MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

Earlier this year, we submitted a grant proposal to the NIMHD to establish the UMD Center of Excellence, *Mobilizing A Community Engaged Research Infrastructure to Reduce Cardiometabolic Risk Among Health Disparity Populations* (MONARCH) If funded, the MONARCH Center will create a culturally sensitive, transdisciplinary research environment focused on reducing cardiometabolic risk among health disparity populations. These risk factors, including hypertension, type 2 diabetes, dyslipidemia, obesity, and abdominal adiposity (high-waist circumference), disproportionately impact many racial and ethnic groups, and disparities in these conditions are evident in the US and Maryland. In Maryland, African Americans are 1.5 times more likely to be obese, and over 30% more likely to have diagnosed diabetes than non-Hispanic whites. Latinos between 18 and 44 were 13% more likely to be obese, and 41% more likely to have diagnosed diabetes than non-Hispanic whites. A solid body of evidence indicates that individuals with
cardiometabolic risk factors benefit from interventions designed to reduce their risk, including losing weight, increasing physical activity, taking flu vaccinations, and getting appropriate mental health care. However, the most successful interventions require a community engaged, multi-level, multi-disciplinary approach, which is what the MONARCH Center will create. We are committed to this course of work, regardless of the success of this proposal (which we think should definitely be funded!), and will pursue this line of research as our future course of action to reduce health disparities.

In the end, our proposal topped 600 pages, and we could not have put together such a comprehensive, detailed, and innovative approach without the help of our academic collaborators, the commitment and support of our health service provider and community partners, and the endorsement of local and national policy makers, as well as members of the UMD community. Thank you to everyone who collaborated with us during the process, and we hope to share the good news that we have been funded soon!

In late May, Stephen Thomas and Sandra Quinn attended the NIH workshop, *Racism/Discrimination: Impact on Minority Health and Health Disparities*. This invitation-only workshop was organized by the NIMHD and gathered a group of scholars from across the United States to present research related to these issues, followed by smaller group discussions on how to strengthen research on structural racism and discrimination, and equally important, translate its results into tangible interventions. Dr. Quinn reflected on the workshop, “It was a unique gathering of accomplished scholars in which we could delve deeply into these complex determinants of health disparities.”

Earlier in May, on the 4th, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan signed into law the UMD School of Public Health Center for Health Equity Workgroup on Health in All Policies. The law directs M-CHE to convene a workgroup that will make recommendations to state and local legislators to inform laws and policies that will promote health equity and have a positive impact on the life of Maryland’s residents. Read more>>>
RESEARCH NEWS

Breast Cancer Screening

African American women are more likely than other women to be diagnosed with breast cancer at a young age, to be diagnosed at a late stage, and to die from the disease, yet they may also have irregular screening and follow-up. In a new publication in Health Promotion Practice, lead author Susan Passmore, PhD (M-CHE Assistant Director and Project Director) reports on a qualitative research project designed to help better understand African American women’s decision making for breast cancer screening.

“Previous research on psychosocial factors influencing decisions to screen reveals barriers [including] fear, fatalistic perceptions of cancer, inaccurate perceptions of risk, and associations with stigma,” the authors report. This research, however, “indicates both positive and negative factors influencing decision making,” they continue. Passmore and colleagues found that the participants believe in the value of early detection and were motivated to screen in response to encouragement from health providers. However, the participants also indicated that they may delay or skip screening due to confusing messages from the health community, the perception that white women are the priority population for breast cancer, family roles that prohibit self-care and encourage secrecy, and fear of diagnosis. The article, Message Received: African American Women and Breast Cancer Screening, was first published March 23, 2017 online, and is available here.

Vaccine Disparities

The Vaccine disparities research team is hard at work on data analysis and preparation of manuscripts. With three articles out since December 2016, three under review, and more in process, the team is hard at work on dissemination of our results. The team had some team transitions in 2017. Don Musa, a long time collaborator at the University of Pittsburgh, retired in early winter. The team benefited from his experience with both qualitative and quantitative research. This summer, Ji An, who has been the team’s statistician for the past 2 years, will graduate from her doctoral program and move to the next step in her career path. “Ji has been a great asset to our team,” says Sandra Quinn. “We wish Don well in this new phase of his life and know for certain that Ji will make major contributions wherever her path takes her.” Three of Dr. Quinn’s doctoral students, Naheed Ahmed, Yuki Lama, and Jessica Gleason, have all begun work with the team on their own manuscripts from the team’s data. Sandra Quinn continues her collaboration with her joint PI, Dr. Broniatowski at George Washington University and Dr. Dredze at Johns Hopkins on their project, Supplementing Survey-Based Analyses of Group Vaccination Narratives and Behaviors Using Social Media. Working with students at all three institutions, including Yuki Lama, her research assistant and first year Maternal and Child Health doctoral student, Quinn, Broniatowski and Dredze are exploring the extent to which social media can help public health professionals understand public attitudes. Currently, Yuki, along with a partner at Hopkins, are working on a paper on disparities in HPV vaccine compared to the coverage of HPV in social media data.

On June 22, Dr. Quinn presented the results of her FDA funded research on Public Understanding of Medical Countermeasures at the Food and Drug Administration. This qualitative study, with collaborators Drs. Brooke Liu, Vicki Freimuth, and Michael Egnoto, along with Natalie Boonchaisri, a MPH student, also benefited from the opportunity to recruit participants in our HAIR network. The research team wants to acknowledge Shawnta Jackson’s support for data collection. Their new article is available here.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

2017 Mid-Maryland Mission of Mercy and Health Equity Festival

Planning is well underway for the second Mid-Maryland Mission of Mercy and Health Equity Festival (MOM&HEF), which will be held September 8 & 10, 2017, at the UMD Xfinity Center. At our 2014 MOM&HEF, we served about 1,000 patients with over $1M dollars in dental and health care services. This time, we hope we can treat even more patients! This year, we are happy to announce that all attendees, even those who are not able to receive dental care, will be admitted to the Health Equity Festival (HEF) portion of the event. The HEF will include more than 20 exhibitors providing free health care services and education including screenings, counseling, and information. We are still seeking volunteers and donors! Please visit our website for more information on the MOM&HEF and to volunteer or donate.

Susan Denison Mona Center Ribbon Cutting

We have a date for the opening of the Susan Denison Mona Center for Health & Wellness! October 3rd is the day set for the ribbon cutting. The Mona Center, a joint project among the SPH’s Maryland Center for Health Equity (M-CHE), Catholic Charities, and Doctor’s Community Hospital is currently under construction in Temple Hills, Maryland, but already provides some services to the community, including a mobile medical van and lunch service. When it fully opens, the Mona Center will house a medical clinic, a wellness center, a dental clinic, legal services, a community garden and teaching kitchen, and an array of programming to address job readiness, physical activity, nutrition literacy and access to healthy foods. The Center will “address a broad range of health disparities and improve quality of life for under-served Prince George’s County residents,” Stephen Thomas said.
We have much to celebrate in this issue of our newsletter, as several of our faculty, staff and students have reached new milestones in their careers.

First, we extend congratulations to the new Associate Professors with tenure in the Department of Behavioral and Community Health, M-CHE Associate Directors Craig Fryer and James Butler, III! “This is fabulous news,” said Sandra Quinn, “and recognition of the contributions they have made to the field of health disparities and health equity, to tobacco research, to M-CHE, to the department, the SPH and the university.” In his reaction to the news, Dr. Fryer said “I am both elated and humbled by the achievement of this professional milestone. I appreciate the support from my department, the M-CHE, the SPH, and the University with this recognition of my contributions to the field of public health and my maturation as a scholar activist. I look forward to the evolution of our collective work to achieve health equity.” Also congratulations to Dylan Roby, Marian Moser Jones, Sacoby Wilson, Paul Turner and Shannon Jette, who were also promoted.

We also acknowledge and salute Susan Passmore, who has been promoted to assistant director of M-CHE. She continues in her role as project director for M-CHE, but will now also assume a greater leadership role in the center.

Two of our students, Norah Aljohani and John Hart, graduated this spring with their PhDs after successful-ly defending their dissertations earlier in the semester. Congratulations to Norah and John!

Finally, M-CHE student worker Taylor Rogers has begun her summer fellowship in Tanzania. Thanks to a research award from the University of Nebraska College of Public Health's Cancer Epidemiology in Special Populations program, Rogers, a master of public health student in the health equity track, is spending the summer conducting research on cervical cancer disparities in Tanzania. To learn more about her work, click here.

**TRAINING & EDUCATION**

Want to learn more about Culturally Aware Mentoring? Many mentors are not equipped to effectively address cultural diversity matters with mentees. Yet “all across the academic career stages, science is losing talent. We’re losing people who come from historically underrepresented backgrounds,” states Sandra Crouse Quinn, in the first of a two video
series from the National Resource Mentoring Network. In these videos, Quinn and Angela Byars-Winston, PhD (University of Wisconsin), provide knowledge and skills for mentors to improve their ability to address diversity matters with mentees from historically underrepresented backgrounds. The videos, produced by iBiology, highlight the development of a training that focuses explicitly on helping mentors to more effectively mentor young scholars from under-represented minority groups. The videos focus on the new Culturally Aware Mentoring Training, which was developed and pilot tested by a team that includes Drs. Byars-Winston, Quinn, Thomas, McGee (Northwestern), Saetermoe (Cal State Northridge), Womack (Northwestern), Butz (Wisconsin), and Emily Utzerath (Wisconsin). To view the videos, click here.

In other NRMN news, Drs. Quinn and Thomas continue as co-investigators in the National Research Mentor Network (NRMN), which provides effective, evidence-based mentoring and coaching opportunities to increase the number of under-represented minority scholars in the biomedical research workforce. On May 5, Dr. Quinn presented on NRMN’s activities at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine Fellowship Roundtable.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Mid-Maryland Mission of Mercy & Health Equity Festival, UMD Xfinity Center, September 8 & 10, 2017

IN THE NEWS

• Medical Studies Still Exclude People of Color (By Alexandra Ossola, June 2, Tonic)

• States with more black people have less generous welfare benefits, study finds (By Tracy Jan, June 6, The Washington Post)

• Internment, America’s Great Mistake, (By George Takei, April 28, The New York Times Opinion Pages)

• Leaving Segregated Neighborhoods Lowers Blacks’ Blood Pressure, (Rob Sein, Heard on All Things Considered, May 15, NPR)