

UNC GILLINGS SCHOOL OF GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH SCHOOL NEWS

JANUARY – MAY 2012

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Dr. Noel Brewer



Anna Child



Dr. Jo Anne Earp



Dr. Howard Koh



Dr. Robert Sandler



Dr. Stephanie Wheeler

Behavioral economics of colorectal cancer screening

A NEW STUDY from UNC's Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention examines behavioral factors that may influence whether people pursue colorectal cancer screening and identifies strategies that might increase screening rates in disadvantaged communities.

Stephanie Wheeler, PhD, assistant professor of health policy and management, and Michael Pignone, MD, MPH, professor of medicine in the UNC School of Medicine, lead the study, along with Kristen Hassmiller Lich, PhD, assistant professor of health policy and management.

Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer diagnosis and second leading cause of cancer-related death in the U.S. Overall screening rates have increased in recent years, but rates for uninsured, minority and rural-dwelling people are lower than for the rest of the population.

Related research led by UNC epidemiologists Robert Sandler, MD, and Nicholas Shaheen, MD, found that during the current recession, continuously insured Americans

underwent fewer screening colonoscopies, a cost-effective, recommended preventive service. The study appears in the March issue of *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology* (<http://tinyurl.com/colonoscopies>).

HBHE will change its name

EFFECTIVE JULY 1, the School's Department of Health Behavior and Health Education will have a new name—Health Behavior. The shortened name, says professor and chair Jo Anne Earp, ScD, “celebrates the common ground that we share as a department of behavioral scientists, health behavior interventionists and health education practitioners.” The change is the result of a 15-month deliberation by faculty members, alumni and others.

Directory connects women to cervical cancer services

THE N.C. CERVICAL CANCER RESOURCE DIRECTORY (www.ccreourcedirectory.org) helps connect women to information about life-saving screening and HPV vaccination

services. Dr. Noel Brewer, associate professor of health behavior and health education, directs Cervical Cancer-Free NC (www.ccfnc.org), a School-based initiative that developed the directory.

Each year, more than 4,000 women in the U.S. die of cervical cancer. Experts say a majority of deaths could be avoided through regular cervical cancer screenings, commonly known as Pap tests, and timely HPV vaccination.

Koh speaks at May commencement

HOWARD K. KOH, MD, MPH, assistant secretary for health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, presented the School's commencement address on Saturday, May 12.

“Howard Koh is one of the most exemplary figures in public health today,” said Dean Barbara K. Rimer. “Dr. Koh's work on tobacco control and health disparities is important and widely cited. His current leadership in HHS is setting a new standard for excellence.”



WATER IN OUR WORLD

Switching to water, diet drinks save calories

SUBSTITUTING WATER OR DIET SOFT DRINKS for caloric beverages can help people lose four to five pounds, says a study published in March in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (<http://tinyurl.com/switch-to-water>). Deborah Tate, PhD, associate professor of nutrition and of health behavior and health education, led the study, along with nutrition professors June Stevens, PhD (chair), and Barry Popkin, PhD. If the substitution took place on a large scale, Tate says, we could “significantly reduce the increasing public health problem of obesity.”

Undergrad develops educational program for Ugandan women

HEALTH POLICY AND MANAGEMENT major Jen Serdetchnaia was instrumental in establishing Empower U (www.empoweruganda.org), a nonprofit organization that promotes women’s rights in rural Uganda by giving women tools and opportunity to finance their own post-secondary educations. Serdetchnaia’s background in entrepreneurship and her time as an APPLES Social

Entrepreneur Fellow also inspired her to provide financial skills training to empower Ugandan women with little education.

February was ‘Celebrate Teaching!’ Month

A DECISION TO HOLD a series of events to celebrate innovative teaching grew out of SPH2020 (www.sph.unc.edu/sph2020), a planning process that aims to develop a vision for public health learning and teaching at the School in the next decade. Three speakers, including alumnus Dr. David Kleinbaum of Emory University, presented talks about innovative teaching methods. One faculty member from each academic unit was selected by students to receive awards for effective teaching. (See page 30.)

Minority Health Conference focused on translational research

THE SCHOOL’S MINORITY STUDENT CAUCUS hosted the 33rd annual UNC Minority Health Conference (MHC) on Feb. 24. Themed “Translational Research: The Road From Efficacy to Equity,” the event included the William T. Small Jr. Keynote

Lecture, delivered by Dr. Ana V. Diez-Roux (University of Michigan) and an afternoon keynote by Dr. Nina Wallerstein (University of New Mexico).

For details about the conference, visit <http://studentorgs.unc.edu/msc>. Read Dean Barbara K. Rimer’s impressions of the event in her blog, <http://mondaymorning.web.unc.edu/MHC>.

Water designated as two-year campus theme

BY ADOPTING “WATER” as a campus-wide theme for the 2012–2013 and 2013–2014 academic years, the UNC Faculty Council provided a unique opportunity to enhance interdisciplinary research and practice around real-world issues related to water and sanitation.

“Water provides so many opportunities to improve the lot of humankind—whether in North Carolina or for the world’s poor,” said Dr. Jamie Bartram, environmental sciences and engineering professor and director of The Water Institute at UNC. Bartram quoted U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s description of water as one of the “great diplomatic and development opportunities of our time.”



Dr. Jamie Bartram greets U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at the launch of the U.S. Water Partnership in March.



Dr. Regina Benjamin



Dr. Dorothy Cilenti



Dr. Beth Mayer-Davis



Dr. Deborah Tate



MHC co-chairs Kea Turner (left) and Turquoise Griffith (right) pose with UNC President Thomas Ross. Turner and Griffith were awarded the 2011-2012 Lucy S. Morgan Fellowship. Griffith also was a Hatch-Barnhill Scholar this year.

“The University is remarkably well prepared to take on a theme of this kind,” Bartram said. “Our focus will promote a unifying dialogue across campus and throughout the world.”

Symposium: ‘What about the children?’

THE SCHOOL’S North Carolina Institute for Public Health (NCIPH) partnered with the nonprofit agency Our Children’s Place to host the symposium “What About the Children?” on Feb. 14. The event gave professionals, students and others a chance to collaborate and consider the impact of a parent’s incarceration upon children.

“Far too often, children whose parents are sentenced to prison are overlooked, vulnerable and without a voice,” said Dr. Dorothy Cilenti, NCIPH’s deputy director and chair of the Our Children’s Place board of directors.

Student leads conference on food politics

THE SYMPOSIUM “SHARED TABLES,” held Feb. 28–29 at UNC and Duke, examined wide-ranging connections between food and

politics, the environment, security, culture and faith. The event was planned by health behavior and health education master’s student Anna Child, whose interest developed when she was a teaching assistant for a public health class about the politics of food. Read more about the event at <http://sharedtablesymp.wordpress.com>.

Older women may not need repeated bone density screening

A NEW STUDY led by UNC researchers found that women age 67 and older with normal bone mineral density scores may not need screening again for 15 years.

Results of the study, co-authored by Jason P. Fine, ScD, and John S. Preisser, PhD, research professors of biostatistics at UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, were published in the Jan. 19 issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine* (<http://tinyurl.com/NEJM-bone-density>).

Callahan and Harris co-author IOM report

DR. RUSSELL HARRIS AND DR. LEIGH CALLAHAN co-authored an Institute of Medicine report that calls for immediate

action to reduce the nation’s burden from all forms of chronic illness. The report, released Jan. 31, “shows how important it is for us to close the gap between public health agencies and medical care institutions so as to form a seamless system of ongoing support and care for individuals and families affected by chronic conditions,” Harris said.

Harris is director of the health care and prevention concentration in the School’s Public Health Leadership Program. He and Callahan are adjunct professors of epidemiology.

Surgeon General speaks at state health conference

NORTH CAROLINA helped showcase the new National Prevention Strategy (NPS) when state health directors met in Raleigh Jan. 26–27. NPS was established by the Obama administration’s Affordable Care Act and developed by U.S. DHHS’ National Prevention, Health Promotion and Public Health Council. U.S. Surgeon General Regina Benjamin, MD, director of the Council, gave the conference’s keynote address. Beth Mayer-Davis, PhD, nutrition professor, is a member of the NPS advisory group.