

Healthy Signs



UNIVERSITY of
ROCHESTER
MEDICAL CENTER

National Center for Deaf Health Research February 2010

Mission of NCDHR:

To promote health and prevent disease in the Deaf and hard of hearing populations through community-based participatory research.

SAVE THE DATES

Town Hall Meeting

**March 15, 2010
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm**

Deaf Health Talk "Memory Issues"

**March 25, 2010
At RRCD**

**Check NCDHR
website for
details.**

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New Training Grant Submitted for Diverse Researchers

Patient care and research are not the only important activities of the University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC). Training of current and future physicians and scientists is an equally important endeavor. Its medical and graduate schools are ranked top in the country. However, health care professionals from racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as those who are Deaf or hard of hearing, make up a tiny fraction of overall health care and research profession. The Association of American Medical Colleges in 2007 reported that 7.5% of medical school faculty throughout the country come from racial and ethnic communities. Another survey revealed that only 1 to 2% of medical faculty are people with disabilities, including those who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

Dr. Thomas Pearson, Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Research at the School of Medicine and Dentistry and Director of NCDHR, in an effort to address this training gap, submitted an innovative training grant called "Programs to Increase Diversity Among Individuals Engaged in Research," or "PRIDE" for short.

This is a summer multidisciplinary training program in behavioral medicine using a wide

variety of educational and career developmental strategies, such as a series of lectures, mentoring, and hands-on skills.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the funder of this grant, the goal of the grant is to encourage scientists from underrepresented groups, including people of color and Deaf or hard of hearing individuals, to enhance their research skills and gain experience to become qualified principal investigators for future NIH grants.

Up to 12 post-doctoral researchers interested in academic medicine will be recruited annually for 3 consecutive years. A portion of these recruits will be Deaf or hard of hearing individuals.

NCDHR will ensure barrier-free learning environments for Deaf or hard of hearing researchers by providing sign language interpreters with training in the specialized language and culture of research, assistive listening systems; culturally competent faculty who are familiar with communication accessibility strategies for mentoring; and meeting facilities that are designed to be Deaf-friendly.

If the URMC receives this grant, it will be announced through NCDHR website.

Why Deaf Health Research? To Eliminate Health Disparities!

Deaf Health research is a relatively new scientific discipline which focuses on improving the health of Deaf people and their communities. Deaf Health research is an effort to rectify a long history of inattentiveness by public health authorities that caused the American Deaf community to become such an understudied and underserved population. In other words, Deaf Health is not analogous to Hearing Health research which traditionally focuses on research to restore hearing and balance.

Public health research with minorities, such as African-Americans, is conducted to eliminate health disparities. The website from the U.S. Office of Minority Health defines health disparities as "...significant differences between one population and another." Health disparities need to be eliminated. For example, cancer rates among African-Americans are twice as high as White Americans.

The Deaf Health Survey from 2008 identified some health disparities between Deaf and hearing population. Deaf people reported higher

obesity rates than hearing people and obesity is one of America's most serious public health problems.

To eliminate this particular health disparity, NCDHR is now working on the next Deaf Health research project to reduce obesity in the Deaf community. This project is an intervention research called Deaf Weight Wise (DWW).

For more information about DWW, check out this [link](#) or call 585-286-2721 VP.

NCDHR Happenings

NCDHR and its community partners were saddened to learn that a long-time supporter of Deaf Health research has passed away after a courageous battle with leukemia.

Marcia Dugan was one of the seven original members of the NCDHR's External Advisory Committee (EAC).

The picture to the right shows Marcia at the EAC meeting at NCDHR last June 29, 2009 with Dr. Laurie Brewer, Vice Dean and Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs and member of the NCDHR's Education & Training Committee.

According to her family, contributions may be made in her memory to the Hearing Loss Association of America's Marcia Dugan Memorial Fund, 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200, Bethesda, MD 20814 or to Keuka

College, P.O. Box 98, Keuka Park, NY 14478.



Abstracts submitted by NCDHR faculty and a DHCC member were accepted for the Society for Public Health Education and Prevention Research Centers Joint 2010 Conference entitled "Advocate,

Communicate and Translate to Enhance Research and Practice," this April in Atlanta, GA. **Nancy Chin, MPH, PhD** and **Jess Cuculick, MSW, MSSW** will do a poster presentation on "Deaf Mothers and Breastfeeding: Assessing their Knowledge and Practices through Focus Group Discussions." **Matthew Starr, MPH** will be one of the three presenters in a 75 minute concurrent session, presenting "Reaching out to Deaf Americans during public emergencies via the Internet."

Colleen Evenstad and **Ruthie Gordon** have been brought in by NCDHR to offer ASL instruction to NCDHR faculty and staff wishing to improve their ASL expressive and receptive skills.

Who is on the NCDHR Research Committee?

The next major Deaf Health research project may have a significant impact on improving the health of the Deaf community. NCDHR researchers and its community partners wanted to find out if a proven weight loss intervention for hearing people can be adapted from English to ASL and whether it would work well with Deaf people.

Obesity was identified as one of the few health disparities between Deaf and hearing people. Findings from the Deaf Health Survey were compared with findings from a local health survey of hearing people. Respondents from the Deaf Health Survey self-reported a higher rate of being overweight or obesity than hearing people. As a result of this revelation, NCDHR pursued to secure a second 5-year grant to conduct an intervention research to reduce obesity in the Deaf community, starting now through 2014.

Members of the NCDHR Research Committee have been meeting every Friday to implement this ambitious and groundbreaking research. They are: **Tamala David, RN, FNP**

(hearing), a family nurse practitioner who is also a UR PhD candidate and an Assistant Professor of Nursing at S.U.N.Y. Brockport; **Robyn Dean, MA, CI/CT** (hearing), a sign language interpreting researcher at the Deaf Wellness Center (DWC); **Michael McKee, MD** (Deaf), a Fellow in the Preventive Cardiology Training Program and a family medicine physician at Lifetime Health; **Amanda O'Hearn, PhD** (hearing), UR Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and a clinical psychologist at DWC; **Thomas Pearson, MD, MPH, PhD** (hearing), UR Professor of Community and Preventive Medicine and Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Research, and the Director of NCDHR; **Robert Q. Pollard, PhD** (hearing), UR Professor of Psychiatry, directs the DWC; **Vincent Samar, PhD** (hearing), an Associate Professor and researcher from NTID; **Scott Smith, MD, MPH** (Deaf), a behavioral pediatrician, is also a Fellow in the Preventive Cardiology Training Program; **Deirdre Schlehofer, MPhil, EdD** (Deaf), UR Assistant Research Professor of Community and Preventive Medicine

and Health Project Coordinator at NCDHR; **Matthew Starr, MPH** (Deaf), UR Senior Instructor of Community and Preventive Medicine; **Erika Sutter, MPH** (hearing), a Senior Health Project Coordinator at NCDHR; **Hongmei Yang, PhD** (hearing), UR Research Assistant Professor of Biostatistics and Computational Biology.

The Research Committee is chaired by **Steven Barnett, MD** (hearing), Associate Professor of Family Medicine and Community and Preventive Medicine, and also the Associate Director of NCDHR.

The Research Committee works closely with its community partner, **Deaf Health Community Committee (DHCC)**, chaired by **John T. Reid**. Additionally, two members of the DHCC's Research Subcommittee, **Chad A. Ludwig** and **Julia Aggas**, meet with NCDHR researchers on a monthly basis.

Denise Thew, PhD (Deaf), will become the newest member of this Research Committee starting in March 2010.