



Urban Transformations

Department of Health Policy & Management
School of Community Health & Policy

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HIGHLIGHTS: From the Department Chair • Sixth Annual Maryland Minority Health Disparities Conference • New Funding for Courts Evaluation • Why Women Cry Conference • Faculty Highlight • Publications and Presentations • Graduations • Department “Briefs” • About the Department



From the Department Chair

Jonathan B. VanGeest, PhD

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Summer 2009 issue of *Urban Transformations*. Everyone at the University looks forward to summer as a time to slow down and (possibly) get caught up on projects and activities that have piled up over the academic year. This simply hasn't been the case for us this year. Following up on our successful Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) accreditation site visit for our Public Health Program, we are all working hard to prepare our final documents for re-accreditation by CEPH. We also have a number of projects continuing in the field and under development. In this issue of *Urban Transformations*, I want to share updates on significant DHPM projects and activities that support and enhance the vision and mission of the School of Community Health and Policy (SCHP) at Morgan State University (MSU) and serve communities throughout Baltimore and the state.

SCHP vision: To partner with community to address health disparities through research, service, and practice, leading the way to optimal health for underserved populations and people of color.

SCHP mission: To prepare leaders who will generate and disseminate new scientific information relevant to urban health problems.

Dr. Anita Hawkins continues to direct the National Minority Male Health Project (NMMHP) and co-direct the Maryland Mental Health Courts evaluation (see story). This summer, the NMMHP, in collaboration with Charm City Sports Development, will once again host Project AHEAD, a summer Nutrition and Fitness Camp for African American male youth 10-13 years of age. Project AHEAD will operate July 13-July 24 on MSU's campus. In addition to providing participants with a fun summer activity, the program will involve and educate coaches and parents on supporting the development of life-long healthy habits. The youth will also learn about public health careers. Dr. Yutaka Aoki has also outlined a project sub-proposal examining racial disparities in thyroid health in support of MSU's re-submission to the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR)

Research Centers in Minority Institutions (RCMI) program. This not only advances a major priority for the University, but also strengthens interdisciplinary collaboration on campus, in this case between the SCHP and the School of Computer, Mathematical and Natural Sciences. Finally, I have wrapped up field work on our Robert Wood Johnson Foundation-funded intervention study in the Morehouse School of Medicine primary care clinics examining the utility of clinical screening of health literacy to improve care and reduce racial and ethnic disparities.

Working closely with other departments in the SCHP Public Health Program, the DHPM continues to increase its contributions to the education of public health professionals in the city and state. Our strategic plan calls for further expansion of our educational programs, including development and implementation of a health policy concentration in the SCHP Public Health Program and a management curriculum within the Department. New distance education/distance learning certificate programs in health leadership and management and health records management are being developed with funding from the Maryland Higher Education Commission (see UT 2;1). A draft proposal for a new Executive MPH degree is also under internal review.

We are posed to move well beyond our current contributions, and construct a model of community service that enhances our educational mission through faculty practice and hands-on student learning. For the SCHP-DHPM, our future will continue to be one of increasing visibility and performance. To learn more about our Department, the SCHP, and our efforts to eliminate minority health disparities, please visit our website:

<http://www.morgan.edu/academics/schp/Public%20Health-%20Main%20Page.htm>



Sixth Annual Maryland Minority Health Disparities Conference

Anne Marie O'Keefe, PhD, JD

“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and the most inhuman.” —
Martin Luther King, Jr.

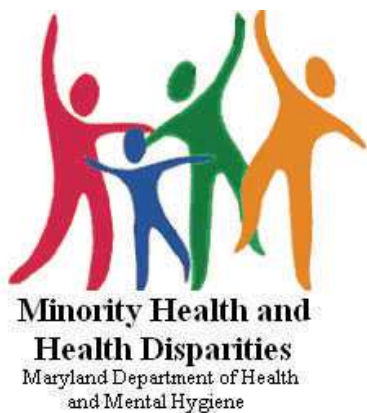
Across the nation, African Americans have the highest mortality rates for 8 of the 10 leading causes of death. Across the State of Maryland, the death rate for Blacks is nearly three times that for Whites. The infant mortality rate among Black Americans is more than twice that of White Americans; in Baltimore City, the comparative ratio is three to one. The death rate for all cancers is 30% higher for Blacks than for Whites; Black men die from prostate cancer twice as often as White men do. Blacks comprise 13% of the population, but account for more than half of all new cases of HIV. Approximately sixty-eight percent of all newly diagnosed HIV-positive women are Black. With 1,000 new HIV infections each year, Baltimore now has the fifth-highest rate of new cases in the U.S.

These intolerable health disparities were some of the crucial issues addressed in the Sixth Annual Health Disparities Conference co-sponsored by the Maryland Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities, the University of Maryland School of Public Health, and Morgan State's School of Community Health and Policy on May 19th. Hundreds of participants attended the conference at Morgan's Student Center to hear an outstanding panel of elected and appointed State and Federal officials, health practitioners, academicians and public health professionals. The additional threats to poor and underserved populations posed by the economic downturn and the new hopes for comprehensive healthcare reform were reflected in this year's conference theme – *Optimizing the Health of Minorities During Economic Restructuring: Politics, Economics and Health Equity*.

Carlessia Hussein, RN, DrPH, Director of the Maryland Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities, and Delegate Shirley Nathan-Pulliam,

the first Afro-Caribbean American registered nurse elected to the Maryland General Assembly, managed the roster of illustrious speakers. Congressman Elijah Cummings (D-MD) told the crowd about his own recent health problem for which he was successfully treated in a hospital emergency department. Sadly, Congressman Cummings' uninsured neighbor died of the same problem almost exactly nine years ago. Dr. Mohammad Akhter, Executive Director of the National Medical Association, keynoted the event by reminding participants that in addition to Wall Street and Main Street, health reform has to focus on the people who live near Railroad Street, where poverty, crime, pollution and despair converge to shorten life spans. John Colmers, Maryland's Secretary of Health and Mental Health, emphasized that eradicating health disparities is a prerequisite to achieving affordable, quality health care for all. SCHP's Dr. Kim Sydnor addressed the role of community-based participatory research in neighborhood interventions for health, and DHPM Chair Dr. Jonathan VanGeest examined the patient-centered medical homes concept as a model for future service delivery in at-risk communities.

According to Dr. Hussein, it is public health professionals who must represent the public's interest in maintaining persistent pressure for healthcare reform that equalizes the health services available to all. "If they don't represent the poor and underserved, who will?" she asked.



New Funding for Courts Evaluation

Anita Hawkins, PhD

This spring, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) awarded an additional \$325,000 to the Morgan State University School of Community Health and Policy to work collaboratively with the Institute of Government Service Research (IGSR) at the University of Maryland College Park on research efforts related to problem-solving courts. Specifically, faculty in the SCHP will partner with IGSR to develop and conduct new process, outcome and cost evaluations of individual drug treatment courts as well as evaluations of individual court-based mental health interventions in the state.

This new memorandum of understanding with the AOC supports ongoing efforts of the Mental Health Courts Project which evaluates the Mental Health Courts in Baltimore City, Harford County, and Prince George's County. The evaluations are being directed by Drs. Anita Hawkins (DHPM) and Kim Sydnor (SCHP Department of Behavioral Health Sciences).

Why Women Cry

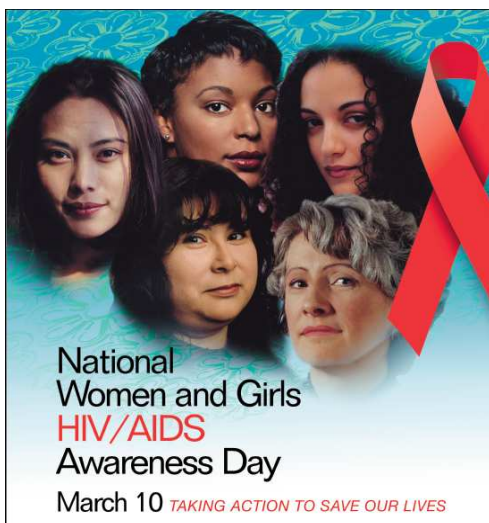
Anita Hawkins, PhD

Women of color are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS. Mirroring national trends, AIDS is now the leading cause of death in Baltimore city for Black women ages 25 to 44. This stark reality prompted one of our community partners, Sisters Together and Reaching, to hold its fourth annual conference entitled *Why Women Cry* to raise awareness about how women and girls can protect themselves against diseases such as HIV and AIDS. The conference was held Monday, March 23rd at the Renaissance Harborplace Hotel in downtown Baltimore. Attendees also celebrated the first

annual National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, a day set aside to help raise awareness about the increase and impact of HIV/AIDS in women and girls, specifically focusing on African Americans.

About 2,500 women registered for the daylong event offering health screenings, workshops on HIV related issues, motivational and spiritual guest speakers, entertainment, day care for children and a series of special activities for teens. Workshop topics addressed a variety of issues related to HIV such as domestic violence, hepatitis C, herpes, incarceration, mental health, personal relationships, as well as personal development topics including financial health and parenting. Each year attendance at the conference has grown and this year continuing education units (CEUs) were offered for provider-specific workshops.

SCHP faculty and students were instrumental in supporting this year's conference. Drs. Anita Hawkins (DHPM) and Lorece Edwards (SCHP Practice Director) were members of the conference planning team and also conducted provider workshops for CEUs. Dr. Hawkins' workshop was entitled "Behind the Data: HIV in the African American Community." Dr. Edwards conducted a workshop entitled "When Hitting Home Hurts: Domestic Violence in the African American Community." SCHP students staffed conference registration, assisted the workshop monitors and collected the workshop evaluation forms.



Sisters Together and Reaching is a Christian-based non-profit organization dedicated to providing spiritual support, direct services, and prevention education to women infected with HIV/AIDS through a holistic women's community center and mobile van unit. The program has a focus on women, but does serve the entire population.

Faculty Highlight: Andrea Kidd Taylor, DrPH

Dr. Andrea Kidd Taylor is an Assistant Professor in the SCHP-DHPM with over 20 years experience in occupational and environmental health and safety. Her current projects include: Integrated Pest Management in Health Care Facilities Community Outreach Project (in collaboration with the Maryland Pesticide Network/Beyond Pesticides), the Safe At Home Baltimore Project (an environmental asthma prevention project in collaboration with the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning), and the Baltimore City Healthy Homes Project (a collaborative partnership with Johns Hopkins University and the Baltimore City Health Department).



Andrea Kidd Taylor, DrPH
DHPM Assistant Professor

In addition to her community-based work, Dr. Taylor serves on the Executive Board of the American Public Health Association (APHA), the oldest and largest organization of public health professionals in the world. This year, the APHA Board has addressed many important public health

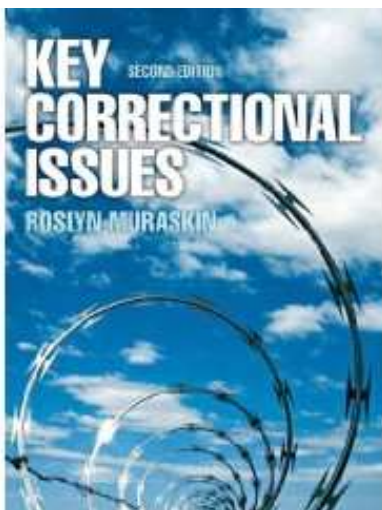
policy issues, including health reform, the H1N1 (swine flu) outbreak, issues of overweight and obesity, school nutrition, and tobacco regulation. Dr. Taylor has also served on the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB), the U.S. Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses, and on the National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (NACOSH).

This year, Dr. Taylor was selected by the MSU-SCHP students to receive the Golden Apple Award for excellence in teaching and advising.

Publications and Presentations

PUBLICATIONS:

Lanier MM, Lucken K, **Akers T.** *Correctional Opportunities: Epidemiological Criminology.* In Muraskin R. [ed.] Key Correctional Issues (2nd Edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2009.



Akers TA, Whittaker JA. *Epidemiological Criminology: A Case for Socio-Biological Determinism.* In Lanier M, Henry S [eds.] Essential Criminology. Boulder, CO: Westview Press (In Press).

Fox MA, **Aoki Y.** *Environmental Contaminants and Exposure.* In Environmental Impacts on Reproductive Health and Fertility. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (In Press).

VanGeest JB, Welch VL, Weiner SJ. Patients' perceptions of screening for health literacy: Reactions to the Newest Vital Sign. *Journal of Health Communication.* (In Press).

PRESENTATIONS:

VanGeest, JB, Welch VL. (2009, May). *Patients' Perceptions of Screening for Health Literacy in Primary Care: Reactions to the Newest Vital Sign.* Institute for Healthcare Advancement's Eighth Annual Health Literacy Conference, Irvine, CA.

VanGeest, JB. *Patient Centered Medical Homes: A Model to Address Disparities.* (2009, May). Sixth Annual Maryland Health Disparities Conference, Baltimore, MD.

REPORTS:

O'Keefe AM, Aoki Y. (2009). *African American Women and their Pregnancies: An Epidemiological Study.* Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

Graduations!

Anne Marie O'Keefe, PhD, JD

The 2009 SCHP Awards Ceremony and Banquet was held May 14 in the Student Center. This spring, 12 students achieved their MPH degrees and 7 more were awarded their DrPH. Masters graduates from the DHPM included:

Chepkorir Maritim, a nurse at Johns Hopkins Hospital, has applied to graduate nursing programs to continue her education.

Sherria Owens, a systems engineer, interned at the Johns Hopkins University International STD laboratory and focused on reproductive health during her matriculation.

Olumide Olorunnishola, an orthopedic surgeon in his native Nigeria, believes his public health degree will make him an even more effective physician.

Sheena Pierce, an aspiring health care executive and recipient of the Gates Millennium Scholarship, hopes to focus her career on decreasing health care disparities.

Tanisha Smith, always passionate about health and African American studies, aims to become a public health educator in urban healthcare programs in underserved communities..

Morgan's 133rd Commencement was celebrated Saturday, May 16, 2009, in the W.A.C. Hughes Memorial Stadium on the University's main campus. This year's commencement speaker was Benjamin Todd Jealous, President and CEO of the NAACP.



SCHP Students at MSU's 133rd Commencement

Congratulations SCHP grads!

Department "Briefs"

The DHPM faculty participated in the successful site visit by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) accreditation team April 6-7, 2009. At the site visit, the CEPH team gave the SCHP Public Health Program a highly favorable assessment, grading the Program as meeting all but one of the criteria mandated for all public health programs nationally. The SCHP Public Health Program will receive the official accreditation decision from the CEPH in November 2009.

Drs. **Jonathan VanGeest** and Verna Welch (Emory University) wrapped up the field period on their Finding Answers: Disparities Research for Change project examining the utility of clinical screening for health literacy (see *UT* Vol 1:2). This two-year project was conducted in the Morehouse School of Medicine Department of Family Medicine primary care clinics, with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Information on the Finding Answers Program at the University of Chicago is available at: www.solvingdisparities.org

Drs. Lorece Edwards (SCHP Practice Director) and **Jonathan VanGeest** attended the May meeting of the Baltimore CHAT (Community Health Action Team), sponsored by Sanofi-Aventis.

Dr. **Jonathan VanGeest** had two abstracts accepted for presentation at the 137th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, November 7-11, 2009 in Philadelphia, PA. The first is entitled, "Using an epidemiological criminology framework to advance evidence-based public health policy: The case of adolescent substance abuse." The second, entitled "Patients' perceptions of screening for health literacy in primary care: Reactions to the Newest Vital Sign," was submitted with Dr. Verna Welch (Emory University).

About the Department

The **Department of Health Policy and Management** at MSU-SCHP includes two content areas: 1) Health Policy and Management and 2) Environmental and Occupational Health. Graduates of the Department are prepared to assume leadership roles in designing and implementing effective policies and programs to eliminate health disparities, including initiatives addressing community and environmental factors impacting urban underserved populations and people of color.

For more information about the Department, please call the School of Community Health and Policy at 443-885-3238 or visit the School's website at <http://schp.morgan.edu>.

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