

EPIDEMIOLOGY NEWS

February 2010

Volume 1, Issue 2

COMMENTARIES FROM FOUR SENIOR EPI FACULTY IN HIGH IMPACT JOURNALS

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In their Nature opinion piece, "AIDS research must link to local policy," Professor of Clinical Epidemiology Salim Abdool Karim and Associate Professor of Clinical Epidemiology Quarraisha Abdool Karim note that while HIV research in South Africa is world class, scientists need to shift focus from global problems to priorities at home in order to halt the country's epidemic.

Karim SS, Karim QA. *Nature*. 2010 Feb 11; 463(7282):733-4.



THE LANCET Dean Linda Fried is lead author on "Global health is public health", a commentary published by a working group of the Association of Schools of Public Health's Global Health Committee in the February 13, 2010 issue of *Lancet*. "This framework offers realistic recognition of how this critical field has evolved, and its leadership role for the future which is essential to maximizing health for the greatest number of people around the world," according to Dr. Fried.

Fried LP, et al. *The Lancet*, 2010 Feb 13; 375,(9714), 535 - 537.



The NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL of MEDICINE

In the article entitled "AIDS in America-Forgotten but Not Gone," Professor Wafaa El-Sadr and her co-

authors Kenneth H. Mayer, MD, and Sally Hodder, MD, point out the waning attention paid to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States. They discuss the complexities of the HIV epidemic in the U.S. and its disproportionate impact on disenfranchised groups. Noting the urgent need to refocus attention to the epidemic in our midst, the authors recommend the development of a relevant research agenda that can help gain ground in the fight against the disease.

El-Sadr WM, et al. *N Engl J Med*. 2010 Feb 10. [Epub ahead of print]



Columbia University
MAILMAN SCHOOL
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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Welcome to the second issue of our monthly newsletter. I find myself awed these days at our faculty's achievements. In this issue we highlight five of the articles published by Epidemiology faculty in February alone. The energy and enthusiasm in the Department is also evident at faculty meetings and in my individual encounters with faculty, students, and staff. I am truly enjoying being a part of this extraordinary department.

March promises to be an eventful month. Our second CUEGR will take place on March 10 with Sonia Hernandez-Diaz, MD, DrPH. At our March 12 faculty meeting I will present a vision and strategic direction for the Department that builds on my discussions with all of you. And on March 19 faculty and staff are invited to our first Epi Social of the year, celebrating Bill Friedewald's service to the Department and his ongoing role as Vice Chair.

I received several positive responses to the first issue, and hope everyone enjoys the current issue. Please continue to send any and all feedback and thoughts about newsletter content to Barbara Aaron at bpa2001@columbia.edu.

Warm regards,

UPCOMING: MARCH AND APRIL 2010

March 10	CUEGR: Sonia Hernandez-Diaz
March 12	Epi Faculty Meeting: Vision and strategic direction
March 19	Epi Social: Honoring Bill Friedewald
March 24	Dean's Grand Rounds: Michael Marmot
April 7	Dean's Grand Rounds: Derek Yach
April 9	Epi Seminar Series: Louise Kuhn
April 14	CUEGR: Alain Jacques Valleron
April 23	Epi Faculty Meeting: Doctoral or Master's program
April 23	Alan Berkman Memorial

FACULTY PROFILE: TIFFANY GARY-WEBB

Dr. Gary-Webb was recruited to the Department of Epidemiology as of October 1, 2009 to develop a program of health disparities research addressing diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease and obesity, as part of a School-wide strategic initiative in chronic disease and urban health.

Before coming to Columbia, Dr. Gary-Webb was an Associate Professor in the Department of Epidemiology at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and was on the faculty for over 8 years. There she held a joint appointment in the Division of General Internal Medicine at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and was a core faculty member in two nationally-recognized research centers, the Welch Center for Prevention, Epidemiology, and Clinical Research and the Center for Health Disparities Solutions.



Dr. Gary-Webb's research program is unique in that she combines observational and intervention research to address the common theme of *"reducing racial/ethnic disparities in diabetes and its complications and improving diabetes care for urban African Americans."* She has developed a national reputation in this area as evidenced by her published, peer-reviewed work, presentations at national conferences, and professional activities. Dr. Gary-Webb has recently expanded her research program to include social epidemiology, advanced statistical methods, and the content area of obesity. These expanded domains provide a nice supplement to her existing expertise in epidemiological methods/clinical trials and will enhance her independent research agenda on reducing racial disparities in obesity and diabetes.

Dr. Gary-Webb is currently transitioning her research program from Baltimore City to New York City. She is in the final years of a career development award from the NIH (K01-HL084700, "Racial Disparities in Obesity: Role of Culture and Environment" National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, NHLBI). She has used this award to develop her emphasis in social epidemiology and has positioned herself to be a leader in the area. She is now in the process of developing R01 proposals and the current proposal will allow her to start the transition of her work to New York. In New York, Dr. Gary-Webb is building work on the social (culture, environment, SES, etc) determinants of racial/ethnic disparities in obesity and diabetes. She is interested in developing population-based, applied studies to examine minority populations (especially African Americans, & Black subgroups) and she welcomes collaborations related to this area and health disparities in general. She is developing collaborations and obtaining an appointment at St. Luke's Hospital to develop work in Harlem.

Dr. Gary-Webb's research program fits directly into the overarching strategic plan for the Mailman School of Public Health in the domains of chronic disease and urban health. As such, it contributes substantially to the field of health disparities, while also filling a unique niche within the Mailman School of Public Health and the University at large.

APPA CONFERENCE MARCH 4—6

This year marks the **100th Annual Meeting of the American Psychopathological Association**. The meeting will be held **March 4-6, 2010** at the Grand Hyatt New York hotel in New York City. The title of this year's Centennial program is ***Mental Health in Public Health: The Next 100 Years***. This year's presentations will address mental health disparities and populations at risk for illness; shifting demographics; changes in mental health from youth to older age; issues that shape the debate about public mental health; and new approaches to including mental health in public health. Topics address disorders conditional upon exposure; intersections of criminal behaviors, mental illness and addiction; perceived stigma and discrimination; economic predictors of mental health and others. The program will conclude with a Past Presidents' Forum, where each will share their vision for the next 100 years.



AMERICAN PSYCHOPATHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

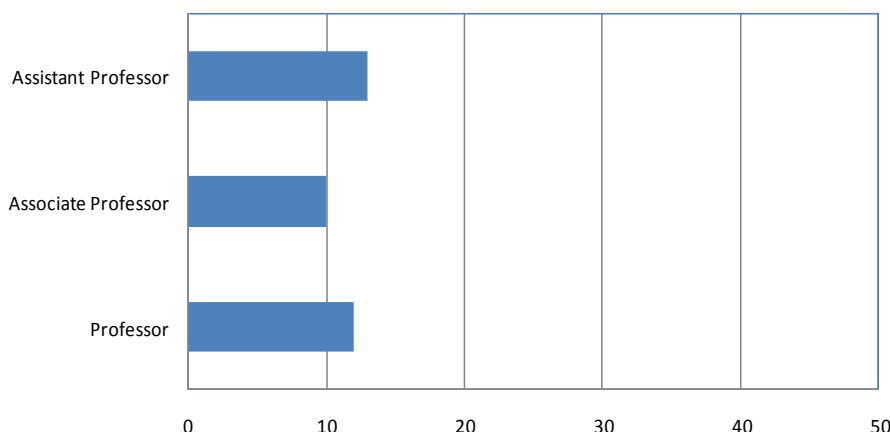
CENTENNIAL
1910-2010

It is an especially auspicious occasion, with significant participation from MSPH faculty. Dr. Sandro Galea is a speaker at the conference, and Dr. Deborah Hasin will serve as one of the session chairs at this year's meeting. Also, Dr. Ezra Susser will be honored as the recipient of this year's Zubin award. The Zubin award recognizes a seminal figure in psychopathology research who has contributed to the knowledge base and has stimulated others, generally in a field related to the meeting topic. Dr. Susser has also been elected to serve as President of the organization in 2012. Among past APPA Presidents are Epi Department faculty Drs. Bruce Dohrenwend and Myrna Weissman.

The conference is preceded by a special annual meeting of the NIMH and NIDA Psychiatric Epidemiology training programs, including a number of our Psychiatric Epidemiology Training fellows.

2010 EPI GRANTS

Epidemiology Grant Submissions January 1 - February 28, 2010



STAFF PROFILE: BRENDA SCARIFF



Brenda Scariff working at home on a snowy day

Brenda Lee Scariff joined the Department of Epidemiology in 2000. Since that time, she has been working with Professors Sharon Schwartz and Al Neugut, coordinating the administrative aspects of the Psychiatric Epidemiology Training (PET) program and the Cancer Epidemiology training programs. In this role, she supports two seminar series, processes appointments for pre- and postdoctoral fellows, and helps trainees out on everything from stipend and tuition payments to computer issues.

At the intersection of Columbia's administrative requirements, the rules of the funding agency and the needs of the fellows, there is often a complicated pattern of conflicting interests. Ms. Scariff manages to talk to the right people, in the right way, at the right time, to develop the best solutions. Beyond the administrative aspects of the program, she also takes care of the trainees themselves. As Dr. Schwartz says, "Brenda has incredible people skills and is attuned to the needs and desires of the fellows. She can sense if a fellow is in trouble, requires more attention, or is having an academic problem. She makes me aware of these problems without betraying the confidence of the fellows. In essence she helps me be a much better training coordinator and mentor. This is not a task that is found in her job description. She just does it because she really cares about her job and about the trainees in the program." And as Ms. Scariff herself reports, "I like working with the trainees and I find my job to be interesting and always challenging and rewarding. Sharon and Al have been good to me and are always there for me when I need them. I work with lots of interesting people and learn new things all the time."

In 2007, the Department showed its appreciation for Ms. Scariff's contributions, nominating her successfully for one of the first Mailman Staff Excellence awards, and that great appreciation continues to this day.

BRIEF MENTIONS: CROI



At the 17th annual Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) Professor Elaine Abrams delivered a plenary lecture, "Putting the 'C' in MTCT: Saving Kids."

Epidemiology doctoral student Michael Marco introduced Dr. Lynda Dee for the inaugural Martin Delaney Memorial Lecture. Dr. Dee's talk was entitled, "Community Involvement in AIDS Research: Past, Present, and Future."

FEATURED ARTICLES



*Lead investigator
Bruce Link, PhD, Pro-
fessor of Epidemiol-
ogy*

Outpatient Care for Individuals with Severe Mental Illnesses Reduces Crime

Mandatory outpatient treatment for New Yorkers with severe mental illness leads to a drop in violent criminal behavior, according to a study lead by Bruce Link, PhD. The study was published this month in the journal *Psychiatric Services*. The study is the first to fully assess the merits of Kendra's Law, enacted in 1999, which mandates outpatient care for New Yorkers with psychotic disorders and other mental illnesses. According to the researchers, previously violent individuals who underwent mandatory outpatient treatment were four times less likely to perpetrate serious violence after undergoing treatment.

Jo C. Phelan, Marilyn Sinkewicz, Dorothy M. Castille, Steven Huz, and Bruce G. Link, **Effectiveness and Outcomes of Assisted Outpatient Treatment in New York State**, *Psychiatr Serv*, Feb 2010; 61: 137 - 143.

Combined Drug Therapy to Treat TB and HIV Significantly Improves Survival

Initiating antiretroviral therapy (ART) during tuberculosis therapy significantly reduced mortality rates by 56 percent in a randomized clinical trial of 642 patients co-infected with HIV and tuberculosis. The study, which provides further impetus for the integration of TB and HIV services, lays to rest the controversy on whether co-infected patients should initiate ART during or after TB treatment. Findings are published in the February 25th issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

N Engl J Med. 2010 Feb 25;362(8):697-706. **Timing of initiation of antiretroviral drugs during tuberculosis therapy.** Abdool Karim SS, Naidoo K, Grobler A, Padayatchi N, Baxter C, Gray A, Gengiah T, Nair G, Bamber S, Singh A, Khan M, Pienaar J, El-Sadr W, Friedland G, Abdool Karim Q.



Senior authors Salim Abdool Karim MD, PhD, Professor of Clinical Epidemiology, and Quarraisha Abdool Karim, PhD, Associate Professor of Clinical Epidemiology

**Save
the
Date**

**Epi Social: Honoring Bill Friedewald
Friday, March 19 2:00—4:00
Hess Commons**

MPH PROFILES: SECOND YEAR EPI GLOBAL TRACK STUDENTS

The Global Health Track (GHT) is an interdisciplinary program open to applicants of any of the School's six academic departments. The track addresses the needs of students interested in both the theory and the practice of global health, and who are committed to becoming practitioners within their areas of primary public health interest. Epidemiology students in the GHT gain an orientation to epidemiologic applications within global health settings, including a six-month overseas practicum. They must also fulfill all of the course requirements for a Master of Public Health degree in Epidemiology.



Emily Smergel worked as a Peace Corps Volunteer in West Africa, serving as a high school level science teacher in Ghana. She also worked as an undergraduate intern at the Center for Immigrant Health (CIH) at the NYU School of Medicine, where she assisted with

research and public health outreach programs in the surrounding communities and local hospitals. Emily did her practicum with Columbia University's Dominican Exchange Program (Santiago Program) in Dominican Republic. She worked on a study investigating smoking habits and attitudes of pregnant women in Santiago.



Amy Huber has worked for two years with the Peace Corps where she educated the Swaziland community of Phonjwane in HIV mitigation and prevention. As an undergraduate at Miami University in Oxford, OH, Ms. Huber served as president of the American Medical Student Association.

Ms. Huber plans to continue working in the HIV field in Africa after completing her degree. Amy worked at the Aurum Institute for Health Research in South Africa for her practicum, on a large observational cohort study to estimate HIV incidence.



Tsega Gebreyesus has worked with Save the Children and UNICEF in Ethiopia. She has also volunteered with various organizations in Uganda, Egypt and Bolivia. These international experiences continue to inspire Ms. Gebreyesus to investigate cultural influences on health care

delivery and ways to bridge the gap between practitioners and recipients. For her six months Global Health Track practicum Tsega worked with the Population Council in Cairo, Egypt on scaling up interventions and secondary analysis of birth spacing data.

Michelle Cohen interned at the State of Illinois Department of Public Health in the Perinatal HIV Prevention Program and worked at the AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition. She participated in a study exchange program at University of Stellenbosch in Stellenbosch, South Africa focusing on public health problems with a large emphasis on HIV/AIDS. Michelle did her practicum with INMENZA –(Investigaciones Medicas en Salud) in Lima & Iquitos, Peru on chemoprophylaxis for HIV prevention.



Anna Barry-Jester has worked as a documentary photographer for three years, focusing on public health and environmental issues in Latin America. Recent documentary subjects include chronic kidney failure among sugar cane workers in Nicaragua and worker run factory cooperatives in Argentina.



Her current research interest is on effective use of media for local education and awareness in public health campaigns. Ms. Barry-Jester did her practicum in India chronicling the challenges of health systems strengthening.