

The NEWSBRIEF

**Midwest Center for Health Services & Policy Research
VA HSR&D Center of Excellence**

MCHSPR (151H)
Hines VA Hospital
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Hines, IL 60141

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The Move Toward Research Themes

The MCHSPR 2004-2008 strategic plan presented how our COE will make an important shift from a general health services research enterprise to a center that will strategically define its mission through a few chosen theme areas. After a year spent examining and recording influences that might impact our program's future research direction, four thematic areas emerged; complex chronic care, value and health, medical therapeutics, and health communications.

These four themes were chosen based on our faculty's interest in conducting research in these areas, their high importance to care of veterans and impact on the health system, and their high potential for local academic interest.

Complex chronic care was included as a theme because a number of investigators have had experience in this area of research, including F. Weaver- SCI, Parkinson's disease, K. Weiss- chronic respiratory illness, K. Conrad- mental illness, E. Budiman-Mak- arthritis, C. Bennett- HIV, and D. Hynes, C. Bennett, and M.R. Ferreira-cancer. With an aging population, and growing complexity of chronic care needs, this is an important area of research with many opportunities for collaboration with our academic partners, other HSR&D COEs and Resource Centers as well. This also builds on COE expertise (Guihan, Weaver).

Value and health also builds on our faculty's capacity and interests. We have several health economists including Drs. Hynes, Lee, Stroupe and Sohn. Other health economists, L. Manheim and D. Dobrez collaborate with our program through our academic affiliation at Northwestern University Feinberg School

of Medicine (NUFSM). With increasing demand for health care services, the need for economic evaluations of health care will continue to grow.

Medical therapeutics was chosen as a theme partly because of existing faculty projects in this area and new affiliates with the UIC School of Pharmacy. T. Lee is currently conducting several pharmaco-economic and pharmaco-epidemiological evaluations. C. Bennett is conducting research on drug safety. K. Stroupe has IIR funding to examine the impact of changes in drug co-pay on outcomes within the VA healthcare system. F. Weaver is examining pharmacological management issues for secondary complications of SCI&D including urinary tract and respiratory infections.

Our efforts in developing the last theme (health communications) is in early development. A. Arozullah (West Side VA) and M. Wolf (NUFMS) are already studying issues of health literacy and outcomes. K. Weiss has current research in how caregivers and patients report health status and how this is impacted by the socio-economic status of the patient. J. Parada and M.R. Ferreira are interested in studying health literacy and communications with HIV and screening for colon cancer. D. Baker, Chair, Division of General Internal Medicine, and Director of the new Program in Communications & Medicine at NUFSM, has demonstrated a strong commitment to work with MCHSPR in developing a joint program in this area.

We are excited about this new direction for MCHSPR and look forward to new local and national collaborative efforts in these areas.

Effect of Increased Co-payments on Pharmacy Use In VA ECI 02-220 (Stroupe, PI)

The Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act of 1999 gave VA authority to increase the medication co-payment. Subsequently, VA raised the medication co-payment in February 2002 from \$2 to \$7 per 30-day prescription. The co-payment increase will have a direct effect on VA revenues. However, the quantity of medications veterans receive might decrease as the price veterans pay increases. So the full impact of the co-payment increase will depend on the effect the increase has on the quantity of drugs obtained from VA. To determine the impact of the co-payment increase, we are conducting a retrospective analysis of VA administrative data, using a random sample of veterans who used VA healthcare prior to the co-payment increase. We will describe the extent to which veterans receiving medications from VA are exempt or not exempt from medication co-payments, measure the change in the quantity of medications veterans obtained from the VA following the

increase in the co-payment, determine whether veterans are discontinuing use or decreasing intensity of use of VA pharmacy due to the co-payment increase, and determine whether the co-payment increase had a differential impact on specific categories of VA pharmaceuticals (generic drugs versus brand drugs, over-the-counter versus prescription only, more essential versus less essential drugs, and drugs for the treatment of symptomatic versus non-symptomatic conditions). By examining the effect of the co-payment increase this study will inform policymakers about the impact of the co-payment increase on VA revenues and on patient care.



Keeping Up with SCI QUERI



SCI QUERI has had a very productive year. VA HSR&D made Locally-initiated project (LIP) funding available to the QUERI centers for the first time this year, and SCI QUERI received funding for 3 LIPs. This is especially exciting since two were submitted by junior investigators mentored by Dr. Fran Weaver. Sherri LaVela, MPH, MBA will use a modified version of the Behavioral Risk Factors Surveillance Survey with veterans to

study "The Epidemiology of Health Behavior and Health Status in Individuals with SCI&D and Multiple Sclerosis." Jibby Chittet, MPH will use administrative and clinical data to examine "The Epidemiology of Cardiovascular Conditions in Veterans with SCI&D." A third QUERI LIP based at the QUERI Clinical Coordinating Center in Seattle will involve a "Literature review of quality improvement

research projects to implement the chronic care model (B. Goldstein, MD, PhD et al). Congratulations to the PI's and we look forward to full project submissions in the future!!!

SCI QUERI staff presented three posters at The American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (AAPM&R) 64th Annual Assembly at the Hilton in Chicago, October 9-11, 2003.

The SCI QUERI also presented at the National QUERI Meeting in Washington, DC December 10-12, 2003.

A workshop, "Crosscutting issues in implementing evidence-based medicine" was presented by Legro M, Wallace C, Guihan M.

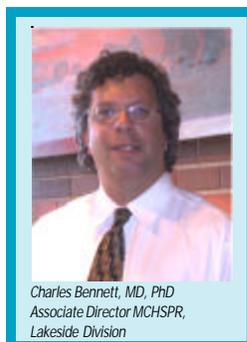
Posters included: "Spinal Cord Injury QUERI" - Weaver
"Community-Acquired Pneumonia Management in Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury"- Evans

"Predictors of Pressure Ulcer Outcomes in Veterans with SCI" - Guihan

"Acute Respiratory Infection Trends in Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury" - Chittet

News from Lakeside Division, RADAR Launched

This summer NCI funding was granted for a new project called Research on Adverse Drug events And Reports (**RADAR**), (Bennett, PI). The purpose of this grant is to research oncology related adverse drug events that have not been previously identified or widely disseminated, in order to improve physician and researcher knowledge. Two papers have recently been published concerning this work, with corresponding editorials. "Dissemination of Information on Potentially Fatal Adverse Drug Reactions for Cancer Drugs from 2000 to 2002" was published in the October 15 issue of the Journal of Clinical Oncology, (JCO), Bennett, et. al. Of the 25 ADRs described, five have not been



included in revised package inserts (PI) and another 7 were described more than 9 years after drug approval. "Clopidogrel-associated thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (TTP): An update of pharmacovigilance efforts conducted by independent researchers, the pharmaceutical suppliers, and the Food and Drug Administration" will be published in an upcoming issue of Stroke. Bennett, et. al., found that compared to reports submitted by suppliers or the FDA, reports obtained with active surveillance provided timelier and more complete information. In addition, the RADAR group presented findings on gemtuzumab associated veno-occlusive disease at the December '03 meeting of the American Society of Hematology.

2002-03 Post Doc Awardees



Karen Kramer, PhD

Karen Kramer, PhD. is the first recipient of the Post-Doctoral Fellowship in MCHSPR, granted in 2002 and sponsored by the Office of Academic Affairs. She attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for her bachelor's degree in Psychology, two master's degrees

in Psychology and Statistics, and her Ph.D. in Quantitative Psychology. Recently she married her high school classmate Kevin Li. She does leave Illinois on occasion for conferences, and loves traveling internationally.

In her research, Karen examines and creates quantitative models of individual judgment and decision making. In particular, she is interested in how people deal with less than ideal circumstances in their decisions, such as uncertainty, little or no information, time pressure, and emotional pressure. Karen's mentors are Drs. Charles Bennett and Frances Weaver. Through her fellowship, Karen is applying her knowledge in medical decision making, currently to health utilities and issues in shared decision making between patients and physicians. The goals of her projects are to a) enable physicians and others to determine which factors affect utility estimation, and the appropriateness of using these tools in shared decision making, b) model the importance of risk and uncertainty in shared decision making, and in doing so, c) utilize these factors proactively in patient-physician interactions. For fun, Karen likes to provide statistical consultation and teach statistics.

Lance Rintamaki, Ph.D. is the 2003 recipient of the Post-Doctoral Fellowship in MCHSPR. Born and raised in Flint, Michigan, Lance attended Michigan State University, Ball State University in Indiana, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Lance currently is enjoying living in Chicago, although he is still adjusting to city life.

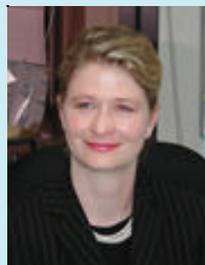
His mentors are Drs. Frances Weaver and Greg Makoul. Lance's research interests focus on the communication processes of managing stigma. He is particularly interested in these issues in the contexts of health care and illness, which offer ample opportunities to advance theory and improve health outcomes. Currently he is pursuing three lines of research dealing with stigma and social identity including, a) how social identity develops among members of stigmatized illness communities, particularly in the context of HIV, b) how people manage and respond to social identity threats inherent to a stigmatized group membership, and c) how social support plays a role in managing stigma and intergroup tensions. These lines of research will lead to interventions designed to facilitate stigma management in people newly diagnosed with stigmatizing illnesses and equip care providers with social interaction skills that foster stronger provider-patient relationships and enhance health outcomes. Lance has received training in a range of both quantitative and qualitative research methods to enable his pursuit of these interests.



Lance Rintamaki, PhD

New MCHSPR Faculty

Whitney Witt holds a PhD in health services research and a MPH from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. She received her BA in women's studies and law from Hampshire College. Prior to her current position, Dr. Witt received post-doctoral training in pediatric health services research and served as a Research Fellow at the Harvard School of Medicine in the MassGeneral Hospital for Children.



Whitney Witt, PhD, MPH

Whitney's prior work focuses predominately on people living with HIV/AIDS, including children and their families. Over the last five years, she has applied her experience in advocacy, policy, and research on vulnerable and high-cost, chronically ill populations to the field of maternal and child health services research. Dr. Witt's future work will further explore how and to what extent living and/or caring for a chronically ill person results in negative health and mental health outcomes for spousal and non-spousal caregivers.



Saul Weiner, MD

Saul J. Weiner, MD joins the Midwest Center for Health Services and Policy Research, West Side Division as a Research Associate. Dr. Weiner is an Assistant Professor of Medicine and Pediatrics and Program Director of the Medicine-Pediatrics Residency at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is also a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Generalist Physician Faculty Scholar.

Dr. Weiner's research focuses in two areas: 1) Examining the process of rationing of services to medically indigent patients at large healthcare institutions; 2) Exploring how physicians factor patient specific contextual information into medical decision making. He joins the MCHSPR with plans to pursue his interest in the latter. His paper "Contextualizing medical decisions to individualize care" is being published in the March 2004 issue of the Journal of General Internal Medicine.

Dr. Weiner, a board certified internist and pediatrician, graduated from Dartmouth Medical School in 1993 and completed his residency at the University of Chicago.

Publications

Charlesnika Evans, Marcia Legro, **Frances Weaver**, et al published "*Influenza Vaccination Among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury Part1: A Survey of Attitudes and Behaviors*" in Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine, 2003;26:204-209 (see Weaver for part 2). **This is Ms. Evan's first publication as lead author, Congratulations!**

Frances Weaver was the lead author on, "*Influenza Vaccination Among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury Part 2: Increasing Vaccination Rates*" in Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine, 2003;26:210-218.

Ahsan Arozullah, Career Development Awardee and investigator at VA Chicago, West Side Division, is the lead author for an article titled, "*Postoperative Mortality and Pulmonary Complication Rates: How well do they correlate at the Hospital Level?*" This article was published in Medical Care, 2003;41:979-991.

Todd Lee, is the lead author on an article titled, "*Comparison of Directly Elicited Preferences Derived from the SF-36 in Adults with Asthma.*" Medical Decision Making, 2003;23:323-334. The article addresses the validity preferences derived from the SF-36.

Marylou Guihan, is the lead author on an article titled, "*Spinal Cord Injury Providers' Perceptions of Barriers to Implementing Selected Clinical Practice Guideline Recommendations*," which was published in Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine. 2003;26(1):48-58.

Charles Bennett, is first author on an article titled, "*Perspectives on the Value of ASCO Clinical Guidelines as Reported by Oncologists and Health Maintenance Organizations*," which was published in Journal of Clinical Oncology. 2003;21:937-41.

Denise Hynes is a co-author on a paper by Neumayer, et al. in Journal of American College of Surgeons. The title is, "*Tension Free Inguinal Hernia Repair: The Design of a Trial to Compare Open and Laparoscopic Surgical Techniques.*" 2003;196:743-52.

Jorge Parada's article, "*The Smallpox Vaccine: Risk and Reason*" was published in Chicago Medicine, 2003;106:23-26.

Kevin Weiss is the second author of an article in Annals of Internal Medicine titled, "*The Evidence Base for Tight Blood Pressure Control in the Management of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus.*" The lead author on the article is V. Snow and the article appeared 2003;138:587-592.

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