



Department of Community Health Sciences Newsletter

Issue 1 • Fall 2008

Welcome from Department Chair Anne Pebley

Welcome to the first edition of the UCLA Department of Community Health Sciences Alumni Newsletter. Several months ago, we polled CHS Alums about whether they would be interested in a CHS Alumni newsletter and the resounding answer was "YES"! So here it is. This newsletter is intended to let you know what is going on in CHS, with other CHS alumni, and with CHS students who are just going on the job market for the first time. I hope that we have put together a useful and interesting source of information for you, but we would also like to improve its content and user-friendliness. So send me your comments and suggestions at chsalumni@ph.ucla.edu.

Alumni Spotlight: Nancy Wongvipat Kalev



Nancy Wongvipat Kalev, who got her MPH from CHS in 1998, says that she got interested in public health almost by accident. As an undergraduate at UCLA, she was recruited by CHS doctoral student Poppy Insixiengmay to conduct

general health and HIV education and health screenings in the Thai community. That taste of public health work and a couple of classes she took as an undergrad spurred her to apply to the MPH program in CHS.

Kalev still wasn't sure what she was getting into the day she arrived for orientation, but she got lucky again. During orientation, Dr. Marjorie Kagawa-Singer described her interest in women's and minority health. Kalev approached her afterwards and Kagawa-Singer hired her as a work-study student for two years. She worked on a nation-wide study of women's health which used qualitative methods and was very applied. Work-

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ing on the project with Kagawa-Singer gave Kalev a much more solid feel for public health.

For her internship, Kalev worked at the Long Beach Department of Health, which led to a job with the Department after graduation. Unfortunately, the Department offered health insurance only to career track employees (this situation has since changed), so she decided to look for other positions. She took an offer from AIDS Project LA (APLA) as Manager of Prevention Programs. Kalev says the position allowed her to apply everything she learned during her MPH training.

She developed four major programs and grew the staff from 2 to 12 people, over a three year period. APLA was a terrific place to work. She and her colleagues were very successful in obtaining funding for their programs and people at APLA were passionate about their work. However, after four years, the programs Kalev developed were running well on their own. Although it was difficult to leave APLA, Kalev felt it was time to move on.

Through a co-worker, Kalev heard about a position at Health Net, one of the major health insurance providers in California. She joined Health Net as a Health Education Manager and has since moved up to the position of Director, Health Education and Cultural and Linguistic Services. Her

responsibilities are wide ranging and include the design and administration of health education programs and cultural and linguistic services (C&L) for Medi-Cal and Healthy Families clients, and planning and administration of statewide C&L mandated requirements for commercial and Medicare insurance plans. She is also responsible for designing policies, establishing standards, and ensuring compliance with a number of regulations and contractual and accreditation requirements.

How does working in the for-profit sector compare to her previous non-profit experience? It is definitely quite different. Kalev says that in non-profits like APLA, you have more direct contact with the population you serve, and the staff is focused on making a difference. Colleagues are generally strongly committed to their work and innovation is easier. On the other hand, in the for-profit sector, there is no direct contact with the client population and the focus is on both making a profit and improving health and access. "You are working within a business model, so you can't wear your advocate hat all the time. Instead, you have to find a balance between providing a good service and making a solid business case for the potential revenue effects of the service," Kalev explains. Many times, funding for new or existing programs in a for-profit depends on the company's earnings in the previous quarter; and when earnings are uncertain, as in the current economic climate, it is difficult to plan ahead.

Fortunately, most of the programs that Kalev works on are driven by regulatory and contractual requirements, which are not completely affected by the company's financial performance since maintaining regulatory and contractual compliance are priority areas.

Will Kalev spend the rest of her career in the managed care world? She doesn't know. A great advantage of jobs in the for-profit sector is better pay and benefits compared to non-profits. This is very important to Kalev because she has a young family and is trying to balance work and family life. Health Net has also been very supportive of Kalev's work-family balance – giving her maternity leave two years in a row and allowing her to telecommute. But she often misses the hands-on work of non-profits. In the next few years, Kalev may explore positions in the foundation world or at non-profit health plans.

What advice does Kalev have for current MPH students? "Students should acquire as many marketable skills as possible before graduating. Learning these skills is much more difficult while you are working," she says. These skills include both qualitative and quantitative research methods, such as SPSS, SAS, and questionnaire design and administration. Kalev also suggests that students get as much work or volunteer experience as possible. "The internship itself is just not enough," she says. "Experience with several different organizations in which you develop contacts, experience, and skills is invaluable when you set out to look for a full time job."

Big Changes in the CHS Faculty

The past few academic years have brought important changes in the CHS faculty. Two faculty members retired, one moved on, and we have five new faculty members.

Departures

Drs. Virginia Li and Emil Berkanovic have retired after long careers at UCLA. Li, a specialist in health education and promotion, has collaborated in recent years with Dr. Roger Detels on several reproductive health projects in Yunnan Province in China. She also has a second career as a writer and has published *From One Root Many Flowers: A Century of Family Life in China and America* (Prometheus Books, 2003). Berkanovic's speciality is social and psychological determinants of health behavior. He was a provocative and iconoclastic instructor, researcher, and public health practitioner for many years prior to retirement.

Dr. Susan Sorenson left UCLA in 2006 to take a position as Professor of Social Policy and Criminology at the University of Pennsylvania. She continues her research and teaching in the areas of measuring sensitive topics, fatal violence in the U.S., and violence in relationships.

Arrivals

Dr. Gilbert Gee (PhD, Johns Hopkins, 1998) joined the CHS faculty in 2007. He was previously at the University of Michigan School of Public Health. Gee's research and teaching focuses on: (1) the consequences of ethnicity and discrimination by race/ethnicity on health behavior and health outcomes and (2) the effects of physical environmental factors on health.

Dr. May Wang (DrPH, UC Berkeley, 1993) came to UCLA this past summer from the University of California, Berkeley School of Public Health. Wang is a specialist in public health nutrition who has worked in the United States and Asia. Her research interests include ethnic differences in body composition and bone development in children, the effects of social and physical context on nutrition, and immigrant nutrition.

Dr. Chandra Ford (PhD, UNC Chapel Hill, 2005) joined the CHS faculty this past summer, after completing a two year post-doctoral fellowship as part of the W K. Kellogg Health Scholars Program at Columbia University. Ford's research focuses on the role of discrimination in health disparities, HIV, and contextual effects on health.

Dr. Jessica Gipson (PhD. Johns Hopkins, 2006) has accepted the offer of a faculty position from CHS and is expected to join CHS in October 2008. Gipson is currently completing the Charlotte Ellertson Social Science Postdoctoral Fellowship in Abortion and Reproductive Health at Johns Hopkins. Her research focuses on reproductive health and couple dynamics and she is currently working on projects in Malawi, the Philippines, and Bangladesh.

Dr. Ondine von Ehrenstein (PhD, University of Munich and University of Bielefeld, 2000) has accepted the offer of a faculty position from CHS and is expected to join CHS in January 2009. Von Ehrenstein is currently an Investigator at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. Much of her research focuses on social and epidemiological determinants of health and global health. For example, in a recent series of papers, she has examined the devastating consequences of arsenic contamination of ground wells in West Bengal.

Best wishes to Drs. Li, Berkanovic, and Sorenson! And a warm welcome to Drs. Gee, Wang, Ford, Gipson, and von Ehrenstein.

Faculty Profile

Chandra L. Ford, PhD has just joined the CHS faculty, after post-doctoral fellowships at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Health Scholar Program at Columbia University.

Long before she even knew the term "public health," Ford was strongly committed to public health practice. "I must have been a nerdy kid," she explains. "I was more interested in distributing fire safety books, developing community bicycle safety and exercise programs, learning CPR, and promoting nutrition education than in playing with other kids! On the other hand, this abiding interest in health tells me that public health is exactly where I belong."



Ford's undergraduate training in nutrition almost led to a career in clinical nutrition, but her exposure to a few faculty members trained in public health made her change course and focus on social and community factors affecting health. She went on to get an MPH in Behavioral and Community Health Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh. After studying efforts to improve health care access, she got a second masters degree in library and information science focusing on health information to try to understand how African Americans access information about HIV and other preventable diseases. As Ford says, "Information is the currency of the present. If a particular community is missing out on the flow of information, it will have myriad consequences for this community and for society as a whole."

Ford completed her doctoral training at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill in Health Behavior and Health Education with a minor in Epidemiology. Much of her work focused on the consequences of racism and perceived racism on health care utilization and health outcomes. Her dissertation was entitled "Perceived Racism, Neighborhood Characteristics and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Testing Behavior among African American Community Residents and Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Clinic Pa-

tients.” In addition to training in the social determinants of health, racial and ethnic stratification, and the consequences of racism and a strong concern about social justice, Ford acquired one other strong interest at UNC: basketball. She jokes that no one is allowed to get a North Carolina driver’s license without declaring an allegiance to a basketball team. The basketball habit has stuck with her ever since and she is looking forward to cheering on UCLA Women’s Basketball and the Los Angeles Sparks.

Through post-docs at UNC and Columbia, Ford further developed her interests in the social determinants of health. These fellowships, and particularly the Kellogg Health Scholars Program, exposed her to new ways of thinking and new ideas, but also to colleagues who have worked for many decades on the central public health issues she is interested in.

Ford’s current research is in two primary areas. The first is the consequences of race and racism for health behavior, health outcomes, and access to health care. Much of her previous research has focused on African Americans, but living and working in Los Angeles will give her the opportunity to broaden her work to include other racial and ethnic groups. A second area of interest is sexual minority health, in particular the intersection of sex, gender, race/ethnicity and health. Studies of HIV are particularly useful in understanding these relationships. For example, what are the social and health consequences of being black and homosexual? Is there extra stress that African American gay men feel because of perceived responsibilities to African American women and communities? What is the role of the church in conversations within the African American community about sexual identity?

Ford is an excellent addition to the CHS faculty and we are lucky to have attracted her to UCLA!

Faculty Awards and Honors

Dr. Carol Aneshensel received the Leo G. Reeder Award from the Medical Sociology section of the American Sociological Association for distinguished contributions to medical sociology. This award recognizes scholarly contributions, especially a body of work displaying an extended trajectory of productivity and encompassing theory and research. The Reeder Award also acknowledges teaching, mentoring, and training as well

as service to the medical sociology community broadly defined.



Dr. Carol Aneshensel receiving the Leo G. Reeder Award from Dr. Chloe Bird

Dr. Marion Taylor Baer will receive the 2008 Mary Egan Award from the American Public Health Association’s Food and Nutrition Section. This honor goes to those public health nutritionists who pioneer fresh approaches to public health nutrition, with a particular focus on maternal and child health.

Dr. Gilbert Gee received the “Best Paper of 2007 Award” from the Asian and Pacific Islander Caucus of the American Public Health Association. He also received an NIH Merit Award for his project “Multicultural Survey Methods Group.” Last, but not least, Dr. Gee and his colleague Dr. Devon Paynes-Sturges (US EPA) received the US Department of Environmental Protection’s Scientific and Technological Achievement Award this year for their two papers. These papers are Gee and Payne-Sturges (2008) “Environmental health disparities: A framework integrating psychosocial and environmental concepts,” *Environmental Health Perspectives* 112(17): 1645-1653, and Payne-Sturges and Gee (2006) “National environmental health measures for minority and low income populations,” *Environmental Research* 102(2): 154-171.

Dr. Michael Goldstein has just become the Chair of the UCLA Academic Senate after serving for a year as Chair-Elect. Together with the UCLA Administration, the Academic Senate governs UCLA through the principle known as “shared governance.”

Dr. Gail Harrison will receive the 2009 March of Dimes/APHA Agnes Higgins Award for Excellence

in Contributions to Maternal and Fetal Nutrition. The award will be presented at a joint meeting of the Food and Nutrition and Maternal and Child Health Sections of the American Public Health Association in Philadelphia, followed by a lecture and reception.

Dr. Anne Pebley has been appointed to head the UCLA California Center for Population Research (CCPR) one of the twelve national NIH-funded population research centers.

Snapshots: CHS Faculty Participation in Public Health

Technical Assistance in Senegal. Réseau Africain de l'Éducation pour la Santé (RAES) www.raes.sn is a four year old Senegalese nonprofit organization specializing in health communications. RAES has partnered with CHS faculty (Drs. Deborah Glik, Michael Prelip, and Don Morisky) over the last three years to enhance digital and innovative health communication in West Africa. CHS faculty have assisted in the development of a radio serial drama now in production funded by UNFPA and USAID and a digital communication training partnership with high school students funded by Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA). CHS faculty are currently seeking funding for partnership projects with PAH Nation to empower youth to produce digital media (i.e., videos) and Mobile Cause to enhance clinical care for patients using cell phones. Two MPH students, Phillip Massey and Bozena Morowsk, completed summer internships at RAES this past summer.

Food Policy: Dr. Gail Harrison is on the Board of Directors of California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA). CFPA is a statewide public policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious and affordable food. She also is a member of an Institute of Medicine committee which is charged with recommending revisions to the nutrition standards for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs.

New Center for Global and Immigrant Health

During the past three years, Drs. Gail Harrison (CHS) and Jrn Olsen (EPI) have headed up a new School of Public Health effort in the area of Global Health, through a NIH/Fogarty Center-

sponsored UCLA Training Program in Global Health. Recently the program has been designated the Center for Global and Immigrant Health. Dr. Gail Harrison directs the Center. Dr. Steve Wallace (CHS) is Associate Director for Immigrant Health and Dr. Haroutune Armenian (EPI) is Associate Director for Global Health. The Center offers a Certificate of Global Health upon the completion of specific global health coursework and training. In 2008, certificates were earned by students graduating with the MPH in CHS, MPH in Epidemiology, MSW in Social Work, MPP in Public Policy, and DDS in Dentistry.

CHS Masters of Public Health for Professional Program (MPH-HP)

Many health professionals who work full time jobs can't afford to take time off to get their MPH degree in CHS' regular MPH program. For health professionals in this situation, CHS has offered the MPH-HP program at nights and on weekends for several years. Many who have completed the program have found that having an MPH and the training that accompanies it has opened doors for them, led to promotions, or allowed them to change directions. The program has always focused on health promotion and health education – all skills needed by health professionals. Unlike other "executive-style" MPH programs, the CHS MPH-HP courses are taught primarily by full-time CHS faculty.

This year we have decided to take a hiatus for a year and not to admit a new class of first-year students. The second-year students are continuing with their coursework and will complete their degrees on time. The one-year hiatus provides an opportunity to rethink and revamp the program to better serve the needs of health professionals. Have suggestions about the program? Please send them to the new MPH-HP Program Director, Dr. Michael Prelip (mprelip@ucla.edu).

We will be admitting first-year students for the fall of 2009 to the MPH-HP program. Although there may be changes in the program (such as allowing concentrations in specific areas), the basic structure of this very popular program will remain the same. Know health professionals or others who are interested in getting their MPH at nights and on weekends? Please tell about the MPH-HP program. Check out the new program website at <http://www.ph.ucla.edu/mphhp/>.

Student Awards and Honors

Nellie Duran and **Uchechi Ancholonu** both received school-wide fellowship awards sponsored by the California Endowment. The fellowship was established to support excellent students and promote diversity in the SPH student population.

Mirna Troncoso received a school-wide fellowship award sponsored by the California Wellness Foundation. The fellowship was established to support excellent students and promote diversity in the SPH student population.

Jocelyn Chen won the Abdelmonem A. Afifi Fellowship for general academic excellence combined with a well-balanced and humanitarian understanding of the field of Public Health.

Maria Koleilat was awarded the Juneal Marie Smith Fellowship for general academic excellence to graduate student who is pursuing a career in international nutrition.

Suzi Spear was the 2008 recipient of the Edward Swartz Scholarship which supports an academically meritorious student who has financial need.

Anna Louba Aaronson won the Dean's Outstanding Student Award in CHS which honors the most outstanding graduating student based on overall academic performance, professionalism, and dedication to Public Health.

Incoming student **Hsin-Chieh Chang** received the Nonresident Graduate Student Scholarship for outstanding non-Californian students at the UCLA School of Public Health.

RHIG News

Founded in 2003, the Reproductive Health Interest Group (RHIG) is a very active group, with an annual membership of more than 70. Although it is a School of Public Health-wide group, many of its members are and have been CHS students. So we present a brief update of RHIG activities here, compiled by current RHIG officers (Philip Massey '09, Courtney Burks '09, and Jocelyn Chen '09) and RHIG faculty advisor Dr. Paula Tavrow.

RHIG currently has four subcommittees: HPV, Adult Film Industry Safety (AFI), Speakers, and Fundraising. The HPV subcommittee organized HPV education and awareness seminars at sev-

eral sororities and collaborated with the Student Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) to promote greater access to the HPV vaccine (Gardasil). The AFI subcommittee worked with LA County Health Department on legislation to improve the safety of performers in the adult film industry, wrote to assembly members to urge their support, and carried out a survey of consumer knowledge.

The Speakers subcommittee, in collaboration with Planned Parenthood of Los Angeles and Peace Over Violence, advocated for the Prevention Through Affordable Access Act and participated in Denim Day. RHIG also had a booth at the Sexual Health Fair, organized by the Center for Women and Men at UCLA. RHIG members traveled to Reproductive Freedom Day in Sacramento. They hosted the first RHIG Alumni Discussion Night on careers in reproductive health. CHS alumni Robin Lowney-Lankton, Lidia Carlton, Emily Chung, and Megan Grimm recounted their careers and gave tips to current students. RHIG alumni have also form a Linked in group to network.

The Fundraising subcommittee had a stellar year. In April, RHIG sponsored the first SPH Talent Show. It was a night to remember. RHIG members recruited performers, sold over a hundred tickets, and even choreographed and performed a public health rap. Performers included singing and guitar acts, classical violin, Chinese lion dance, public speaking, standup and singing by Prof. Deborah Glik, and a comedy spoof by Profs. Donald Morisky, Charlotte Neumann, and Alfred Neumann. Performers creatively incorporated the event's "Love Carefully" theme into their acts. Judging was done American Idol-style with Profs. Mike Prelip, David Gjertson, and Paula Tavrow (AKA Randy, Simon, and Paula). Proceeds of over \$1,400 were all donated to the Nairobi Women's and Children's Hospital, benefiting victims of sexual violence during the December 2007 Kenyan post-election violence. The subcommittee also held a raffle at the PHSA banquet and raised \$350 for Burmese hurricane relief.

In 2008-9, RHIG will continue several activities from last year and begin several new projects including collaborating with the UCLA OB/GYN Clinic, UCLA Mobile Clinic, and students from the David Geffen School of Medicine on a community service project educating homeless youth about their reproductive health rights and how to gain access to services. RHIG also plans to host another school-wide talent show.

RHIG alumni who live in the Los Angeles environs are encouraged to stay connected with RHIG and participate in our events. We hope to see many of you at the APHA conference in San Diego!

Alumni Announcements

Elissa Bradley (2008) and Joe Provost happily wedded in Los Angeles on August 16, 2008.

Jamie Sweningson (2002) Since graduating from UCLA Jamie and her husband have had two beautiful little boys, Grant age 4 and Sutton age 1.

We want to hear about how you are doing, where you are working, and "life cycle events" like job changes, promotions, retirements, marriages, and new babies. Please send us a sentence or two (or more if you like). Digital photos are welcome too. We'll publish them in the next issue of the CHS Alumni Newsletter. Send them to chsalumni@ph.ucla.edu.

Job Announcements

Stephanie Cecilia Jones-Wood is exploring career advancement opportunities across the U.S. She has worked at Harris County Public Health & En-

vironmental Services (HCPHES) in Harris County, Texas since August 2005. As a Public Health Analyst, she is responsible for managing subcontractor activities and community assessment, quality improvement, and accreditation preparation projects. She also facilitates departmental planning activities and staff trainings related to assessment, policy development, and evaluation. Prior to HCPHES, Stephanie worked in the CDC Office of the Director on strategic planning and with the (former) National Center for Infectious Diseases in refugee health. Stephanie received her MPH from the UCLA in 2004. Stephanie is a public health generalist, but her passion for public health lies in the areas of health disparities and maternal and child health. If you have opportunities and are interested in talking with Stephanie, please contact her at sjoneswood@yahoo.com.

Are you looking for a well-trained CHS Alum for a position in your organization? Or perhaps you are looking for a new position yourself? Send us a job announcement or a summary of your credentials and we will include it in the next CHS Alumni Newsletter. Deadlines for submission are: September 1 for the fall newsletter (published September 15) and March 15 for the spring newsletter (published April 1).

Incoming Student Profile 2008-2009 Academic Year Profile/Program MPH

	MPH	MSPH	MA-MPH	MPH-MSW	MD-MPH	MPH-DI	PH.D.	DRPH
# students in entering class	58	0	4	5	1	3	10	2
Mean GPA	3.38	N/A	3.58	3.32	3.77	3.3	3.28	3.02
Mean GRE Total	1100	N/A	1130	1124	N/A	1110	1200	1065
Mean GRE Quant	640	N/A	630	600	N/A	640	650	575
Mean GRE Verbal	540	N/A	500	520	N/A	470	550	490
% Minority	44%	N/A	25%	20%	100%	33%	40%	50%
Mean age	26	N/A	24	27	32	24	27	29
Cal residents/out of state	53/5	N/A	3/1	4/1	1/0	3/0	8/2	1/1
International %	3%	N/A	0	0	0	0	20%	50%