



Urban Transformations

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

VOLUME I, ISSUE 2 SUMMER

HIGHLIGHTS From the Department Chair • Morehouse/ SCHP Partner • Homelessness in Baltimore • National Minority Male Health Project • 2008 African American Men's Health Conference • Recent Department Publications • Department "Briefs"



From the Department Chair

Jonathan B. VanGeest, PhD

In our inaugural issue, I introduced the Department of Health Policy and Management's newsletter, *Urban Transformations*. Increasingly, we will use this newsletter to feature policy issues under consideration by the Maryland General Assembly that are relevant to urban underserved populations and people of color. We will also highlight projects and activities underway in the Department and in Morgan State University's (MSU) School of Community Health and Policy (SCHP). As Maryland's designated public urban university, MSU has a responsibility and unique opportunity to contribute to the well-being of urban communities in Baltimore and throughout the state through our teaching, research and service programs. However, we cannot do this without partners and collaborators and I encourage readers to learn more about our Department and SCHP as we strive to move "from Invisible to Invaluable."

We are off to a good start. This spring, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) donated over \$8,000 worth of textbooks that will form the nucleus of a new Health Policy Department library. Faculty have also been busy. Our many activities include: a

proposal submitted to the National Institutes of Health to support a new State initiative in minority health (in partnership with the University of Maryland); a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning to evaluate their HUD-funded demonstration project addressing home-based environmental health hazards in targeted low-income communities in Baltimore; a 2008 African American Men's Health Conference hosted by the American Cancer Society (see story below); and MOUs signed with the Baltimore Mayor's Office to address homelessness in the city (see below). Internally, we continue to work diligently to prepare for our upcoming CEPH accreditation visit and to launch new courses and degree programs.

This only touches the surface of the many projects and activities in planning or underway in the Department of Health Policy and Management. We are proud of our achievements, but much work remains to serve as a policy and practice resource in the city and State on health issues faced by minority and underserved populations. We continue to work to expand our programs and

we are committed to excellence in many areas; striving to make a real difference in the communities we serve.

Morehouse/SCHP Partner

Improving Care for Patients with Low Health Literacy

Faculty in the Department of Health Policy and Management are partnering with faculty in the Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) in Atlanta, GA, to improve care for patients with low health literacy (defined as the inability to understand or act upon health-related information). The model quality improvement program, implemented within the MSM Department of Family Medicine Family Practice Center, was funded by the **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Finding Answers: Disparities Research for Change** program at the University of Chicago (<http://www.solvingdisparities.org>). The goal of this project is to enable clinicians to modify care and/or patient communication based on an assessment of patients' health literacy using the "Newest Vital Sign (NVS)," a brief screening test designed for use in primary care.



Morehouse/MSU Project Team (L to R): William Ashley Davis, Rodney Harrison, Charlye Majett, Mariel Lopez, Verna Welch, & Jonathan VanGeest Not Pictured: Gregory Strayhorn

Specifically, patient scores on the NVS are incorporated into their medical record and then used by clinicians to tailor patient instruction. An evaluation is ongoing to assess care outcomes associated with the intervention from both the clinicians' and patients' perspectives. In this evaluation, patients are being interviewed to determine the impact of the screening on their care experiences and medical records are being analyzed to determine impacts on quality of care and disparities, as measured against clinical quality performance guidelines for hypertension. Surveys and focus groups of clinicians are also being used to assess whether this new "vital sign" was helpful in providing high quality care to at-risk patients. Ultimately, this project will highlight opportunities and barriers to clinical screening for a condition impacting more than 90 million adults in the United States, including disproportionate numbers of racial and ethnic minorities.

Finding Answers:
Disparities Research for Change

Homelessness in Baltimore

Morgan Partners with the Mayor's Office to Address Homelessness in Baltimore

In Baltimore, as in other cities nationally, homelessness remains a serious public health issue. Nationally, it is estimated that at least 800,000 people are homeless on any given day in the United States, including approximately 200,000 children. Typically episodic in nature, national estimates also suggest that as many as 3.5 million people experience homelessness at some time during an average year. In the city of Baltimore, current estimates suggest that more than 3,000 people are homeless daily. Chronic homelessness may also be increasing, with more than half of homeless individuals reporting being without a home for more than a year.

This summer, the Baltimore City Mayor's Office contracted with faculty in SCHP, the MSU Institute for Urban Research, and the MSU School of Architecture and Planning (SAP) to conduct two community-based research projects addressing homelessness in the city. The first is a mixed-method impact assessment to examine the potential effect on community of the city's planned placement of a permanent homeless shelter at 620 Fallsway Road, Baltimore, Maryland. The second is a one-day census of the homeless population in the city. Information from these projects will inform efforts to achieve goals outlined in the city's 10-year plan to end homelessness. This plan can be viewed at: www.baltimorecity.gov/mayor/downloads/0108%2010%20Year%20Plan.pdf.

National Minority Male Health Project

Anita Hawkins, PhD

The National Minority Male Health Project (NMMHP) is a multi-institutional collaborative (involving five Historically Black Colleges and Universities) dedicated to promoting healthy lifestyles among minority males through a comprehensive program of research, education, and service. It is funded through a collaborative agreement between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health and Morehouse College. Since its inception, the consortium has been actively engaged in building campus-community partnerships committed to reducing health disparities among minority males through education, health promotion, and increased access to quality preventive and intervention health services.

Activities have included: health screenings and health education sessions to improve health care

utilization and the promotion of healthy behaviors; providing technical assistance, training and support to faith based organizations to increase the number organizations providing outreach to minority men; and a re-entry initiative to increase access to health services to minority ex-offenders recently released from incarceration.

This summer, SCHP/NMMHP was one of the co-sponsors for the American Cancer Society's African American Men's Health Conference (see related story). We also partnered with 132 ministerial and 33 lay church leaders in an event entitled, *Spiritual Health Care: Getting Equipped to Impact AA Men's Health in the 21st Century*. Finally, SCHP/NMMHP is currently piloting a summer Nutrition and Fitness Camp for male youth in collaboration with the Charm City Sports Development Corporation and the Leon Day Foundation. This two-week program, entitled Project AHEAD, will involve area youth 10-15 years of age who will receive instruction on nutrition and fitness, along with opportunities to participate in recreational activities (photo page 6).

This October, NMMHP project staff will present findings at the Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association (see www.apha.org/meetings/sessions/ – Section 3016.0 – for details).

2008 African American Men's Health Conference

Xanthia James, MPH

In June, the National Minority Male Health Project (NMMHP) participated in an invaluable community outreach effort as a co-sponsor of the 2008 African American Men's Health Conference in Baltimore, hosted by the American Cancer Society. This

annual conference was designed to provide African-American men with a forum for learning about their health issues and how to improve their health through the adoption of healthy behaviors and through increased use of healthcare services. The free conference offered seminars, workshops, access to health exhibitors, and screenings for prostate cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular health. The SCHP/NMMHP contributed to the success of the conference, with faculty serving on the Planning Committee. The school also committed funding in sponsorship of the event. NMMHP also partnered with Morgan State University's WEAA 88.9 FM radio station to produce vignettes as part of the *Our Health Watch* initiative to promote the conference and discuss colon cancer and its high prevalence among African American men.

During the conference, SCHP/HMMHP served as a health exhibitor, providing useful and culturally sensitive information on a variety of health issues affecting African American men, such as prostate cancer, colon cancer, HIV, Hepatitis C, and cardiovascular disease. By all accounts, the 2008 conference was a success, with a total of 515 attendees and health screenings provided to 264 men. In acknowledgement of our support, the American Cancer Society awarded the NMMHP with a plaque expressing their appreciation.



2008 African American Men's Health Conference

Recent Department Publications

Weiner SJ, **VanGeest JB**, Abrams RI, Moswin A, Warnecke R. Managing the Unmanaged: A Case Study of the Intra-institutional Determinants of Uncompensated Care at Hospitals with Differing Ownership Models. *Medical Care*. 2008;46(8):821-28.

Department "Briefs"

Dr. **Anita Hawkins** was appointed to the Equal Health Opportunity Committee by the Executive Board of the American Public Health Association.

Dr. **Andrea Kidd-Taylor** finalized a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning, Inc. to evaluate their HUD-funded demonstration project addressing home-based environmental health hazards in targeted low-income communities in Baltimore.

Dr. **Andrea Kidd-Taylor** gave a presentation at the Chesapeake Watershed Conference entitled "Pesticides and the Chesapeake Watershed and their Public Health Implications."

Dr. **Andrea Kidd-Taylor** testified on behalf of labor before the US House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce's Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Materials, regarding legislative bills HR 5533, the "Chemical Facilities Act of 2008", and HR 5577, the "Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Act of 2008."

Dr. **Payam Sheikhattari** is a co-Principal Investigator on a 5-year research project from National Institute of Health (NIH) to examine “Community Based Participator Research to Reduce Tobacco Smoking among Residents of a Low Income Urban Setting.”

Dr. **Payam Sheikhattari** is a co-Principal Investigator on a longitudinal survey of freshman students entering MSU to learn more about factors that may increase or reduce the chance of drug involvement and other HIV risk practices.

Dr. **Anne Marie O’Keefe** trained National Dental Association representatives in Policy and Media Advocacy in preparation for their Hill Day to lobby for improved access to oral health by the poor.

Dr. **Anne Marie O’Keefe** delivered a workshop in Social Marketing, Policy and Media Advocacy to partner organizations of the DC Tobacco Free Families coalition.

Dr. **Anne Marie O’Keefe** was awarded a subcontract by Actuarial Research Corporation to examine the NHANES national data sets to examine disparities in pregnancy outcomes among White, Black and Hispanic women.

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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alumni, we would also welcome information on
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2008 PROJECT AHEAD - CHARM CITY
BUCCANEERS & MORGAN STATE