



CENTRE FOR
Urban Health
INITIATIVES



Spring Newsletter 09

Notable News

With the change of seasons comes the fruits of planted seeds for new opportunities and collaborations in population health research. We are thrilled to announce a new Research Interest Group, *Exploring Policy Pathways for Improved and More Equitable Health and Health Care* under the leadership of Mark Stabile, Director of the School of Public Policy and Governance at the University of Toronto. Mark has pulled together an impressive team of researchers representing disciplines of economics, law, political science, medicine, sociology and health. We look forward to supporting this new research program with new health policy research teams and projects that make linkages with policy-makers. Stay tuned to our website for more information to be posted soon.

I hope you will take some time to read this new edition of Notable News. This issue will give you a glimpse of the many accomplishments of our relatively new Research Interest Groups (RIGs). We provide updates on a few of our seed grant projects, profile the research of some of the students involved with the RIGs, highlight the Health Studies research program at University of Toronto and provide reports on our Spring symposiums.

CUHI is pleased to say that our three current RIGs have attracted new interdisciplinary research teams through our seed grant program. The Chronic Disease Prevention and Management RIG has now expanded its research teams and student projects addressing prevention and management of diabetes, heart disease, cancer and COPD. Common themes include health literacy, built environment and ethnicity and health.

This year, the Youth Sexual Health RIG plans to build on new and emerging research in adolescent sexual health with a special focus on populations who share a disproportionate burden of disease and/or increased barriers to accessing sexual health resources. This includes Aboriginal youth, racialized youth, youth living with disabilities and others. The youth RIG also strengthens its partnership with the Gendering Adolescent AIDS Prevention (GAAP) by engaging students in RIG research and events.

The RIG welcomes Jessica Yee, CUHI's 2009-2010 Community Intern, who, at the young age of 23, is the founder and Director of the Native Youth Sexual Health Network and has been recognized as the 2009 YWCA Young Woman of Distinction. CUHI also extends its congratulations to everyone involved in *Sexpress: The Toronto Teen Survey Report Launch*, which presented the results of a survey of 1,216 diverse youth aged 13 – 18+ addressing their sexual health needs. There has been widespread uptake of results by media at local and national levels.

The Environmental Health Justice RIG continues to attract a wide variety of stakeholders interested in social inequality and environmental health justice. There are four CUHI funded projects underway and three new projects that have received recent CIHR and SSHRC funding. The RIG *Conversational Cafes* and other sponsored seminars have proven to be innovative approaches to knowledge exchange and networking. Future projects and proposal development will build on fruitful alliances already developed with Cities Centre and the Centre for Environment at the University of Toronto as well as with community partners.

The Centre for Urban Health Initiatives continues to attract and engage students from a variety of disciplines. Graduate and undergraduate students are provided research training and mentoring opportunities through funded seed grants, fellowships, conference scholarships and student symposiums. We will continue to support the Health Studies program at University College by providing students with hands-on research experiences. The launch of the "Tommy Douglas Fund for Health Studies" is at a speaking event featuring Ralph Nader on September 24, 2009 at Hart House Great Hall. Support the Health Studies program by buying tickets through UofTtix.ca.

Further updates of our centre's work can be viewed on our website (www.cuhi.utoronto.ca). Here you will see our exciting line up of speakers for CUHI sponsored knowledge exchange forums as they are confirmed. If you are interested in being involved in our centre's work and current research interest groups, please let us know.

Brenda Ross, Director of Research
Alyssa Cloth, Centre Coordinator (Acting)

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Research Interest Groups in Action...

An Update from the *Environmental Health Justice in the City* RIG

The *Environmental Health Justice in the City* Research Interest Group (RIG), led by co-directors Blake Poland (Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto) and Cheryl Teelucksingh (Sociology Department, Ryerson University), has had a productive and exciting first year. Academics across disciplines, policy-makers, and community stakeholders have expressed significant interest in the RIG's focus on social inequality and environmental health justice.

The RIG's seminar series have included: Geoffrey Edwards (Geomatics, Laval University); Lake Sagaris (Living City); Izumi Sakamoto (Social Work, University of Toronto); and Jeffery Masuda (Centre for Population Health Promotion Research, University of British Columbia & Canadian Network for Environmental Health and Social Equity). We are grateful to the speakers for their stimulating presentations and for attracting researchers, students, policy-makers and NGOs interested in environmental health justice.

Over the past several months, RIG members have been preparing grant proposals, publications, and conference papers. Congratulations to Jim Frankish, Jeffrey Masuda, Cheryl Teelucksingh, Alexis Crabtree, Blake Poland, and Rick Eagan on being awarded a CIHR Catalyst Grant entitled, *SUCCEED: Strengthening Urban Communities' Capacity to Promote Environmental Health Equity Through Dialogue-Centred Research*. We have also been awarded a SSHRC Environment Strategic Research Grant and a SSHRC Development Initiative Grant. Two peer-reviewed publications have been accepted and are forthcoming. In addition, there have also been a number of presentations and workshops delivered by RIG members.

To date, our RIG has been awarded three CUHI seed grants. Jeffrey Masuda, Cheryl Teelucksingh, Rick Eagan and Blake Poland were awarded a seed grant for their proposal, *"Toward a Community-based Participatory Research Partnership for Environmental Health Justice in Parkdale, Toronto: A Capacity Assessment and Pilot Study"*. This study uses photovoice methods to document environmental justice issues and to develop environmental health justice indicators grounded in the experiences and insights of residents. Geoffrey Edwards and Marie Louise Bourbeau were awarded a seed grant for their proposal, *"Arts-Enabled Approaches to Popular Education on Global Warming"*. This study focuses on the development of interactive, embodied, arts-enabled methods for engaging practitioners and members of the public in urban climate justice issues. Finally, Blake Poland, Francisco Cavalcante Jr., Cheryl Teelucksingh, Daniel Schugurensky, and Renate Motschig-Pitrik were awarded a CUHI seed grant for their proposal, *"Building Community Resilience: Mapping the Terrain and Refining the Practice"*. This proposal tests a promising new community resilience development methodology.

We would like to thank the RIG's research advisory group, which held its first meeting on December 10, 2008, and to interested parties who attended an information meeting on June 16, 2009 for their advice on the direction of research and potentially new seed grant projects. The RIG is grateful to Nadia Formigoni, Shannon Lane, Paul Hadian, and Ciann Wilson for their research assistance.

To get involved and for more information please contact either Blake Poland at (blake.poland@utoronto.ca) or Cheryl Teelucksingh at (teeluck@ryerson.ca) or check out our developing website: www.EHJiC.ca.

Forum on Links between Pollution and Poverty

On March 26th, the Centre for Urban Health Initiatives, Cities Centre, and the Centre for the Environment sponsored a forum on the 'Links between Pollution and Poverty in Toronto Neighbourhoods.



The goal of this forum was to bring together academics, policy and community members to engage in dialogue and actions addressing poverty and pollution. Fe de Leon (Researcher, Canadian Environmental Law Association) was joined by panelists Loren Vanderlinden and Rich Whate (Toronto Public Health, Environmental Protection Office), Lina Cino (Toronto Environmental Alliance), and moderator Frank Cunningham (Cities Centre, University of Toronto).

The need for this dialogue was identified in response to the Fall 2008 PollutionWatch report (a collaborative between the Canadian Environmental Law Association and Environmental Defense) which mapped air release data of toxic pollutants and criteria air contaminants from the National Pollutant Release Inventory (2005) and income data from Statistics Canada (2001 Census). Results showed that 17 neighbourhoods in Toronto had a poverty rate at or higher than the national average as well as high releases of combined toxic air pollutants and air contaminants. Toronto Public Health panelists responded to the report by sharing municipal policy initiatives such as the Environmental Reporting and Disclosure Program. Lina, the Toxics Campaigner with Toronto Environmental Alliance, spoke of advocacy and community responses, such as the Good Neighbour Campaign which aims to galvanize a community and negotiate directly with industrial polluters to reduce toxic emissions. This event was widely attended and was followed by a reception at Hart House's Gallery Grill.

An Update from the *Socio-Ecological Strategies for Chronic Disease Prevention & Management RIG*

The *Chronic Disease Prevention and Management* Research Interest Group, led by Wendy Young, Enza Gucciardi, and Margareth Zanchetta, has had a successful year filled with many exciting accomplishments.

Over the winter, Wendy Young and her team were awarded a CUHI seed grant to establish links with community organizations, engage a group of ethnic seniors, translate health literacy instruments, and develop a proposal for a larger research project surrounding culturally sensitive health literacy programs for older adults. Together with Anne Sclater, the 2008 Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada Kilborn Memorial Visiting Professor to the West China University of Medical Sciences in Chengdu, the team is working with CUHI on a CIHR Team Grant: China-Canada Collaborative Teams in Health Research.

Margareth Zanchetta, Christiane Fontaine, and Christine Maheu received a Canadian Council on Learning Grant to implement knowledge exchange workshops on *Critical Awareness of Health Literacy among French Speaking Health and Social Services Workers*. The team held workshops in Sudbury, Toronto, and Ottawa.

Congratulations to Enza Gucciardi and Brenda Ross who were awarded a CIHR Meetings, Planning and Dissemination Grant to disseminate the research results of a CUHI funded project entitled, "*Diabetes Education Programs for Women of Colour: Linking Evidence with Best Practice*". While preliminary findings were presented by poster at Ryerson's Faculty and Community Services Research Day, a knowledge exchange workshop is being planned for the Spring of 2010.

Many new research teams have emerged under our RIG and have successful CUHI seed grant funding. Dina Brooks, Marla Beauchamp, Roger Goldstein, and Kylie Hill have been awarded a CUHI seed grant for their proposal, "*Optimizing Outcomes Gained from Pulmonary Rehabilitation: The Development of a Community-based Maintenance Exercise Program for Older Adults with COPD*". Another team composed of Christopher Blanchard and Daniel Rainham have received seed grant funds for "*ENVironmental Correlates Of caRdiac rEhabilitation (ENCORE)*". Christine Maheu and Gilbert Gallaher have been awarded a CUHI seed grant for their proposal, "*Understanding and Improving Breast Cancer Self-Management through Social Networks and Infrastructures within Portuguese-Speaking Communities in Toronto: A Pilot Study*".

Wendy Young attended the Heart and Stroke Foundation Built Environment Researcher Interaction Workshop in Calgary on May 10, 2009. Young is one of 18 Canadian women appointed to the Heart Truth Leadership Council, an initiative of the Heart and Stroke Foundation. The council is made up of Canadian women who are leaders in the fields of health, sport, politics, media, research and scholarship, government, industry, business, philanthropy and community involvement. Wendy Young has also been invited to become a member of the Evidence on Tap: Expedited Knowledge Synthesis merit review committee. The program is a two-year pilot that accelerates all phases of synthesis production – application, review, research, knowledge translation – to offer timely, accessible and relevant evidence to ministry-level decision makers. This funding opportunity will support teams of researchers to conduct expedited knowledge syntheses on topics identified by decision makers in the health ministries of three participating pilot provinces: New Brunswick, Ontario and Saskatchewan.

Leadership Council: Front row (Left-> right) Vicki Gabereau, Wendy Young, Kathryn Laurin, Beth Abramson, Lisa Meeches, Veena Rawat Back row (left-> right) Sally Brown, Diane Jones Konihowski, Bobbe Wood, Kay Stanley



At our RIG's spring planning meeting, we received several outstanding suggestions from our CUHI graduate students. They brought forth ideas of an interprovincial graduate symposium and learning opportunities from RIG faculty members across Canada. We are now exploring a pilot 'RIG' Fireside Chat on chronic disease prevention and management, developed and guided by a group of graduate students through the use of an innovative virtual networking venue. Please visit the CHNET-Works! website for more information: <http://www.chnet-works.ca/>. Keep an eye out for additional information from our RIG students about this innovative pilot project as plans progress.

To be kept informed of RIG updates, please join our email list (listserv), through the CUHI web site: <http://www.utoronto.ca/cuhi/membership.html>

Environmental Health Justice Conversational Café

This Spring, the Environmental Health Justice RIG hosted their first series of conversational cafés. A conversational café is a forum for public conversation that brings together people who are interested in a dialogue on a given topic. The first one was held on March 12th on *Green Jobs and the 'Green Economy': Coming Soon or Pie in the Sky?* We are grateful for Chalo Barueta from Banyon Tree Community Initiatives who was the guest of the forum. Another conversational café was held on April 15th at Mangiacake Café on *Caring for our Environment: Do Small Actions Really Make a Difference* with Stuart Chan from the Sustainability Office at the University of Toronto as the guest and Blake Poland as the moderator. Conversational cafés are being planned for upcoming months.

An Update from the *Urban Youth & the Determinants of Sexual Health RIG*

As the *Urban Youth & Determinants of Sexual Health Research Interest Group (RIG)* enters its second year under Sarah Flicker's leadership, we are pleased to update you on the exciting progress we have made.

This academic year, we funded two new seed grants (for full descriptions, please visit www.cuhi.utoronto.ca). "*Teens Resisting Urban Trans/Homophobia (TRUTH): Examining Trans/Homophobia Among Diverse Toronto Youth*," led by Robb Travers at Wilfrid Laurier University and Susan Flynn at Planned Parenthood of Toronto, is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of sexually diverse youth through collaborative community-based and policy-relevant research.

"*Healthy Sexualities, School-based Sex Education and Canadian Youth*," led by Maria Gurevich at Ryerson University, examines the ways in which school-based sex education influence sexual health attitudes and behaviours of youth.

Several of our initiatives have garnered external funding – Taking Action (funded by CIHR) leveraged additional resources from Ontario HIV Treatment Network. The Toronto Teen Survey received CIHR Knowledge Transfer and Exchange funds for dissemination.

The RIG is grateful for the strong turnout at our speaker series, including seminars by: Elizabeth Saewyc (UBC, McCreary Centre), Alex McKay (Sex Information and Education Council of Canada), Sarah Flicker (Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University) and Maria Gurevich (Department of Psychology, Ryerson University). We will continue to bring exciting speakers in the coming year.

We are also proud to announce that Kristin McIlroy (undergraduate student) and Adrian Guta (graduate student) received CUHI student awards in recognition of their contribution to RIG research. We are also delighted to announce that Roxana Salehi (graduate student) received a CIHR doctoral fellowship in HIV CBR for her continuing efforts to investigate HIV prevention among newcomer youth.

We have been so pleased with the success of The Toronto Teen Survey Sexpress Report Launch which was held on June 2nd at the YMCA. The results of this study have been widely disseminated through the mass media, and we are looking forward to further analyses of population specific data that will be released in 2009-2010. To learn more about the Toronto Teen Survey, please visit: <http://torontoteensurvey.ca/>

The RIG is currently planning for 2009/2010, and welcomes suggestions for speakers and new interdisciplinary research teams interested in youth sexual health. To be kept informed of RIG activities, please join our email list (listserv), through the CUHI web site: <http://www.utoronto.ca/cuhi/membership.html>

Youth Sexual Health Student Symposium

On March 26th, CUHI's Youth Sexual Health RIG, along with the Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies, the LaMarsh Centre for Research on Violence and Conflict Resolution, the York Institute for Health Research, the Centre for Urban Schooling, Gendering Adolescent AIDS Prevention, Toronto Public Health, Planned Parenthood Toronto and the University of Toronto Sexual Education and Peer Counseling Centre hosted its first student symposium on "Urban Youth and the Determinants of Sexual Health". The goal of the symposium was to bring together students to share their research and artistic pieces and to engage and network with other students, academics, policy makers, and community members involved or interested in youth sexual health. Fourteen students, across twelve disciplines from six academic institutions presented their work (either research or and arts-based) to a diverse audience of over 100 registrants.

Awards were presented for the best oral, poster and artistic submissions. Sarah Switzer (M.A. Candidate, Dept. of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, OISE/UT) received the award for best oral presentation for her presentation entitled *Unpacking the Visual: Youth Narratives on HIV/AIDS*, Rosemarie



Mangiardi, (PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta) received an honourable mention for her presentation entitled *Adolescents Taking Exploratory Action to Transform their Sexual Health Education*. Undergraduate Matt Eldridge (Department of Psychology, York University) was recognized for his poster presentation entitled *Connectedness and Condom Use: The Effects a Sense of Community has on Sexual Health* and Bryn A. Lydlow (Director, Canadian Artists Against Sexual Assault & Undergraduate, Ontario College of Arts & Design) was honoured for her artistic submission for her video entitled, *They Were, S/He Was, I Was, I Will Be*. More information on these projects and can be found at www.cuhi.utoronto.ca.

The symposium concluded with a presentation by Dr. Michelle Fine, (Distinguished Professor of Social Psychology, Women's Studies and Urban Education at the Graduate Center, City of New York) entitled, "Reflecting on the Wet and Dry Moments in Youth Participatory Action Research".

We received extremely positive feedback from symposium delegates. The event was a great success and CUHI looks forward to supporting the second annual student symposium in the coming academic year.



CUHI Seed Grant Updates...

Performed Ethnography, HIV/AIDS & Aboriginal Youth



Youth Warriors, June Larkin, (University of Toronto), Christine Smillie, Jean-Paul Restoule, Tara Goldstein (OISE/UT), Tiffany Nelson, (Native Child & Family Services), Charlene Avalos,

Liz Briggs (Native Child & Family Services), Sarah Flicker (York University) and Claudia Mitchell (McGill University)

We are working with a dynamic group of young people from Native Child and Family Services to create innovative knowledge dissemination strategies of research on HIV/AIDS and Aboriginal youth. HIV/AIDS is reaching epidemic proportions in some Aboriginal (First Nations, Metis and Inuit) communities in Canada. As young people are one of the most vulnerable groups to HIV infection, stopping the spread of HIV among Aboriginal communities must start with youth. While research can provide valuable information on HIV risk and prevention, this does not always transfer to HIV education. In addition, there is much evidence that conventional forms of education are not effective with youth. This seed project aims to find better ways of engaging youth in research and education on HIV/AIDS.

Performed ethnography is a way of disseminating research findings through performance. We hired Herbie Barnes, an Aboriginal actor, to work with youth to create short scripts using data from a study conducted by the Gendering Adolescent AIDS Prevention (GAAP) project. Perhaps best known for his roles in the film, *Dance Me Outside* and the series *Due South* and *the Rez*, Herbie was a draw for youth who attended the information and recruitment sessions held at three Toronto locations.

Herbie developed an innovative method that involved the youth reading quotations from the study and brainstorming images that emerged from the data. Based on these ideas, the group produced short scripts for an educational video. A workshop was held at the University of Toronto Media Commons was held in May to provide the *Youth Warriors* with training in film production and editing. The youth have expressed their creative talent documenting the project through video, photography, collage making and making props for the scripts and developing a *Youth Warrior* logo. The video will include an evaluation tool to use with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal audiences which will inform a larger research proposal.

Using Community Health Mapping Tools to Reduce Health Disparities

Health disparities are largely determined by social and economic conditions. Isolated census maps and neighbourhood profiles do not capture the racialization of poverty, the social exclusion due to discrimination, or the strengths and capacities of communities. Many community health organizations have rich data from client databases, community-based research projects and needs assessments that can be used to understand and address the multiple factors that contribute to health disparities. However, these organizations rarely have access to mapping tools such as geographic information systems (GIS) to maximize the use of different datasets.

With the support of a CUHI Seed Grant, researchers from Access Alliance Multicultural Health & Community Services and Ryerson University worked with five community health centres (CHCs) to develop and utilize community health mapping tools for service planning and advocacy aimed at reducing local health disparities. Participating CHCs included Access Alliance, Black Creek, Four Villages, Regent Park, and Women's Health in Women's Hands.

With guidance from faculty and students from the Department of Geography at Ryerson University, CHC representatives created maps for their catchment areas. These maps helped to answer questions such as: Where do the majority of our refugee clients live? Which ethno-racial groups are concentrated in low income neighbourhoods? Are there neighbourhood clusters of people with access barriers who are missed from services and outreach strategies? Access Alliance for example, mapped data showing age and language to plan outreach for pilot-testing a health education program aimed at newcomer youth. Other maps were used to engage community partners in planning outreach to Tamil, Mandarin, Urdu and Bengali-speaking communities as part of a migration and diabetes research project. Participants also tested a tool for participatory mapping that could enable community residents to submit and discuss observations that relate to the places they live, and the health impacts they experience.

The project revealed community information needs, capacity and constraints. Through user testing, the participants identified ways that the GIS tools could be made easier to use. This information is being used in a graduate student's research paper. The participating CHCs also joined a larger group of health organizations and academic researchers to develop a research proposal for interactive map-based decision support for reducing health disparities. Future research collaboration will be enhanced by the lessons learned and experience gained from this project.

For more information on this project, please contact Dianne Patychuk at stepstoequity@gmail.com or visit <http://tinyurl.com/czrfpp>.

Introducing 2009-2010 CUHI RIG Students

Jennifer Boyko is currently in her third year of a PhD in Health Research Methodology in the Department of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics at McMaster University. The focus of her research is deliberative dialogues as a strategy for knowledge translation in the health systems management and policy-making arena. She is currently exploring the literature to develop a model that describes deliberative dialogues as a knowledge translation/exchange strategy. She is also planning a qualitative research project to explore the key features and intended outcomes of successful dialogue. A case study approach is being used in the development and evaluation of a deliberative dialogue on the topic of chronic pain management in Canada by working with stakeholders, policymakers and researchers to improve understanding of the use of deliberative dialogues and address system level issues related to chronic disease prevention and management.

Paul Gorczynski is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Faculty of Physical Education and Health, University of Toronto. Under the supervision of Guy Faulkner, and support of a CUHI seed grant, Paul studied the *'Obesogenic' Environment of CAMH Service Users*. Paul interviewed clients at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Queen Street Site investigating aspects of community safety and how the hospital environment is affecting client dietary and physical activity behaviours. Findings show that clients are concerned about the numerous environmental elements that promote increased consumption of unhealthy food products and decreased opportunities for physical activity. Additionally, some clients indicated that they experience stigma in the Queen West neighbourhood and that such experiences dictate where they purchase their food products and participate in physical activities. Paul presented preliminary findings at the Eastern Canada Sport and Exercise Psychology Symposium hosted by York University in early March. An abstract of results will soon be posted on the CUHI website.

Adrian Guta is a PhD Candidate from the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto and has been awarded a CUHI graduate fellowship. His research explores ethical decision making in HIV community-based research, towards improving it as a mechanism for community engagement. Adrian continues to play a critical role in the coordination of the Youth Sexual Health RIGs knowledge exchange and training initiatives.

Nora MacKendrick is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Toronto. She was awarded a graduate fellowship for her research on *Managing Family-level Environmental Health: The Role of Precautionary Consumption*.

Subha Ramanathan is presently a PhD Candidate in the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto and a recent recipient of a CUHI graduate student fellowship. Subha's research focuses on physical activity participation among South Asian girls in Toronto and specifically explores relationships between social networks and broad cultural influences on decisions around physical activity. Using a mixed-method approach, Subha examines the ways that South Asian girls perceive their social networks and cultural forces to either work together to support physical activity or be at odds with each other and undermine participation in physical activity.

CUHI Recognizes the Contributions of Undergraduate Students

Graduating student Kristin McIlroy (Health Studies/ Biology, University of Toronto) was recognized for her continued voluntary work with the knowledge dissemination strategy of the Toronto Teen Survey, a collaborative project between Planned Parenthood Toronto and a number of Youth Sexual Health RIG Research Associates. Kristin has been working with CUHI in various capacities for the last two years and she will be sorely missed as she moves on.

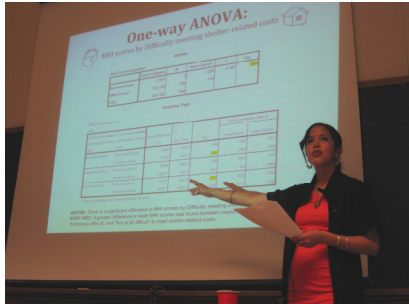
First year student Helen Huang (University of Toronto) was recognized for her innovative artistic contributions to CUHI's knowledge exchange activities, such as the recent student symposium on Youth Sexual Health and forum on Pollution and Poverty. Helen will continue to support the work of the Youth Sexual Health RIG by assisting on the publication *Empower: Youth Arts and Activism, An HIV/AIDS Arts Activism Manual for Youth... by Youth*.

Community Research Internship Accomplishments

Yogeeta Sharma, a Community Dietitian from Women's Health in Women's Hands Community Health Centre is CUHI's 2008/2009 Community Research Intern. Yogeeta has received ethics approval for her project, *"Exploring Equity and Syndemics in Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2) Management of Non-Status Women of African, Caribbean, Latin American and South Asian Descent Living in the Greater Toronto Area and Surrounding Municipalities"*. Her mentors are Margareth Zanchetta and Enza Gucciardi. The Community Internship has provided learning opportunities at the University of Toronto, Ryerson and at other local scientific meetings. Yogeeta has been very successful in networking within community stakeholders and is a leader in local food security networks. Congratulations, Yogeeta!

CUHI Supports Health Studies Program at University College, University of Toronto

Over the 2008-2009 academic year, CUHI supported 4th year Health Studies students in their independent research studies by providing teaching stipends for Jason Ramsey, a post-doctoral fellow with the Centre for Research on Inner City Health, to mentor and supervise students. On April 9th, these students participated in the First Annual Health Studies Research Symposium. The Health Studies students were grateful for John Clarke from the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, who as the Plenary Speaker presented his work on *Community Responses to Poverty and Economic Crises*.



CUHI extends our congratulations to the following Health Studies students for their academic accomplishments:

- **Lucia Fiestas Navarrete:** The Effects of Housing Affordability on Mental Health
- **Tomas Krakowski:** Improving Community Mental Health with Social Capital & Stress Reduction Leisure
- **Mallory Switzer :** Neighbourhood Health Priorities: a comparison study of four low-income Toronto communities
- **Marjorie McAllister:** Housing as a Criminal Diversion Strategy for Individuals with Severe Mental Illness

We would like to thank Paul Hamel, Health Studies Program Director, for his guidance and leadership and for organizing an engaging and successful symposium.

Practicum in Health Studies Course - Reflections by Course Instructor, Reena Tandon

The aim of this 4th year course was for students to develop a critical perspective for community based participatory research with an emphasis on marginalization and health disparities. The course included in-class seminars, student-led class discussions and concurrent placements in nine different health-research projects in research institutes, community agencies and university departments. This integrated course model provided an opportunity for students at advanced levels in their undergraduate degrees, to integrate their theoretical understandings with hands-on experience. An underlying aim of the course was to encourage students to think about the next step in their careers within the health field.

In the three years of teaching this course, this integrated approach of classroom teaching with practicum placements has proven successful. The feedback from the placement partners has been overwhelmingly positive, attested by their acceptance of students year after year. Some students have been hired by the projects in summer and work study positions. Here are some reflections from this years' students:

"A new understanding of health research – becoming more than a researcher – to become an action agent that facilitates change from the inside out, from within."

"Gained knowledge and skills on how to develop programs and evaluate programs or services (both quantitatively and qualitatively) ... the knowledge and skills (from practicum and course) will enable me to work effectively in the health care field".

"Enhanced my skills working in an interdisciplinary group settingLooking at issues from different perspectives."

"...The means we do research must empower rather than take; build capacity within communities and not at their expense."

I would like to thank Brenda Ross, Alexis Kane Speer and Prof. Dennis Magill for assisting in finding student placements and for providing funding for students to attend the "[Determinants of Our Health: Toronto in a Global Village](#)" symposium held in October 2008. The opportunity to participate in this landmark public health event in Toronto was much appreciated by all students.

Health Studies Students' Cuba Experience

Over reading week, 13 Health Studies students traveled to Cuba where they visited healthcare institutions and spoke to government officials and healthcare professionals to gain a better understanding of Cuba's universal health care system.

Here is what they wrote on their learnings. "The Cuban healthcare systems' success is derived from its placement within a larger context of an entirely socialized governing structure. Such a structure ensures that the social determinants of health are adequately addressed. There is little social and/or economic inequality and everyone has adequate access to food, housing, and education. These social factors can often have a larger influence on health outcomes than the healthcare system and medicine itself. Cuba does not limit its perspective of health solely to healthcare, and instead, emphasizes the social determinants of health, which, in turn, reduces healthcare system costs. We believe that if Canada wants to lessen the financial strain on the healthcare system, it should focus its attention on addressing the broader structural issues that lead people to require medical attention in the first place."

This interactive travel opportunity enabled the students to understand Cuban health determinants learned from their textbooks with new complexities, taking into account living conditions and discussing personal anecdotes with Cuban patients. The students' exploration of the Cuban healthcare system opened up many new avenues of inquiry, challenged former assumptions, and provoked questions and answers that will reveal themselves throughout the rest of their careers as students, activists and professionals.

For more information on the Health Studies Program at the University of Toronto, please visit:

<http://www.uc.utoronto.ca/content/view/174/1013/>

Connecting Researchers for Change: The Toronto Community Based Research Network

In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of community-based research (CBR) projects conducted in the Toronto area. Many of these are led by community agencies and actively involve community members as partners. There appears to be a growing recognition of the value of CBR as an alternative to 'top-down', academic-driven approaches. In light of this growing interest, the Toronto Community-Based Research Network (TCBRN) was established in 2007 as a vehicle to connect community practitioners, academics, funders and community members in the GTA who are or have been involved in CBR.

To determine the initial direction and priorities for the Network, three open forums were organized in 2007. Interest in these forums was unexpectedly high, each drawing dozens of participants including researchers, students and community members. The forums were held in community settings and each featured a presentation about a successful local CBR project. Participants also had opportunities to provide input into the Network's mission and mandate. Based on participants' input, the TCBRN established its founding mission:

To increase and sustain the capacity of local health and social service organizations and academic partners in the GTA to conduct effective Community-Based Participatory Research leading to evidence-based action and policy change.

The TCBRN pursues this mission by offering support for networking, collaboration, learning and action among community and academic researchers.

Over the last two years, the TCBRN has been guided by a volunteer Steering Committee with representatives from Access Alliance, Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, Ontario Women's Health Network, Planned Parenthood Toronto, St. Joseph's Health Centre, Street Health and the Wellesley Institute. The network has no core funding; however, last year, the University Health Network funded an environmental scan of community-based research activities within the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) catchment area (www.torontocentrallhin.on.ca – reports + publications). A small grant was also obtained to produce a webcast video about engaging community members as research partners (see below). CUHI recently provided funds to support further CBR resource development and knowledge exchange. Steering Committee members are working with the Wellesley Institute and the Centre for CBR in Waterloo to explore the establishment of a community-based ethics review board for research projects. Finally, a simple website was created to facilitate networking: more than 200 individuals have registered to date. Each of these projects speaks to issues and ideas that were initially identified at the public forums.

For Us, By Us: Peer Research 101 is a video, produced for the web, that features the voices of community members who have worked on local CBR projects. They discuss how and why they became involved in research, what they did as peer researchers, and some of the benefits and challenges of this research approach. The 30-minute video is being used by local agencies as a tool for education and training. It was produced by Lisa Campbell with support from the CBR Working Group of the Health and Learning Knowledge Centre of the Canadian Council on Learning.

A public forum took place May 22 to highlight key findings from the environmental scan and will feature a screening of *For Us, By Us: Peer Research 101*. For further details or to view the video online, please visit the TCBRN website: <http://www.torontocbr.ca>. To learn more about the TCBRN or joining the Steering Committee, please send an email to: info@torontocbr.ca.

Spring 2009 Peer Reviewers

CUHI would like to thank our Research Advisory Committee and External Reviewers who contributed their time and efforts to our 2009 RIG Spring Seed Grant Competition. Without thoughtful and careful reviewers, we would not have an effective peer review process.

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