action: Efforts For Haiti

By Jackie Eareckson, MS
Monmouth University

I recently had the privilege to discuss with a New Jersey biomedical software engineer, Moleen Madziva, her role as advocate and humanitarian for the rural village of Macheke, Zimbabwe, a landlocked country in Africa. Moleen's vision for Macheke involves improving community conditions through a public health initiative for eradication of extreme poverty, mortality reduction, environmental sustainability, and health education program. Her mission reflects the importance of building a sustainable and healthy community according to needs and strengths identified in the Village of Macheke. The most prominent needs include combating HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, child/maternal health; and disease prevention. Her goals employ strategies that embrace Macheke's strengths, such as the integration of traditional herbalists in preventative and holistic medical practices. Moleen, known as Molly, has established a bridge between the United States and Macheke through the Macheke Sustainability Project, supported by Monmouth University's Institute of Global Understanding.

Why Macheke? Macheke is the village in which Molly was raised, so giving back to this community comes naturally to her. Molly earned a Bachelor of Science in Electrical and Computer Engineering from Drexel University and a Master of Science in Software Engineering at Monmouth University. With her love for Macheke, ties to Monmouth University, and extraordinary leadership, she has built an alliance with professors and students who support global understanding between her village in Macheke, and her home in New Jersey. This, coupled with her expertise in computer technology, will aid in producing research and program planning, while helping to build a true global health bridge between New Jersey and Macheke. "Macheke is not well documented. Its people seem invisible online," said Molly. It is an honor to watch as this story of advocacy unfolds and as Molly turns the Macheke



Battling Tuberculosis

By Helena Chapman, MPH
Iberoamerican University School of Medicine



March 24 marked World Tuberculosis Day (WTBD). Annual celebrations were held across the globe to highlight educational opportunities to increase awareness that tuberculosis (TB) is a clinical and social challenge for health care providers and those affected individuals and family members.

Dr. Robert Koch (1882) discovered that *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* was the transmission agent in TB.¹ Health professionals should design preventive efforts to halt the spread of TB since we understand transmission and treatment options for this critical health concern.

In order to highlight the goal of the initiatives in global health for *TB elimination: Together We Can!*,¹ medical and psychology students from two major universities in the Dominican Republic collaborated to design and implement *TB Alert! Dominican Republic* to highlight the high national TB incidence. From March 23-26, students representing the Iberoamerican University (UNIBE) and Autonomic University of Santo Domingo (UASD) brought attention to the community TB health threat by organizing WTBD educational activities to educate students and community members about *Mycobacteria* transmission, prevention methods and appropriate treatment regimen.

Forty-eight health professions students organized educational activities, including TB poster displays, educational displays and health brochures to learn and share information about this disease with other students and community members.

Medical students presented educational posters on the clinical aspect of TB, while psychology students focused their educational efforts on describing associated stigma, discrimination and lack of adherence to treatment regimen for persons diagnosed with TB.

Both university libraries supplemented these activities by organizing central displays with books, scientific journals, graduate theses and online database searches to increase knowledge on evidence-based practices and excite health professions students to conduct literature reviews on the clinical and public health components of TB disease.

This was the second student-directed health collaboration conducted between medical and psychology students from both universities. Students gained further insight on the clinical pathology of diagnosis, appropriate treatment regimen and psychosocial challenges due to disease stigma and medication adherence. They learned key skills in teamwork and health communication on how to transmit the health message and motivate community members to become active participants in their health, while being alert for TB symptoms, knowing the appropriate time to seek medical care and understanding the established treatment regimen against *Mycobacteria*.

The overall impact of this interdisciplinary WTBD health collaboration was to provide an avenue where students acquired and improved skills in teamwork and awareness of critical public health issues in the Dominican Republic. This knowledge will augment their medical and public health academic studies by recognizing community health needs and providing the chance to make a difference through future educational campaigns.

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2010). World TB Day 2010 <<http://www.cdc.gov/tb/events/WorldTBDaydefault.htm>>.

Consider a Kellogg Health Scholars postdoctoral fellowship!

by Ndidi Amutah-Hardrick

The Kellogg Health Scholars Program is a post-doctoral program which develops new leadership in the effort to reduce and eliminate health disparities and to secure equal access to the conditions and services essential for achieving healthy communities. Through this program, leaders emerge with the competence to undertake research that will add to our knowledge about the nature of social disparities in health and about interventions to reduce those disparities; the capacity to partner with communities in carrying out research and building policy advocacy; and the skills to inform and support policymakers who seek to reduce and eliminate health disparities. The Kellogg Health Scholars Program consists of two tracks and offers two-year postdoctoral fellowships at eight training sites.



The Community Track:

This track highlights *community-based participatory research* and relationships between academic health disparities research, public health practices in communities, and policy development.

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) in health is a collaborative approach to research that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings. CBPR begins with a research topic of importance to the community and has the aim of combining knowledge with action and achieving social change to improve health outcomes and eliminate health disparities.

The Community Track has training sites at Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, Morgan State University School of Community Health and Policy, the University Of Michigan School Of Public Health, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Gillings School of Global Public Health.

The Multidisciplinary Track

This track highlights a *multidisciplinary approach* to studying the determinants of health inequalities and inequities. The Multidisciplinary Track prepares a new generation of largely minority scientists for careers and leadership roles in health disparities and health policy research, with the objective of facilitating the translation of such research to policy and practice. Training sites are located at Harvard School of Public Health, University of California, San Francisco/Berkeley – Center on Social Disparities in Health, University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health – Center for Minority Health, University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center – Health Disparities Research, Education and Training Consortium

Both tracks highlight the *translation of health research into policy findings and recommendations*.

Most Scholar alumni are Scholars of color—African American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, Middle Eastern, South Asian and Asian American.

The impact these two programs have had on the careers of each of their fellows, the institutions where they have trained and where they are pursuing their careers, and the communities where they have worked is evidenced by the of alumni from the two programs who are now engaged in research, teaching and policy work on health disparities at 25 institutions and agencies.

For more information, please visit www.kellogghealthscholars.org



Kellogg Health Scholars
Connecting Academe, Community, and Policy



American Public Health Association
Student Assembly

A blue line-art illustration of a pair of scales of justice, positioned on the left side of the poster. The scales are set against a light brown, textured background.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

APHA 138TH ANNUAL
MEETING & EXPO

NOVEMBER 6-10, 2010

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