Smoking Cessation for Teens

Cigarette smoking during childhood and adolescence produces significant health problems among young people, including an increase in the number and severity of those with respiratory illnesses and decreased physical fitness, and potentially negative effects on the rate of lung growth and maximum lung function. Additionally, according to a 2008 report from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, every day almost 3,900 children under the age of 18 years try their first cigarette, and more than 950 of them will become new, regular daily smokers.

A new effort to help teens quit smoking will use one of today’s teens’ most consistent companions: the mobile phone. Developed by smoking cessation experts, SmokefreeTXT is a free text message cessation service that provides 24/7 encouragement, advice and tips to teens trying to quit smoking. The initiative is led by the National Cancer Institute (NCI), part of the National Institutes of Health. Teens can sign up online at http://teen.smokefree.gov or text the word “quit” to iQUIT (47848) on their mobile device.

Along with SmokefreeTXT, another initiative, Smokefree Teen, offers several social media pages to connect teenagers with smoking cessation tools. Smokefree Teen will also launch a free smartphone application, QuitSTART – an interactive quit guide for teens that delivers cessation and mood management tips, tracks cravings, and monitors quit attempts.

SmokefreeTXT is a key component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ efforts to develop mobile health programs and is one of the core features of the new Smokefree Teen initiative, an extension of the NCI’s smoking cessation website (www.Smokefree.gov). Smokefree.gov was designed to help individuals quit smoking and offer guidance to concerned friends and family members of cigarette smokers. The website offers multiple forms of assistance, including: a step-by-step quit smoking guide; a wide range of smoking-related information; an interactive U.S. map highlighting local smoking cessation resources; NCI’s instant messaging service; access to national, state and local quitlines; and access to publications.

Welcome to Closing the Gap, the newsletter of the Minnesota Center for Cancer Collaborations (MC3). While it is only February, it is beginning to look like 2012 will be quite a busy year in Minnesota and abroad in regards to reducing cancer-related disparities. I would like to tell you about a few upcoming events involving some of our leaders from the center.

On April 10th, there will be a town hall meeting for cancer prevention and control programs. Co-director of our research initiatives, Anne Joseph, M.D., M.P.H. will present with other colleagues at this event representing the areas of: prevention and etiology; carcinogenesis and chemoprevention; and cancer detection, treatment and outcomes.

On April 18-21, Community-Campus Partnerships for Health will hold their 15th anniversary conference. MC3 co-director of training, Cathy Jordan, Ph.D., will be a presenter at three sessions at this conference. More information on both of these events is available inside this publication. Additionally, over the
Quick Bites

Which Disparities Interventions Work?

While the existence of racial and ethnic health care disparities has been firmly established, health care systems need better tools, strategies and interventions to reduce these differences. Previous quality improvement efforts to reduce disparities have often failed or experienced limited success because we have yet to discover the practical steps necessary to eliminate them. In 2005, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation launched Finding Answers: Disparities Research for Change, to seek and evaluate projects aimed at reducing racial and ethnic health care disparities.

Finding Answers manages an $8 million grant portfolio that funds program evaluations in 33 health care organizations across the country. By testing intervention strategies in a variety of settings, Finding Answers is gaining a better understanding of which strategies work best and how they should be implemented. An update on the Finding Answers program and its projects is now available. Hear from the researchers and find out more about solutions that will help reduce health care disparities.

For more information, visit: www.solvingdisparities.org

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New Culturally Specific Wellness Information on the Web

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in the United States, people of African descent experience disproportionately higher rates of disease, fewer treatment options and reduced access to care when compared to the majority population. Glaring disparities persist in rates of diseases such as obesity, cancer, diabetes and HIV/AIDS. While many different determinants exist for these uneven health outcomes and issues, one factor that can play a role is poor communication from health care providers.

The Internet can be a powerful communication tool. Some individuals feel more comfortable searching for health information in the comfort of their homes rather than speaking with a health professional. Indeed, many organizations are now utilizing the reach of the Web to disseminate health information. As a result, we are increasingly getting more options for this online health information. However, there are still gaps in resources that offer credible public health communications that are culturally appropriate to our diverse communities. This is why a new website, Pepper Soup, was created.

Pepper Soup is an African-focused online health resource that promises to close the information gap while offering credible, culturally competent and timely public health information from an Afrocentric perspective. Content includes in-depth medical news, feature stories, fact sheets and health topics. “PepperSoup aims to be the go-to place on the Web for accurate health content that meets the needs of people of African descent,” said Wynfred Russell, Minnesota resident and publisher of the website.

The name, “Pepper Soup,” was chosen to reflect a traditional West African home remedy served by mothers for centuries. Synonymous with chicken soup in Western culture, pepper soup represents a source of nourishment and sustenance. This new, Minnesota-based website aims to offer this soup in a digital world by helping to change health behaviors and thus be a catalyst for preventative health and wellness education in the African immigrant community.

Read more online at www.PepperSoup.org
Community-Based Participatory Research Pilot Course Offered

As part of the MC3 Training Core, the first Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) course was offered during the 2011 Fall Semester. This pilot course was led by Training Core Co-director Cathy Jordan and Community Partner Susan Gust. Junior faculty, post-docs, graduate students and community practitioners interested in adding CBPR to their repertoire of effective approaches to understanding and addressing health disparities, and MC3 Training Core Career Enhancement program mentees were given preference to attend. Four of the 22 ethnically and culturally diverse participants were MC3 mentees.

The course was designed to be participatory to embody the primary tenet of CBPR. Within a basic course scaffold, student input and requests determined the content for the rest of the course, helping guide Cathy and Susan to make weekly adjustments to the curriculum and format. Class participants explored topics such as the purpose and applications of CBPR; partnership formation and maintenance; issues of power, trust, race class and social justice; conflict resolution; ethical issues; CBPR’s relationship to cultural knowledge systems; funding for CBPR; and making the case for community-engaged scholarship to count in career advancement. They also visited an important community partner, the Cultural Wellness Center.

The CBPR pilot course was primarily discussion-based, and participants were asked to do independent readings, assignments and reflections between sessions. Because it was a pilot, the course was free, had no grades, no papers and no final exam. Attendees offered quantitative and qualitative feedback several times throughout the course and one insight all participants communicated is that CBPR is a process and is nonlinear, not a methodology in itself or restricted to certain research designs. The rich feedback provided will allow for reflective revision of the class before it is offered again during the 2012 Fall Semester; an option for course credit will be offered for a fee.

Quick Bites, continued

University of Minnesota, Crookston Ranks High

The first-ever edition of Top Online Education Program rankings by U.S. News & World Report nationally ranks the University of Minnesota, Crookston among the top 40 colleges and universities for its online bachelor’s degree programs in two separate categories. They earned the number 32 spot out of 173 U.S. colleges and universities in the Teaching Practices and Student Engagement category and the number 40 spot out of 179 schools in the Student Services and Technology category. The rankings were published in January.

Mini Medical School Winter Session Registration Now Open

Registration is open for the winter session of Mini Medical School, “It’s All in Your Head: The Latest in Brain Science and Treatment.” Never before has more attention been paid to the devastating effects of brain diseases, neurological disorders and traumatic brain injuries. Participants will discover how world-renowned experts at the U are making major advances in the field of brain science. For registration and more information, call 612-624-4604 or visit: www.health.umn.edu/mini-medical-school
**MC3 Update, continued**

coming summer we will host our first annual symposium on health disparities in partnership with other organizations on campus. Please visit our website for more information on this exciting two-day event.

In this issue of Closing the Gap, we will highlight two initiatives that have great potential for enabling people to achieve better health. One initiative is a locally-developed website that aims to be a home for culturally specific and high quality information geared towards the African immigrant community. The other project discussed in this issue is a combination of digital and interactive resources for teenage cigarette smokers provided by the National Cancer Institute, including a free text messaging service that provides around-the-clock encouragement and tips to teens attempting to quit smoking. Both of these initiatives highlight the importance of technology and digital connectivity in our efforts to improve public health in the 21st century.

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**Cancer Disparities Postdoctoral Positions Available.** The School of Public Health and the Medical School announce a postdoctoral education and career development program in cancer disparities funded by the NCI. Three fellowship positions will be available for candidates with a doctoral degree. For more information, contact Lindsey Fabian at fabian@umn.edu.

**Postdoctoral Fellowship Available.** The Division of Epidemiology and Community Health in the School of Public Health and the Nutrition Graduate Program of the University of Minnesota are seeking candidates for a postdoctoral fellowship in nutrition and cancer. The emphasis of this program is on cross-disciplinary training, requiring fellows to be exposed to fields relevant to nutrition, cancer etiology and prevention research outside their own degree discipline. For more information, visit [www.sph.umn.edu/epi/training/T32.asp](http://www.sph.umn.edu/epi/training/T32.asp) or contact Lori Strayer at strayer@umn.edu.

**Free Bio-Medical Library Workshops.** The Bio-Medical Library offers in-house workshops open to all University students, staff and faculty on a variety of library resources and research techniques. Sessions are designed to help you enhance your skills searching databases and other library resources, organizing and managing your research, and publishing in the health sciences. Visit [http://hsl.lib.umn.edu/biomed](http://hsl.lib.umn.edu/biomed) for more information.

**Town Hall Meeting for Cancer Prevention and Control Programs.** April 10, 2012: 3-4 p.m., 450 MCRB: Hear updates from Anne Joseph, M.D., M.P.H., and DeAnn Lazovich, Ph.D., M.P.H., program leaders of prevention and etiology, Stephen Hecht, Ph.D., carcinogenesis and chemoprevention, and Karen Kuntz, Sc.D., and Todd Tuttle, M.D., M.P.H., cancer detection, treatment and outcomes. There will be time for discussion from program members as well.

**15th Anniversary Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) Conference.** April 18-21, 2012, Houston, TX. The conference “Community-Campus Partnerships as a Strategy for Social Justice: Where We’ve Been & Where We Need to Go,” aims to nurture a growing network of community-campus partnerships that are striving to solve our most pressing health, social and economic challenges. MC3 Co-director of Training, Cathy Jordan, Ph.D., will be a presenter for the pre-conference workshop on April 18, “Community-Engaged Scholarship: Strategies and Resources to Support Your Work,” a skill-building workshop on Apr 20, “Faculty for the Engaged Campus: New Strategies for Supporting Community-Engaged Scholars,” and another on Apr 21, “CES4Health.info: Moving Beyond the Peer Review & Dissemination of Diverse Products of Community-Engaged Scholarship to Community Impact.” Visit [http://www.ccph.info](http://www.ccph.info) for more information.