

Issue #10

PBRN Week in Review | March 27, 2009

PBRN Grantees: Please circulate relevant information to your network members. For additional information and suggestions for future items, please contact Elaine Wootten, woottenelaine@uams.edu or 501-526-6628.

Notable Activities this Week

- ***PBRNs at NACCHO.*** Congratulations! The PBRN learning session proposal entitled *Measuring the Value of Public Health through Practice-Based Research Networks* was selected for presentation at the NACCHO Annual Conference, July 29-31 in Orlando, Florida. The session thus far includes Harold Cox (MA), Lee Thielen (CO), David Fleming (WA), and Glen Mays (NCC). We invite other PBRN presenters to be a part of this learning session – let us know if you are interested and able to join. We will work together to flesh out the structure and content of this session during the coming months.
- ***Keeneland Meetings are Upon Us.*** The Public Health PBRN Grantees and National Advisory Committee will convene in Lexington for meetings on April 7, preceding the main Keeneland Conference. Meeting agendas have been finalized and will be transmitted to you separately. The PBRN Grantee Meeting will commence with lunch at noon on Tuesday and run through 5pm, followed by networking opportunities. The following day, speakers from each PBRN will participate in a panel scheduled for 9-10am on Wednesday. ***For those of you staying over on Wednesday evening, we are organizing a PBRN group dinner*** to allow for additional opportunities for networking and discussion. We'll announce the restaurant and all the details during our grantee meeting.
- ***Research Opportunities in Public Health Law.*** This week a call for proposals was released from a new RWJF program devoted to studying the design, implementation, and impact of law on the public's health. PBRNs may offer compelling opportunities for conducting this type of research, and we at the coordinating center are pleased to help networks consider opportunities for individual and/or collaborative studies in this area. See the funding opportunities announcement below for more details, and contact us if you would like our assistance.
- ***Building the Pipeline.*** This week provided clear evidence that the pipeline of scholars and practitioners engaged in public health systems and services research continues to grow in volume and quality. Glen Mays was in North Carolina on Monday for the successful defense of a Tarheel doctoral dissertation by a well-known public health practitioner and up-and-coming scholar in this field, Dr. **Paul Erwin**.

Paul's research has examined how changes in local public health resources have influenced state health system performance as measured in the *America's Health Rankings* report – one of the longest-running and most visible “report cards” of state health performance. Come to Paul's presentation at the **Keeneland Conference** if you are interested in his findings, and watch for more revealing studies to come from the research group that Paul is developing from his post at the University of Tennessee.

Later in the week, New York City hosted the advisory board meeting for the **Pfizer Scholars in Public Health** program, a wonderful career development award that gives junior research faculty up to three years of protected funding to support research on public health systems and services issues, under the guidance of established investigators in this field. Board member Glen Mays reports that the board heard research presentations from several investigators who are currently funded under this program, including 2008 grantee **Betty Bekemeier** at the University of Washington, who is examining variations in staffing patterns and service mix across local public health agencies, and their implications for service delivery and outcomes. **Jackie Merrill** at Columbia University, a 2006 grantee, discussed her work that applies the methods of organizational network analysis to the study of information and communication flows within local health departments. **Anne Spaulding** from Emory University (2007 grantee), presented her findings on system characteristics that explain mortality disparities experienced by formerly incarcerated populations. And **Phil Polgreen** from the University of Iowa (2008 grantee) discussed his work that applies mathematical modeling to identify optimal geographic areas for locating public health services so as to maximize reach and coverage within states. The board also met as a study section to review applications and make funding recommendations for the group of 2009 Pfizer Scholars. More information about this program (created by former RI and NY state health commissioner Dr. Barbara DeBuono) and related research career development awards from Pfizer are available at: <http://www.promisingminds.com/AwardDetails.aspx?AwardID=2142> We have much to be enthusiastic about in the group of emerging scholars in public health systems and services research –look for them at Keeneland if you are interested in their work and how it might be applied within your networks.

Activities on the Horizon

- ***Your Thoughts on Cross-cutting PBRN Research Priorities.*** A major action item of the PBRN Grantee meeting on April 7 will be further specifying the cross-cutting PBRN research and evaluation activities that will be conducted collaboratively over the course of this program. We encourage you to review the three-page summary of ***initial research/evaluation priorities*** (now posted on the PBRN website) and come with your own ideas and interests in mind.
- ***Requesting Technical Assistance via Expert Consultants.*** We've developed a simple web-based form for PBRN directors/managers to submit requests for customized TA through expert consultants. Tell us the general topic or area of

interest and we'll help you find a consultant and then we'll set up the arrangement that allows them to consult with you. Or if you already know the specific individual you'd like to tap for this, tell us that information and we'll work out the details. You may want to review the database of current PBRN consultants (located in the password-protected region of the website) to get ideas. Look for this *TA Request Form* to launch on the PBRN website shortly. Remember, each network has an account of 20 days of expert consultant time to use for this purpose over the two year project period (and of course, consultations with coordinating center staff are free!).

- ***What Would You Like to See at the Next PBRN Webinar?*** The second installment of our quarterly PBRN Webinar is scheduled for May 20. We invite your ideas about topics to cover at this next session. We will also use the recent TA survey and the advice of our National Advisory Committee to hone in on topics for this and future webinars.

Related Research Activities

- **“What is Health Care Quality and Who Decides?”** was the title of the testimony delivered last week by Dr. Carolyn Clancy, Director of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Health Care. She described structure, process, and outcomes as the three basic dimensions of health care quality and how AHRQ works to improve quality by developing and using evidence-based information. Her testimony begs the question, “What is quality in public health practice, and who decides?” Some in public health have expressed frustration at the disproportionate share of stimulus funding devoted to clinical research and clinical quality improvement, and the continuing uncertainties about the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of public health activities. **Public health PBRNs** are a critical component of our collective efforts to develop the evidence base needed to answer these questions, and our efforts could not come at a better time!
- ***Why don't they ask us?*** The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute—NIH's home for much of the nation's chronic disease research—has issued a request for input as it designs a new research initiative to examine community-based childhood obesity prevention programs. This is a chance to have input on the design of this national research initiative and the types of studies to be funded. Why might PBRNs be interested in this opportunity? Networks that have partners interested in studying childhood obesity prevention may want to weigh in about the importance of studying the ***implementation and impact of these programs in real-world public health practice settings*** – the kinds of settings represented in PBRNs. Now that's translational research! What kinds of research questions should be asked? What types of settings should be studied? What types of interventions should be tested? What attributes of public health delivery systems should be studied for their ability to support and sustain the delivery of effective interventions? Here's your chance to weigh in ***before*** the research proposals are solicited, at: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-HL-09-122.html>

- **Asking the producers and users of PHSSR.** The web survey mentioned here previously is now available, with responses due April 7! AcademyHealth—the nation’s scientific home for health services research—has empanelled a *PHSR Methods Council* that will work to set priorities, standards, and research agendas for advancing **methodological rigor in the conduct of public health systems and services research**. As a first step, the council sent a brief web survey to the 1000+ members of the *AcademyHealth Special Interest Group on Public Health Systems Research* to examine methodological issues, current practices, and challenges faced in this field. If you are a member, look for the brief survey. If not, consider joining the team: <http://www.academyhealth.org/Communities/>. Survey results will be presented at the *AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting in Chicago, June 28-30*.
- Don’t forget about the *Special Interest Group Meeting on Public Health Systems Research* scheduled at the end of the AcademyHealth conference June 30 and July 1 in Chicago. There is currently a call for student scholarships to attend this meeting, and a call for nominations for the Article of the Year in public health systems research. All of the information is available at: <http://www.academyhealth.org/interestgroups/phsr/2009.htm>

Key Upcoming Dates

April 7 - PBRN Grantee Meeting held in conjunction with the Keeneland Conference, Lexington KY.

April 8 –While at the **Keeneland Conference**, plan to join us for the **PBRN Group Dinner** Wednesday evening at one of Lexington’s storied eateries. Watch out the Fly on the Wall!

April 8-9: Keeneland Conference on Public Health Systems and Services Research. Lexington, KY. www.publichealthsystems.org/media/file/2009KCRegistrationFormPDF.pdf

May 12: PBRN Monthly Conference Call - 11:30-1:00 ET; 10:30 CT; 9:30 MT; 8:30 PT.

May 20: PBRN Quarterly Webinar - 2:00-3:30 ET; 1:00 CT; 12:00 MT; 11:00 PT.

June 28-30: AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting in Chicago.
www.academyhealth.org

June 30-July 1: AcademyHealth Public Health Systems Research Interest Group Meeting, Chicago. <http://www.academyhealth.org/interestgroups/phsr/2009.htm>

Funding Opportunities for Public Health Systems Research



- **Call for Proposals for Research on Public Health Law!** The call was released this week, and RWJF's Public Health Law Research program is officially open. In the first round of funding, short-term, less-complex studies such as policy analysis or public health implications of specific laws or regulations will be funded up to \$150,000 each for up to 18 months. Complex and comprehensive legal and public health studies that include long-term analyses or in-depth evaluations will be funded up to \$400,000 each for up to 30 months. The CFP is available at http://www.rwjf.org/files/applications/cfp/cfp_PHLR2009.pdf.
- **New NIH "GO" Research Opportunities Include Public Health Studies!** A newly-announced component of the NIH Recovery funds is the Research and Research Infrastructure "Grand Opportunities" or "GO" grants program. This funding is designated for biomedical and biobehavioral research projects that can benefit from significant 2-year funding with no expectation for renewal. According to the NIH announcement, research supported by this program "should have high short-term impact, and a high likelihood of enabling growth and investment in biomedical research and development, public health, and health care delivery." GO grant key dates differ from other ARRA application dates and may be found at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-OD-09_004.html#KeyDates. To see the GO grant opportunities of participating NIH Institutes and Centers, go to http://grants.nih.gov/recovery/ic_go.html.
- All the NIH Challenge Grants announced so far under the federal stimulus package can be found at <http://grants.nih.gov/recovery/>. Click on the link and subscribe to email updates if you so desire. Thus far, the email traffic is not unbearable. We are finding that the individual NIH research institute web pages have more and clearer descriptions about their research priorities than does this web page. You may also want to keep an eye on the CDC, HRSA, and AHRQ web pages – and of course www.grants.gov
- **CDC Practice-Based Implementation Research:** CDC has released a FOA for R18 translational research projects that appears particularly well-suited for public health PBRNs, entitled, Translating Research to Protect Health through Health Promotion, Prevention, and Preparedness. Critical to CDC's mission is new scientific knowledge that can accelerate the translation of research findings into public health practice. Moving the best science into practice is essential to protect and improve health. To that end, the purpose of this FOA is to accelerate the translation of proven effective interventions into public health practice through implementation, dissemination, and diffusion research.
Submission Date: April 21, 2009
More information is available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/od/pgo/funding/CD09-001.htm>
- Grantees may qualify for Wal-Mart Foundation's State Giving Program Grant in the areas of Health and Wellness and Workforce Development.

Deadline: April 17, 2009

More specific grant information is available at:

<http://walmartstores.com/CommunityGiving/8169.aspx?p=8168>

- The William T. Grant Foundation has issued a RFP for research “on the factors that affect policy makers’ and practitioners’ acquisition, interpretation, and use of research evidence. Grant awards ranging from \$100,000 to \$600,000 for direct and indirect costs for two to three years of work are anticipated. Interdisciplinary projects are welcome. Visit www.wtgrantfoundation.org/ for complete program guidelines. Letters of inquiry are due by May 12, 2009.

- **Systems Research for Population Health:** A new program announcement from the National Institutes of Health looks particularly well suited for practice-based research in public health. *Using Systems Science Methodologies to Protect and Improve Population Health (R21)*. This FOA solicits Exploratory/Developmental (R21) applications from institutions/organizations that propose to apply one or more specific system science methodologies to “policy resistant” public health problems and contribute knowledge that will enhance effective decision making around the development of and prioritization of policies, interventions, and programs to improve population health in the U.S. and abroad, especially where resources are limited and only a limited number of programs/policies/interventions can be implemented. Standard NIH submission deadlines apply. <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-08-224.html>

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