On June 28, the Supreme Court—by a 5-4 vote—largely let stand President Obama's Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA). The court’s ruling is considered by many to be the most significant in decades, and allows nearly all of the changes under the law to move forward, upholding the controversial individual mandate while limiting the Medicaid provision.

The ACA was passed by Congress in 2010, and calls for sweeping changes to the nation’s healthcare system. It was designed to bring health insurance to more than 30 million currently uninsured individuals and to help curb the soaring healthcare costs, thus bringing more equitable care to all Americans. Moments after the decision was handed down, UMD Newsdesk interviewed Maryland Center for Health Equity (M-CHE) Director Stephen Thomas about the ruling: "I think it is a great day to be an American. What this decision upheld is that health care is a right and that there is now going to be a commitment to promoting health and preventing disease."
Our previous system allowed millions of Americans to fall through the cracks; our safety net had many holes. Unfortunately many of those people falling through the cracks were blacks and Latinos and other minority groups, and that now will end,” he said. To view Dr. Thomas’ interview on CTV, Prince George’s Community Television visit http://www.healthequity.umd.edu/video.asp

Maryland has already committed to improving the health and healthcare of its residents, as evidenced this spring when Governor George O’Malley signed the Maryland Health Improvement and Disparities Reduction Act of 2012, a law based on the ACA and its provisions. Continued Thomas: “With this ruling upholding the Affordable Care Act, we can now move forward aggressively to close the gap on racial and ethnic minority health disparities. I am proud as a faculty member of the School of Public Health to be in a leading role to help the state implement this. As Marylanders, we can all be proud to be part of a national model that other states can emulate.” Maryland has made significant progress thus far in establishing its Health Benefit Exchange and planning for other facets of the implementation of the ACA in 2014.

Maryland Partners with U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps and Community

The M-CHE, the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Officers Foundation/Association (USPHS), the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, and the Community Ministry of Prince George’s County formed a unique partnership to focus on addressing racial and ethnic health disparities in Prince George’s County, MD. This service activity for the USPHS officers was part of their 2012 Training and Scientific Symposium, co-sponsored by the School of Public Health; the symposium took place on our campus.

On June 18, these partners came together for the inaugural Health Promotion Expo held at the Community Place Café in the First United Church in Hyattsville, MD. Four days per week, approximately 100 vulnerable or homeless individuals are served lunch at the Café, a program of Community Ministry of Prince George’s County. The Health Expo launch gave USPHS officers the opportunity to provide health and wellness services, including BMI and blood pressure screenings, health and nutrition education and consultations, medication reviews, diabetic foot health checks, and other health promotion and educational services to seniors, homeless, and low income residents in Prince George’s County.

The service partnership between the USPHS and the Community Ministry of Prince George’s County was initiated by Dr. Sandra Quinn, Senior Associate Director of M-CHE, Associate Dean for Public Health Initiatives, and Principal Investigator of the School of Public Health’s partnership in the Mid-Atlantic Public Health Training Center. As a planning committee member for the Symposium, she built upon the USPHS Corps’ commitment to local service and M-CHE’s already established relationship with the Community Ministry. This collaboration was a natural choice with the USPHS as part of their commitment to reach out to the Prince George’s County community and to contribute to the health needs of county residents.
Maryland and Wisconsin Partner to Train Health Disparities Researchers

In early June, researchers at the M-CHE partnered with the Collaborative Center for Health Equity (CCHE) and the Institute for Clinical and Translational Science Research at the University of Wisconsin to conduct the 3rd annual Health Equity Leadership Institute (HELI). HELI is an intensive, week-long “research boot-camp” designed to help developing investigators, particularly minority scholars, interested in health disparities and health equity research to become successful tenure-track academicians.

The M-CHE team of Drs. Stephen Thomas, Sandra Quinn, James Butler, Craig Fryer, and Mary Garza served as core faculty of the HELI, and joined with University of Wisconsin faculty to interact with the HELI scholars throughout the weeklong program. In addition to multiple presentations by the M-CHE team, interactions included small and large group discussions, mock study sections, and individual mentoring. HELI is built upon the framework used by the M-CHE team in their Summer Research Career Development Institute (SRCDI), funded by the National Institute for Minority Health and Health Disparities, NIH.

HELI scholars are chosen from a national pool of applicants. This year, among the 26 participants were scholars from multiple schools of public health including two from the University of Maryland, one from the University of South Carolina, one from Johns Hopkins, two from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and one from Georgia Southern University. Also included in this year's cohort of scholars was one of our own, M-CHE post-doc Natasha Brown.

“Strengthening the pipeline of under-represented minority scholars, and fostering their success as they begin their careers is what HELI is all about” said Dr. Quinn. “Yet we know from our experience at our SRCDI and HELI, one of the most critical ingredients for its success is that we create a safe environment in which scholars can share their experiences and find true support.”

In October, 2012, the M-CHE and CCHE teams will collaborate on their presentation at the American Public Health Association meeting in which they will share some of the evaluation data from its three-year history.
Building Trust Curricula Updates

This summer we completed all specific aims of our NIMHD-funded ARRA grant, National Bioethics Research Infrastructure Initiative: Building Trust between Minorities and Researchers. Building Trust, which was a $3.9M NIH Grand Opportunity grant, linked to our ongoing commitment to address the successful inclusion of racial and ethnic minorities in research including clinical trials. As the performance period of the grant approached its conclusion, we have been working hard to finish up our two educational programs, the community curriculum and researcher curriculum. We have finalized the presentation materials for both programs, and are currently finishing comprehensive facilitator guides for each.

In early June, Dr. Quinn led a session of the researcher curriculum with a select group of investigators from University of Wisconsin's the Institute for Clinical and Translational Science Research and the IRB on their campus, and on July 20, Drs. Quinn and Thomas returned to Wisconsin to present select portions of the community curriculum to the Lindsay Heights Community Research Council in Milwaukee.

We continue to receive requests for the trainings and look forward to a national roll out of the program. To accomplish this greater outreach we executed a contract with Interactive Knowledge, Inc. to develop an online adaptation of our researcher curriculum. With clients like the Smithsonian, Interactive Knowledge, Inc. is nationally recognized for creating websites that engage visitors with outstanding visual design and intuitive interfaces implementation of the best way to deliver a compelling experience using the most appropriate tools available. Together we are translating key messages from our curriculum to an online, interactive platform and will continue to issue updates on its development.

Finally, we will be working for some time to come on data analyses and preparation of publications. Look for a forthcoming article on recruitment strategies in Contemporary Clinical Trials (http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1551714412001723). Through our Building Trust grant, we are able to sponsor a theme issue of the American Journal of Public Health that focuses on the complex issues related to minority inclusion in research (see Call for Papers, Page 6). Our joint goal with the journal is to publish high quality articles that can make an ongoing contribution to the science and practice of enhancing minority inclusion in research.

However, as we approach the end of the ARRA grant performance period we also want to applaud the phenomenal work of a critical Building Trust staff member, Meleah Himber, our curriculum developer. Meleah has been an incredible asset to this effort, and her dedication, competence and passion for Building Trust truly has been a huge part of our success. We wish her well in her next position as she takes her tremendous skills to the development of new educational programs.

Meleah Himber

Once Building Trust is completely launched it will be an integral component of the M-CHE. Stay tuned for other announcements in future newsletters.
Team Highlights, Trainings, and Speaking Engagements

While many people view the summer as a time to take vacations, go to the beach, and enjoy a break from the hectic day-to-day pace of teaching and research, the M-CHE team uses the summer to take advantage of the break from the busy school year to participate in a variety of speaking, learning, and mentoring opportunities (and sneak in a vacation day or two). This summer has been exceptionally full of these events! Below are some of the highlights of our team members and the career development programs to which they were accepted:

Dr. James Butler was accepted to participate in the 12th Annual Summer Institute on Randomized Behavioral Clinical Trials. Organized and sponsored by the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the NIH, in collaboration with the NHLBI, the Institute provides participants with a thorough grounding in the conduct of randomized clinical trials (RCTs). During the two-week Institute, participants engaged in a variety of activities designed to enhance their abilities to plan, design and execute RCTs involving behavioral interventions.

Dr. Mary Garza was accepted to participate in the 30th Annual Graduate Summer Institute of Epidemiology and Biostatistics offered by the Departments of Epidemiology and Biostatistics of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The program offered courses on epidemiologic methods and the history and etiology of disease to help attendees develop their understanding of epidemiologic research, and will help Dr. Garza further develop her research program specializing in colorectal cancer.

Dr. Craig Fryer was invited to attend the 1st annual Youth and Young Adult Tobacco Use and Nicotine Dependence planning meeting at the University of Hawaii Cancer Center in Honolulu, Hawaii. The meeting organizers targeted early career investigators interested in culturally-tailored, community level interventions addressing racial and ethnic minority youth and young adults. Dr. Fryer presented his K01 research study design regarding adolescent nicotine dependence and engaged the group of tobacco experts in discussion regarding gaps in the current scientific literature. The goal of the planning meeting was to foster new collaborative efforts in the development of effective mechanisms to address tobacco-related health disparities.

Drs. Craig Fryer and Natasha Brown were accepted as attendees to this year’s Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s 6th Annual New Connections Symposium. The intense, 2-day Symposium aims to increase the visibility and enhance the skills set of early to mid-career researchers from historically underrepresented groups by creating a forum to network, share research ideas, and hear from senior researchers, mentors, and current and former New Connections grantees.

Dr. Natasha Brown was selected to participate in the Academy Health/Aetna Foundation Minority Scholars Program, held this year on June 22-26, which provides cost support for travel and registration for 15 scholars to attend their annual research meeting. The aim of the Minority Scholars Program is to provide professional development of underrepresented minorities in disparities and health services research.
Call for Papers: The Ethics of Human Subjects Research with Minority Populations

The American Journal of Public Health (AJPH) intends to publish a theme issue on the complex issues related to the ethical treatment of human research subjects with respect to under-represented, minority, and vulnerable populations. As part of the Bioethics Research Infrastructure Initiative: Building Trust between Minorities and Researchers grant, guest editors, Stephen B. Thomas, Sandra C. Quinn, and Nancy E. Kass are working with AJPH to produce this theme issue on the ethical engagement of minority participants in research.

The goal of this issue is to assemble a collection of papers that explores the factors that affect the inclusion of these populations in research and to identify innovative strategies, solutions, and policies to achieve ethical inclusion of these populations in research, including clinical trials. The focus is on health issues, in particular how the exclusion and exploitation of minority populations in research can contribute to health disparities, how policy changes have affected minority inclusion in research, and how clinical practices and medical decisions may be impacted by more inclusive research studies. Topical areas of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Novel strategies for the ethical engagement of underrepresented participants in research
- Impact of prominent cases of research abuse or controversy on researchers’ practices, community attitudes, and regulatory policy in the oversight of research
- Training and educational efforts designed to strengthen the capacity of investigators, research staff, and regulators to ethically engage minority communities in research
- Challenges of ethical engagement of minority populations in cutting edge research including issues related to broad consent for genetic research among other topics
- Implications of cultural, social, community, and political factors on willingness to participate in research and autonomous decision making about research
- Consideration of social impacts of research on minority communities
- Implications of the ethical duty to include and/or engage minority participants in research

All types of manuscripts will be considered and will undergo the peer review process by the AJPH editors and peer referees as defined by AJPH policy. Submission of a manuscript for consideration in this theme issue does not guarantee publication. Manuscripts will be due to the Journal by October 12, 2012 and can be submitted at http://editorialmanager.com/ajph. Article guidelines and submission instructions are available at http://ajph.aphapublications.org.
Upcoming Events and Presentations

Please visit our website for additional details on our presentation titles and times for these upcoming events.

8th International Conference on Bioethics Education: Contents, Methods, Trends, September 2-5, 2012, Tiberias, Israel
- The Dynamics of the Informed Consent Encounter: The Confluence of Race, Class, and Power in Clinical Trials Recruitment, presented by Stephen Thomas and Sandra Quinn
- Toward a Paradigm of Openness: Implications for Bioethics Education for Researchers, presented by Sandra Quinn and Stephen Thomas


2012 APHA Annual Meeting and Exposition, October 27-31, 2012, Moscone Convention Center, San Francisco, CA

Bioethics in the News

University of Texas Will Review Gas Study After Conflict Questions Raised (The New York Times, July 24, 2012). There have been several developments following the disclosure of a substantial unstated financial relationship between Charles Groat, who supervised a University of Texas Energy Institute study of environmental impacts of gas drilling, and a drilling company.

U.S. medical research endangered (The Baltimore Sun, July 9, 2012). Unless Congress acts, America may lose its leadership in biomedical science.

The future of human subjects research regulation (Harvard Law Today, July 2012). Leading experts in the fields of law, science and medicine gathered at HLS May 18 and 19 to discuss the future of human subjects research regulation.

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/05/opinion/guatemalans-used-in-experiments-deserve-compensation.html

Some patients fear speaking up will upset their doctors (amednews,Posted May 23, 2012). They worry that asking questions would affect the quality of care negatively.
http://www.ama-assn.org/amednews/2012/05/21/prsd0523.htm

Discontent with consent (Nature Biotechnology, June 7, 2012). A new type of patient consent promises to galvanize how personal genomic and medical data are shared in open research environments.
http://www.nature.com/nbt/journal/v30/n6/full/nbt.2270.html?WT.ec_id=NBT-201206

FDA rebukes Advocate Health Care (The Chicago Tribune, June 16, 2012). Feds say state’s largest health system failed to get ER patients’ consent for drug study.