Minnesota Center for Cancer Collaborations

In October 2010, Program in Health Disparities Research Director Kola Okuyemi, M.D., M.P.H., received an award notice from the National Cancer Institute’s Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities for a Community Networks Program grant. The Community Networks Program is an initiative designed to address the cancer burden in racial and ethnic minorities and other underserved populations by engaging community members through community-based participatory research. This is the grant mechanism that established the Minnesota Center for Cancer Collaborations (MC3).

The mission of MC3 is to reduce cancer disparities experienced by Minnesota’s racial and ethnic minority populations with an initial focus on the state’s growing new immigrant and refugee populations.

MC3 is composed of four operating groups (cores): Administrative Core, Community Engagement Core, Research Core, and a Training Core. The Administrative Core will provide leadership and organizational infrastructure for the center, including overall center strategy, technical support, and public relations. This core is led by Kola Okuyemi, M.D., M.P.H., with Jane Korn, M.D., M.P.H., from the Minnesota Department of Health, serving as deputy center director.

The Community Outreach Core will collaborate with established partners, New Americans Community Services and Centro Campesino, to increase community members’ knowledge of and access to cervical and breast cancer screening in Minnesota’s African immigrant and Latino populations. This core is led by Nancy Raymond, M.D., Gloria Contreras, and Sirad Osman, Ph.D.

The Research Core will support one full research project on tobacco use and one pilot research project on cervical cancer screening in the Somali population. This effort is led by Jean Forster, Ph.D., M.P.H., and Anne Joseph, M.D., M.P.H.

The Training Core will prepare a cadre of scientists and health professionals with a focus on underrepresented groups across Minnesota. The goal of this core is to train investigators to incorporate community-based participatory research into their cancer research and to promote their capacity to achieve sustained career success as community-engaged health disparity workers. This core is led by Cathy Jordan, Ph.D., Jasjit Ahluwalia, M.D., M.P.H., M.S, and Susan Gust, Ph.D.

Overall, Minnesotans enjoy a high quality of life and health status, but not all Minnesota citizens benefit equally. Our center aims to combine the expertise of both UMN researchers and our community-based partners for the primary purpose of addressing health disparities. MC3 creates a unique opportunity to use community-based participatory methods to reduce the disproportionate burden of cancer and other health disparities in the region.

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Upcoming Events

April 15-17, 2011: Stick it to Cancer Hockey Tournament
National Sports Center, Blaine, Minn.
The Stick it to Cancer Tournament is a girls’ and women’s hockey tournament that raises money to support the fight against breast cancer.
For more information, contact: Jackie Olson at jolson@superrink.org, or call 763-792-7340 or visit the Web site at: www.nscsports.org/sports/hockey/tourneys/stick_it/index.htm

April 19, 2011: Annual Symposium: Accelerating the Future: The Changing Face of Health in America
8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Coffman Memorial Union, University of Minnesota
Presented by: Center for Health Equity, Minnesota Center for Cancer Collaborations, Program in Health Disparities Research, School of Public Health: Dean’s Office, Health Disparities Work Group, Midwest Center for Life-Long-Learning in Public Health. For more information, please visit: www.sph.umn.edu/ce/roundtable/

April 29-30, 2011: Bridging the Transition to Life After Cancer Treatment Conference
Minneapolis Airport Marriott
The Minnesota Cancer Alliance and the Masonic Cancer Center, University of Minnesota are proposing an educational conference for health care professionals on helping their cancer patients successfully navigate the transition from cancer treatment to life after treatment. Oncologists, primary care and family practice physicians, nurses, social workers, physical therapists, dietitians and other cancer care professionals

The Collaboration Building Process

by S. Warfa Osman, Ph.D.

New Americans Community Services is a partner with the University of Minnesota Medical School’s Program in Health Disparities Research and the newly founded Minnesota Center for Cancer Collaborations (MC3). We utilize a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach to research, which is a collaborative approach that equitably involves all partners in the research process from the initial stages through project completion. CBPR enables us to recognize, organize and mobilize the unique strengths that each individual, organization, or community partner brings to the research endeavor.

As an organized approach to research, CBPR is not only a simple matter of discovering facts about health disparities, but also includes informing the development of theories that explain research phenomena.

The partners in MC3 are experienced and thoughtful individuals working as educators, administrators, government officials, business leaders, human services providers, health professionals, researchers, and scholars. These groups with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and ideas come together for a single cause. They are aware of limited advances in health disparities research in the world of science, medicine, and community health and are devoted to closing the gap in cancer-related health disparities.

Together, we are focusing on a potent alternative to traditional outside expert-driven research in order to reduce and eliminate cancer health disparities. This, in turn, creates a change in the balance of power and viewpoints that earlier dictated many research methodologies. By involving community members in the decision-making process, we make it a priority to treat research participants as more than research subjects.

In the coming editions of Closing the Gap, we look forward to updating you on our research progress and findings. We will continue our efforts in dialogue and collaborative inquiry through a truly participatory approach toward the overall goal of closing the gap in cancer-related health disparities in Minnesota.

(continued on page 3)
Immediate Consequences of Cigarette Smoking

Lung cancer kills an average of 3,000 people every day. The long-term impacts of smoking, including heart disease and at least 18 types of cancers, are well known.

New research from the University of Minnesota Masonic Cancer Center and Department of Pharmacology shows that chemicals that cause cancer form rapidly after smoking. Funded by the National Cancer Institute and published in the journal *Chemical Research in Toxicology*, this study suggests the damage begins just moments after the first cigarette is smoked.

The researchers looked at the level of chemicals linked with cancer, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH), in 12 patients after smoking. PAH are among the likely major causative agents for lung cancer in smokers. All 12 research participants smoked a cigarette that had PAH added. The smokers’ bodies subsequently modified the PAH, turning it into another chemical that damages DNA and has been linked with cancer.

The research findings show this process only took between 15 and 30 minutes to take place. States professor Stephen Hecht, Ph.D., from the University of Minnesota Masonic Cancer Center, “This study is unique, it is the first to investigate human metabolism of a PAH specifically delivered by inhalation in cigarette smoke, without interference by other sources of exposure such as air pollution or the diet. The results reported here should serve as a stark warning to those who are considering starting to smoke cigarettes.”

The research was funded by the U.S. National Cancer Institute.

More information: [www.mccc.umn.edu/newsletter/artlink2](http://www.mccc.umn.edu/newsletter/artlink2)

Upcoming Events, continued

are encouraged to attend the proposed interdisciplinary conference. Breakout sessions will be offered that focus on three different tracks: 1) identifying, preventing and managing co-morbidities and treatment-related complications; 2) lifestyle recommendations for the prevention of chronic disease among cancer survivors; and 3) psychosocial, spirituality and relationship issues after cancer treatment. Featured speakers include: Dr. Patti Ganz UCLA, Dr. Jon Hallberg UMN, Dr. Wendy Harpham.

For more information: [www.cme.umn.edu/home.html](http://www.cme.umn.edu/home.html). A call for posters has also been announced. Please contact Heather Hirsch (hirs0090@umn.edu) for more information.

**June 5-6, 2011: Randy Shaver Cancer Research and Community Fund**

*Rush Creek Golf Club*

Evening Gala, Sunday, June 5, 2011: The evening gala is a night to celebrate and support Minnesota’s cancer community and the work done by the fund. The gala will include a large silent auction, a live auction, entertainment and other activities.

Golf Tournament, Monday, June 6, 2011 For more information, visit: [www.randyshavergolf.com](http://www.randyshavergolf.com) or call 952-473-1780.

**June 16-18, 2011: Advances in Breast, Endocrine and Cancer Surgery**

*Radisson-University Hotel, 615 Washington Ave. S.E., Minneapolis, Minn.*

For more information and to register visit the Continuing Medical Education website by visiting this link: [www.mccc.umn.edu/news/eventslink1](http://www.mccc.umn.edu/news/eventslink1)
MC3 Update, continued

*Closing the Gap* will keep you informed of ongoing activities and research updates within our center. We look forward to bringing you updates on our research activities, and we will also be sure to provide detailed research findings as our research projects transition into larger initiatives. Additionally, this publication will highlight specific cancer-related research and news happening both within the larger University community and in the larger world of science.

In this edition of *Closing the Gap*, a brief discussion of the overall structure of MC3 is featured on the first page. The co-director of our community engagement group (core), Sirad Osman, Ph.D., from New Americans Community Services also will provide an introduction of what their group aims to accomplish within MC3 (page 2).

*Closing the Gap* is a quarterly publication; visit our Web site to subscribe for automatic e-mail delivery. For more information about MC3, please feel free to visit us on the Web at www.mccc.umn.edu.

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**MC3 Research**

The Minnesota Center for Cancer Collaborations includes two cancer research projects. One is a pilot project focused on cervical cancer screening among Somali women, and the other full research project is a community-based randomized controlled trial addressing tobacco use in Latino youth.

The cervical cancer pilot project is led by Rahel Ghebre, M.D., Sirad Osman, Ph.D., and Anne Joseph, M.D., M.P.H. The specific aims of the pilot research project are:

- Finding suitable language, structure, and context to describe cervical cancer prevention and screening methods by conducting key informant interviews with immigrant Somali women and community advocates.
- Identifying facilitators of and barriers to cervical cancer screening, and assess women’s attitudes towards home vaginal bio-specimen collection for human papillomavirus (HPV) testing by conducting focus groups with immigrant Somali women.
- Estimating rates of successful completion of cervical cancer screening by home vaginal bio-specimen collection for HPV testing compared with standard clinic-based Pap test through conducting a pilot study in a sample of immigrant Somali women who have not met evidence-based guideline recommendations for screening.

The community-based randomized controlled trial addressing tobacco use in Latino youth is led by Michele Allen, M.D., M.S., and Jean Forster, Ph.D. The specific aims of this project are:

- Determining the effectiveness of a family-based intervention to prevent tobacco and other substance use intention in middle school-aged (10-14 year olds) Latino youth utilizing a community-based randomized controlled trial.
- Assessing the effect of a family-based intervention, directed at immigrant Latino parents, on parent youth relationship and practices utilizing a community-based randomized controlled trial.

This project also has an exploratory aim to assess partnership, operational, and contextual factors that contribute to the successful implementation of the intervention at eight community sites participating in the collaborative project.

These two research projects are currently beginning along with our new center. We look forward to providing updates on these projects in future editions of *Closing the Gap*. For questions or more information about these projects, please visit us on the web at www.mccc.umn.edu.