

Issue 2, Fall 2003

A word from the Chairman...

Welcome to the second edition of our Department's newsletter - *Focus*.

As I mentioned in our first newsletter, the goal of *Focus* is to provide our colleagues and friends with an informal look at important projects, events and issues relevant to public health and to highlight our most important asset: our faculty and staff.

In this issue of *Focus*, you will learn more about one of our newest endeavors, which was launched this past spring, *The Women's Health Research Group*. I am very grateful to Tracy Nichols, PhD, for spearheading this important effort that is still in its formative phase but has significance for future research in the Department.

Focus also introduces our readers to an overview of our public health training programs, including a description of our newest one, the Pfizer Fellowship in Health Services Research. This will draw upon the expertise of faculty from the Department of Public Health at Weill Medical College of Cornell University, from the Outcomes Research Group in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Institute, from the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University, and from the Outcomes Research Group at Pfizer, Inc.

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feature story —

Spotlight on Women's Health Research Group

Spring 2003 saw the launch of a new research initiative in the Department, the Women's Health Research Group (WHRG). Under the leadership of Dr. Tracy Nichols, a member of the Division of Prevention and Health Behavior, the WHRG is a multidisciplinary group in the Department of Public Health whose goals are to conduct and promote research in women's health issues with the objective of improving the healthcare and health status of all women.

The group also includes senior members of the faculty: Drs. Madelon Finkel, Linda Gerber and Phyllis Supino, as well as new faculty, Drs. Amanda Birnbaum and Heather Gold. Drs. Stephen Lyman and Lisa Mandl from the Hospital for Special Surgery, and Dr. Holly Atkinson and Kawai Oneda, MPH, round out the current group.

Members of the group bring to the field of women's health a broad range of expertise in health services and behavioral sciences, including epidemiology and biostatistics, medicine, education, addiction research,

health services research and disease prevention/health promotion. They offer research experience in cardiovascular disease, hypertension, substance abuse, cancer, diabetes, contraception, HIV, autoimmune disease, arthritis, obesity, aging, osteoporosis, orthopedics, pregnancy, menopausal transition and depression.

"I'm delighted that this group has been established and that so much progress has been made already. It will be a major area of opportunity for our faculty in the future."

-- Dr. Mushlin

The Women's Research Health Group has two related aims. The first is to collaborate with and provide methodological research expertise to clinicians and clinical researchers interested in furthering women's health issues. As part of this aim, WHRG will design, conduct and evaluate preventive programs and clinical interventions geared to women. Research areas will include design of clinical trials and epidemiological studies, disease burden and risk estimates using large datasets, design and evaluation of prevention and health programs, drug efficiency and effectiveness analyses, patient satisfaction surveys, quality of life studies, study of racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities, and study of effectiveness of educational interventions.



Amanda Birnbaum, Stephen Lyman
and Tracy Nichols

see *Women*, page 3

Training Tomorrow's Leaders

The Department of Public Health is the proud sponsor of three postgraduate programs. While the primary site of training is the New York Weill Cornell Medical Center, its affiliates, the New York-Presbyterian Hospital's Westchester Division, the Hospital for Special Surgery, Rockefeller University, and Memorial Sloan Kettering also serve as training sites. These institutions provide a rich training experience in clinical and administrative perspectives, as well as research.

Residency in General Preventive Medicine – A Tradition of Excellence

The Residency in General Preventive Medicine was first accredited by the ACGME in May 1975 and has maintained a high standard of excellence for the past 28 years. Following the most recent review by the ACGME's Residency Review Committee for Preventive Medicine, our program was recognized with a five-year full accreditation without any citations. The goal of this two-year training program is to produce leaders in modern public health, either to pursue careers in academia or in health care policy positions. While the academic and research/practicum years are integrated, areas of emphasis include outcomes and clinical effectiveness research, health services and policy research, epidemiology, clinical, preventive and community medicine, medical care organization, and health economics. The academic component consists of completing course work leading to the Master's in Public Health degree (MPH) at Columbia University's School of Public Health. One of the advantages of the program is its diversity and flexibility, since the training program can be structured according to the interests and career goals of the participants. The practicum requirements consist of continuing academic experiences, didactic sessions and exposure to a variety of field experiences. Residents also assume responsibility for an ongoing research or demonstration project and are encouraged to sharpen their clinical skills in primary care settings.

Graduates of the program have assumed leadership positions in public health and

the health care industry. Upon completion of the program, the two most recent fellows, Drs. Kamran Khan and Gonzalo Bearman, quickly secured positions in academic medicine. Both conducted several research projects that subsequently were submitted and accepted for publication in peer reviewed journals. Kamran is now holding a position as a clinician-scientist at the University of Toronto, where he will continue to conduct research on the relationship between globalization and the epidemiology of infectious diseases, an effort he began here, and will use emerging global and geographic surveillance systems as a means to monitor the relationship between mass migration of immigrant populations and infectious diseases. Gonzalo's new position is as Assistant Professor of Medicine and Associate Hospital Epidemiologist at the Medical College of Virginia, a job he thoroughly enjoys, along with his new house and his new car. In his final narrative, Gonzalo stated, "The quality of the training at Weill/Cornell is second to none."

New to the program is Elizabeth "Li" Nilson, M.D., who began the program in July. She came to us after having worked as a chief resident in Medicine, Assistant Director of Graduate Medical Education, and Director of Quality Assurance at NYU Downtown Hospital. Li is excited about receiving further academic training, with a special interest in outcomes research, quality assurance issues, and delivering clinical care. She sees the residency training as an opportunity to get formal academic training and practical experience in research methodology, evaluation and outcomes and hopes to pursue an academic career in graduate medical education, research and delivering quality health care services.

Residency in Addiction Psychiatry – Innovators in Physician Education

The Residency in Addiction Psychiatry has an interesting and long-standing history. It is the oldest program of its kind in this country. It was developed by faculty

in our Department as a Fellowship in 1978, a time when the nation was experiencing a great surge in drug abuse. From a historical perspective, little had been taught in the curricula of medical schools and residency programs on how to address alcohol and drug abuse in medical settings. This, despite the large number of drug and alcohol patients in the emergency room and on every medical and surgical service. The Fellowship was created to develop a cadre of well-trained experts who could treat a wide variety of patients and train the next generation of medical students and house officers. Furthermore, the goal was to develop research and policy initiatives in this field. The Program has served as a model for other local, national and international programs.

Today, the Residency is a fully ACGME accredited one-year training. There is also a subspecialty board in Addiction Psychiatry. It consists of didactic teaching, clinical supervision, Substance Abuse Rounds and an introduction to administrative responsibilities. Residents may elect to work on research projects and demonstration activities. The training settings are quite diverse and include the Midtown Center for Treatment and Research, The Adolescent Development Program, Payne Whitney Inpatient Psychiatric Service, the Adult Services Clinic, The Employee Assistance Program Consortium, the Employee Development Center and the Westchester Division of New York-Presbyterian Hospital.



Jennifer Cooper, M.D., is our current resident in Addiction Psychiatry. She began her training with great enthusiasm and

has already plunged into clinical work at our affiliated programs. She plans to engage in a research project and expects to present and publish her results. Her goals are to pursue an academic career in addiction psychiatry and eventually develop a practice where she can utilize the skills and knowledge gleaned from this training.

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Team Spirit In Action

On June 24, 2003, the Weill Cornell Medical College, in collaboration with the New York-Presbyterian Hospital and Columbia University, hosted the National Conference on Leadership, Culture, and Patient Safety at the Willard Intercontinental Hotel in Washington, D.C. The event was made possible by a contract from the Agency for Healthcare Research Quality. A diverse group of expert speakers discussed the importance of patient safety, with a particular focus on the foundation of the learning organization approach. They emphasized how leaders conceptualize and catalyze multidisciplinary solutions to enhance patient safety.

The professional quality and caliber of the event was recognized by all who attended. A team of four staff members from the Department of Public Health at Cornell worked behind-the-scenes to organize the event, which turned out to

be a huge success. Over 100 guests attended the conference and the teamwork displayed



by Joylene Rowe, Administrative Coordinator; Clarissa Crabtree, Logistics Coordinator; Kawai Oneda, Technical Coordinator; and Arlene Provder, Administrative Liaison (pictured above) was exemplary. When asked, *What do you think is most important in organizing a successful meeting?* Kawai and Arlene agreed that teamwork is vital to organizing a successful conference. While Clarissa responded, “attention to details makes

the difference between a good and an exceptional conference.” Joylene believes that the “communication of needs and wants” and a pre-determined “timeframe” of what is expected are important in coordinating a successful event.

Despite Murphy’s Law and the enormous amount of pre-conference work, the teams’ progress was not hindered. All agreed that “starting early was the key to success.” Clarissa also believes that “devising a planning schedule and timeframe that is reasonable and realistic would be helpful the next time around”. Arlene and Kawai agreed that delegating assignments to each team member and later “brainstorming ideas” in planning meetings is key. It is evident that this experience has provided the Department a great background for planning future national conferences and meetings of this size and greater. ❖

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Pfizer Research Fellowship in Health Services Research – Breaking New Ground

Members of our Outcomes and Effectiveness Research Division, with the support of Pfizer, Inc., established the Pfizer Research Fellowship in Health Services Research. We’re delighted to have undertaken this new initiative and collaborative effort to train fellows to assume leadership roles in the field, affect change in healthcare policy and do important outcomes research.

The fellowship consists of a two-year program with Master’s level coursework in health services research, combined with mentored research experiences. Fellows will have the opportunity to work with a broad array of faculty from the Department of Public Health, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center’s Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health, and the Outcomes Research group at Pfizer. Through participation with staff at

Pfizer’s headquarters in New York City, the fellowship will provide a better understanding of the corporation’s role and structure within healthcare. Mentoring will be provided jointly through the faculty at Weill Cornell’s Department of Public Health and the Outcomes Division of Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, utilizing the full resources of both institutions.



law, in addition to significant experience in finance management. ❖

The program recently welcomed Kamiar Khajavi, MD, JD, as the first fellow. Dr. Khajavi has a strong background in medicine and

“I intend to use the time and resources so generously afforded me to explore health policy and outcomes research, and work in these areas that will allow me to draw on both my legal and medical training.”
-- Kamiar

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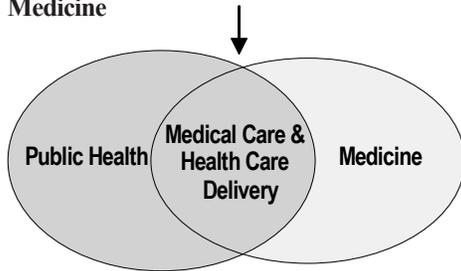
The second aim of WHRG is to promote the inclusion of women and women’s health issues in both research and policy initiatives. To achieve this goal, WHRG plans to provide special seminars and a lecture series for the discussion of critical issues in the field. It will assist in promoting the state-of-the-art research findings through a variety of channels, including scientific publications, policy statements, newsletters, press releases, lectures and presentation and media appearances.

Dr. Nichols and many of her colleagues have a long-standing interest in women’s health issues and see the creation of the WHRG as an opportunity to work with clinicians and collaborate not only with other Weill Medical Center faculty but ultimately other institutions, as well. Response to the WHRG has been extremely enthusiastic and they are delighted that the Iris Cantor Women’s Center will be one of their first collaborating partners. ❖

Internist at the Interface of Public Health and Medicine

When describing the role and mission of the Department of Public Health, we often begin with the phrase “the interface between public health and medicine.” In fact, many of our readers are likely to be familiar with the following diagram of that interface, as it has appeared in many of our slide presentations:

The Interface Between Public Health and Medicine



Nowhere is this interface more evident than in the daily work of our physician-scientists. Out of 20 physician faculty members, the Department of Public Health currently has 10 general internists, the majority of whom participate in clinical teaching and patient care activities at Cornell Internal Medicine Associates. CIMA is a group practice in the Department of Medicine, which serves as a teaching site for internal medicine interns and residents.

In an effort to explore how this “interface” plays out in the real world, *Focus* met with some of our physician-scientists for their observations and thoughts regarding how this patient care activity relates to other aspects of their academic work here at the medical center. *Focus* spoke with Juan Emilio Carrillo, MD, MPH, Associate Professor, Division of Community and Public Health Programs; Joseph J. Fins, MD, Associate Professor and Chief, Division of Medical Ethics, and Lisa M. Korn, MD, Assistant Professor, Division of Outcomes and Effectiveness Research.

Some common themes emerged. All the physicians:

- ✓ cherish the privilege of the doctor-patient relationship, in particular, the opportunity to serve the diverse group of patients, a cross section of the ethnic, cultural, and

economic diversity in New York City;

- ✓ value the opportunity to teach the public health perspectives;
- ✓ remarked on the interconnectedness of the issues and problems facing the individual patient, the general public and the larger healthcare system;
- ✓ believe that their clinical experience provides ideas and stimulation for their research.

Following are expanded descriptions of these comments.

Teaching the Public Health Perspectives

All three physicians considered their work with the CIMA residents as a unique opportunity to teach about the preventive and public health perspectives in clinical care. Of particular interest to Dr. Carrillo are the cross-cultural communication issues that confront the clinic staff, attending physicians and residents. A great majority of the CIMA patients come from a variety of cultural backgrounds such as Hispanic, African, Asian, and Eastern European. The patient population at CIMA also tends to have complicated medical problems. When one combines these with cultural diversity issues such as differing expectations, language barriers, physical plant signage problems, and less than optimal interpretive services, the residents can quickly become frustrated. Dr. Carrillo works to overcome these with residents by teaching a case study based cross-cultural healthcare curriculum and measuring the individual resident’s cultural competencies.

Dr. Korn also spoke of the rewarding aspects of teaching the interns and residents at CIMA and commented that she particularly enjoyed the role she plays in teaching clinical judgment and medical decision-making.

Privilege of Patient Care

The clinical activities of Drs. Carrillo, Korn and Fins represent a relatively small percentage of their overall workload. The

majority of their time is dedicated to an academic agenda encompassing research, teaching, and leadership activities. Nevertheless, the opportunity to continue to provide hands-on medical care to patients was cited as an opportunity, a privilege and an important component of their professional lives. Dr. Fins commented that “working at CIMA gives me the opportunity to continue to provide internal medicine care to patients and to serve a population often underserved elsewhere.” Dr. Korn also spoke of how she cherished the one-on-one relationship with a patient and educating patients to make informed decisions.



Dr. Korn and Dr. Fins

Interconnectedness of Patient Care and Healthcare Delivery/Policy

The final common theme endorses the work of our Department mentioned earlier – “the interface between public health and medicine.”

Dr. Korn told *Focus* that her early interest in medicine was driven by her view of medicine as an intellectually stimulating profession. Eventually, patient care generated additional interest in the broader public health, health policy and health care delivery arenas, as it became apparent that the issues facing the individual are also those facing the general public. Similarly, she recognized that health policy and the healthcare delivery system impact directly on the individual doctor and patient. Dr. Korn commented that she finds her current position, which allows her to combine individual patient care, with research and teaching in clinical epidemiology and

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healthcare delivery, to be ideal for her. Dr. Fins echoed a related sentiment by stating, "as a teacher/researcher, patient care provides me insight into the everyday problems of the individual, the general public and the larger healthcare system." Dr. Fins aptly sums this up with the following statement: "The unique thing about public health is the large number of practicing internists who are also involved in health services research. Practicing and teaching provides the Department a unique perspective on the health of the healthcare system. From our first-hand experience, we translate back to improve quality, ethical standards and reach out to diverse communities." ❖

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Our readers will also hear from several of our faculty, who are not only public health experts but also general internists, as they discuss how their work as practicing physicians interfaces with their teaching, research and other academic pursuits.

Finally, **Focus** highlights the value of teamwork from staff that helped to coordinate the very successful *National Leadership, Culture and Patient Safety Conference*, held this past June in Washington. I witnessed how their collaboration, organization and troubleshooting helped to ensure a successful and smooth functioning event.

All Public Health faculty and staff are invited to contact my offices with any comments and suggestions for upcoming issues, as we continue to share our work and ideas with one another, with the medical center leadership, as well as with our colleagues and friends. ❖



Alvin I. Mushlin, MD, ScM

And on a Personal Note.....

Congratulations

Best wishes to Dr. Madelon L. Finkel, Professor of Clinical Public Health, who has accepted an invitation from the Dean



of the School of Public Health, University of Sydney to spend six months in his department. She will be involved in teaching epidemiology and evidence-based

medicine to the medical and public health graduate students. The School has a large International Health program and Dr. Finkel will be their US healthcare expert. Additionally, Dr. Finkel will conduct research and has been invited to work with the Commonwealth Fund's Sydney office in areas of health services research, as well as meet with New Zealand health care policy experts. Dr. Finkel will be in Australia from January to June 2004.

Congratulations to General Preventive Medicine Resident Dr. Elizabeth Nilson and husband Adam Ostrow on the birth of their son Isaac in early September.

Picnic Update



A great time was had by all at the third annual Public Health picnic in late June at the Westchester campus and we thank all the volunteers who helped make it a success.

In Memoriam



Our deepest sympathies to the family of Ray Rodriguez on his untimely passing September 7th. Ray was a gifted social worker, a master of conflict resolution who had a genius for counseling and brilliant clinical work. Dr. Elizabeth Khuri, Medical Director of the Adolescent Development Program, where Ray worked for almost 30 years, spoke for staff and clients alike, "*We are stunned by the loss of this beautiful and inspiring man. Countless patients owe their recovery and their lives to him. He was well known at the medical center. His circle was the world and he is irreplaceable.*" ❖



New Faculty

Please join us in welcoming the following new faculty for the 2003-2004 academic year:

Rainu Kaushal, MD, MPH – Adjunct Assistant Professor of Public Health. As a board certified pediatrician and internist, Dr. Kaushal is a nationally recognized expert in the area of patient safety issues. She will use this expertise to develop research programs, in conjunction with the Hospital and NYPH System, which will broaden the research portfolio in patient safety and quality of care of the Division of Outcomes and Effectiveness Research and the Department. Dr. Kaushal received both her MD and MPH from Harvard University where she retains her primary faculty appointment.



Debra Quinn, MD, MPH – Assistant Professor of Public Health. A recent graduate of the Mailman School of Public Health, Dr. Quinn also received her MD from the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. Dr. Quinn is involved in several research projects in the Division of Outcomes & Effectiveness Research with an emphasis on those related to the New York Presbyterian Healthcare System. She continues to be active clinically as a hospitalist at the Columbia campus of NYPH.

Pablo Rodriguez del Pozo, MD, PhD, JD – Assistant Professor of Public Health. Dr. Rodriguez del Pozo is the first new faculty member recruited for WCMC-Qatar. Dr. Rodriguez del Pozo holds both a JD and MD from the Universidad Nacional in Cordoba, Argentina, and a PhD from the Universidad Carlos III in Madrid, Spain. A specialist in human rights and legal and forensic medicine, he will spend a part of each year in New York City, participating in the activities of the Department and the Division of Medical Ethics.



Fellows

Jennifer Cooper, MD – Fellow in Addiction Psychiatry. Dr. Cooper recently completed her residency in Psychiatry at NYPH. She is a graduate of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and is a past recipient of the Pfizer Career Directions Psychiatry Resident of the Year Award and the American Medical Association Physician's Recognition Award.

Kamiar Khajavi, MD, JD – Instructor in Public Health. Dr. Khajavi has been selected to be the first Pfizer Research Fellow in Health Services Research. He will be pursuing his MPH at the Mailman School of Public Health, conducting independent research, and participating in the educational and clinical activities of the Division of Outcomes & Effectiveness Research. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and the Columbia University School of Law, Dr. Khajavi recently completed his residency in the Department of Medicine at the New York-Presbyterian Hospital.

Elizabeth Nilson, MD – Resident in General Preventive Medicine. Dr. Nilson most recently was Associate Director of the Internal Medicine Residency and Director of the Department of Medicine's Quality Assurance Program at NYU Downtown Hospital. She will be attending the MPH program at the Mailman School of Public Health to obtain formal academic training and working with faculty in the Department for practical experiences in research methodology.

2003 – 2004 Public Health Seminar Schedule

Research / Academic Conference Series

Date:	Presenter / Topic:
October 21, 2003	J. Emilio Carrillo, M.D., MPH “Managed Care in a Medicaid Population”
November 18, 2003	Patricia Stone, Ph.D., MPH, RN “Organizational Climate and Patient Safety: An Example from the ICU Working Conditions Study”
December 16, 2003	T.B.D.
January 20, 2004	Phyllis August, M.D. “Prediction of Preeclampsia”
February 17, 2004	Nandita Mitra, Ph.D. ”Impact of Propensity Scores on Cost-Effective Analysis”
March 16, 2004	Rainu Kaushal, M.D., MPH “Patient Safety”
April 20, 2004	Mathea Falco, J.D. “Adolescent Drug Treatment Programs”
May 18, 2004	Linda Gerber, Ph.D. “Assessing Management of Hyperlipidemia: A Survey of Clinician Perceptions”
June 15, 2004	Phyllis Supino, EdD “The Epidemiology of Valvular Heart Diseases: Changing Patterns in Hospitalization, Invasive Interventions and Outcomes in New York State (1983-2000)”

Journal Club

Date:	Moderator:
October 28, 2003	Tracy Nichols, Ph.D. “Public Health & Women: Lessons from the Women’s Health Initiative”
November 25, 2003	Lisa Staiano-Coico, Ph.D. “Bioethics”
December 23, 2003	Phyllis August, M.D. “Treatment of Hypertension”
January 27, 2004	Kris Alpi, M.L.S., MPH “Academic Detailing to Spread Public Health Messages”
February 24, 2004	Amanda Birnbaum, Ph.D. “Intervening to Prevent Child Overweight & Obesity”
March 23, 2004	Lisa Korn, M.D., MPH “Metabolic Syndrome”
April 27, 2004	Jorge Kizer, M.D. “Demonstrating Equivalence in Clinical Trials”
May 25, 2004	Elizabeth Nilson, M.D. “Quality Issues in Graduate Medical Education”
June 22, 2004	T.B.D.

Combined WMC/MSKCC Outcomes Research Seminar Research In Progress (RIP)

Date:	Presenter / Topic:
October 13, 2003	Nathaniel Hupert, M.D., MPH & Bruce Schackman, Ph.D., Elena Elkin, Ph.D. “MDM Presentation”
October 27, 2003	Bruce Schackman, Ph.D. “HRSA”
November 3, 2003	Nathaniel Hupert, M.D., MPH - T.B.D.
November 17, 2003	Rainu Kaushal, M.D., MPH - T.B.D.
December 1, 2003	Deb Quinn, M.D., MPH - T.B.D.
December 15, 2003	Lisa Korn, M.D., MPH - T.B.D.

All events take place at 1:00PM in the 3rd Floor Kips Bay Conference room

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