

CHRONIC DISEASE Chronicles

Fall 2005

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The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors

2872 Woodcock Boulevard
Suite 220
Atlanta, Georgia 30341

Phone: (770) 458-7400

Fax: (770) 458-7401

www.ChronicDisease.org

Meet Our New Executive Director

John Robitscher, MPH

John Robitscher became Executive Director of the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors in July. He previously served at the Henry W. Grady Foundation where he also served as Executive Director. In his three year tenure at Grady, he oversaw the reorganization, renaming and rebranding of the Foundation and helped raise \$2.5 million annually.

Prior to the Grady Foundation post, John served as the chief development officer for the International Life Sciences Institute Center for Health Promotion where he helped facilitate their worldwide health care awareness and program development and was active in many health care initiatives for rural Georgians.

"The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors is pleased to have John join us. We look forward to his vision and leadership as we work collectively to promote improved quality of life and healthy lifestyles," said Jennie Hefelfinger, NACDD Board President.

A graduate of Emory University with a Masters Degree in Public Health, John has served in leadership positions for a number of Georgia community organizations. He is a member of Delta Omega Public Health Honor Society and Leadership Atlanta and was recognized by Emory University with a Humanitarian Award for his distinguished contributions to the underserved.



"I look forward to working with NACDD members and staff to align our work to the strategic plan so that our membership and partner organizations see tangible outcomes. I appreciate and thank you for your trust in my leadership."

CDD Becomes NACDD

National Association of Chronic Disease Directors

The Board of Directors took a first step toward a new vision for the organization at their October meeting in Washington, D.C. by approving a change to the organization's informal name to the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors or NACDD. As part of a more comprehensive branding effort, the name will enhance recognition of the Association and help the Association advocate for funding as a leading chronic disease

prevention and control organization. John Robitscher, NACDD Executive Director said of the change, "The word National more accurately describes the breadth and reach of our membership. We'd like chronic disease public health professionals to feel connected to and supported by the Association whether or not they are directors."

A workgroup of select Executive Committee members, Board, and staff began the process of drafting a

new vision while keeping intact the organization's current mission to provide state-based leadership and expertise for chronic disease prevention and control at the state and national level. NACDD will soon launch a new logo, timed for release with a new organizational brochure and 2005 Annual Report. The website at www.chronicdisease.org will undergo a redesign to incorporate the new logo, name, and vision in early 2006.

The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors mission is "to provide state-based leadership and expertise for chronic disease prevention and control at the state and national level."

The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors

Atlanta Headquarters Staff:

Executive Director
John Robitscher

Operations Director
Robert Smariga

Senior Public Health Advisor
Chuck Gollmar

Public Health Program Manager
David Yum

Office Manager
Carma Davis

Public Health Program Assistant
Jerrica Mathis

Email: info@ChronicDisease.org
www.ChronicDisease.org

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Women's Health Council Projects

Four new staff will be working with the Women's Health Council on three new projects for the funded year 2006.

MCH Linkages Project

Joan Ware, MSPH, RN adds her extensive knowledge and experience to the MCH Linkages Project of the NACDD Women's Health Council which will explore the common chronic disease interests of women's and maternal health groups. Partnerships between women's and maternal health groups will be developed to enhance mutual goals. Joan is a past member of the NACDD Board of Directors, Co-Chair of the Chronic Disease Conference held in Dallas, past Chair and current member of 3 NACDD Council steering committees - Cardiovascular Health, School Health, and Women's Health.

A graduate of the University of Utah, College of Family and Preventive Medicine, Epidemiology track with an MSPH degree, Joan has extensive experience in collecting, analyzing, and applying chronic disease data to the development of public health interventions. Joan will be retiring from the Utah Department of Health in December 2005 after 27 years.

Depression and Diabetes Co-Morbidity Project

Mike White, FAHA is working on another Women's Health Council project to examine the co-morbidity of depression and diabetes. As the project moves into its second year of a five-year plan, Mike will help develop and implement an educational initiative about this issue through several activities. The initiative will incorporate a retreat

First Anne Seeley Scholarship

Recipient Shares Her Experience at Physical Activity and Public Health Practitioners' Course

Sue Goodwin was the first recipient of the Anne Seeley Scholarship, established to enable a person outside the field of public health to attend the annual Physical Activity and Public Health Practitioners' Course on Community Interventions. Sue is the Regional Recreation Director of the Healthy Parks Program at the North County Community Services Agency in Southern California.

The annual conference, held this past September at the Sea Pines Resort and Conference Center

in Hilton Head, South Carolina, was a great experience for Sue, who reported to the Chronicles staff, "First of all, the experience and the breadth of the faculty were simply amazing. I have never had the opportunity to hear from such qualified individuals before, and that just set the tone for the rest of my experience. In my line of work, I don't hear much about data, and don't spend time with the data that I do have. What I learned was that evidenced-based data sets the tone for the work we all do, and to not use what works and the best

practices in the field is really not an option. I learned about evidenced-based decision-making; where to find such documentation, and how to use it in my work. I learned about the Community-Guide, of which I have downloaded portions from the CDC website already, to see just how I can put it to use in my field. I saw examples of how research can be used to further the work on the areas of obesity and lack of physical activity, and how to continue to partner with those in the health and wellness field to make a difference. I met people who I am in contact with now; who believe in what they do and will do whatever it takes to move these issues forward, so that everyone has the opportunity for a better quality of life. Lastly I learned that there are lots of good people doing good work, and that only by working together and sharing information will any of us succeed. It was an amazing experience and I thank you for the opportunity."

Sponsored by NACDD, the University of South Carolina Prevention Research Center, and the Centers for Disease Control, the scholarship honors the memory of Anne Seeley, a true pioneer in the area of active living. Anne Seeley, who recently passed away after a difficult battle with cancer, was Coordinator of the Active Community Environments Program within the California Department of Health Services' Physical Activity and Health Initiative. She was unrelenting in her effort to increase public health involvement in the development of national and state transportation, land use, trail building, and park and recreation priorities.

with experts in diabetes and depression in women to glean information for appropriate early detection tools for public health practitioners, a web-based resource guide, and a workshop on depression as a co-morbidity to diabetes.

Mike has been a Steering Committee member of both the Osteoporosis Council and the Women's Health Council and has held several administrative positions in the U.S. Public Health Service. He previously served as a member of the U.S. Senior Executive Service as the Associate Director of CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Mike is a graduate of Iona College in New Rochelle, New York with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration (Marketing) and operates his own consulting business.

Partnership Project on Physical Activity, Diabetes and Women's Health

Snip Young, PhD and Andrea Dunn, PhD are working on a partnership project for the Women's Health Council to evaluate web-based products that promote awareness among women's health coordinators and chronic disease programs on the importance of physical activity, diabetes prevention and control and women's health. Snip Young is familiar to NACDD members as the former Chronic Disease Director in the Colorado Department of Health. Snip developed the Kellogg obesity project for NACDD (see p. 4) and contributed as a team member of the State Success Stories project. Snip is a 2004 graduate of the University of Colorado with a PhD in Health and Behavioral Sciences.

Andrea has worked in local and state government and has held several university adjunct faculty appointments. She has also served in various research director positions with The Cooper Institute. Andrea has a PhD in Exercise Science from the University of Georgia.

Innovative Approaches to Prevent Childhood and Youth Obesity

Tennessee: Kids Gym

Offers fun, interactive exercise options utilizing video games. Kids control the “on screen” action with their stationary bikes. They pedal to move the on-screen vehicle and control the steering with their handle bars. The game stops when the pedaling stops!

Pennsylvania: School Market/ School Nutrition Policy

Engages students in developing healthy eating habits with lessons on nutrition and developing entrepreneurial skills. Students create and staff a fruit and vegetable market in their school where peer-to-peer relationships encourage consumption of fruits and vegetables.

Rhode Island: Community Demo Team

A chef demonstrates quick, easy, economical recipes that students can prepare for their families, teaches children to identify healthy snacks and use the food guide pyramid nutritional labels to make healthy choices.

You can view the full report on the environmental scan from NACDD’s website at http://www.chronicdisease.org/NEW/chronic_disease_reports.htm

Prevalent and Innovative Approaches to Obesity *Nationwide Environmental Scan of Obesity Prevention Programs for Kellogg Foundation Complete*

Though many states and communities nationwide are actively involved in preventing obesity in children and youth, the need of policymakers, potential funders, and practitioners to identify innovative programs continues. NACDD developed a nationwide environmental scan of innovative community-based obesity programs for the Kellogg Foundation and a set of recommendations to guide the development of comprehensive community-based obesity prevention initiatives. NACDD consultant Snip Young served as the principal investigator, supervising data collection, management, and analysis.

Almost 200 submissions from state, regional, national or community organizations, representing 40 states and the District of Columbia, were received that included having one of the following goals: to increase energy expenditure through physical activity, reduce or control caloric intake, or improve the nutritional habits of youth. The findings provide the Kellogg Foundation with a set of unique, promising or innovative community-based approaches and policy interventions including many that had not been published in the scientific literature.

These approaches can be categorized as prevalent and innovative. The most prevalent approaches were: 1) education of children, youth, parents, teachers, clinicians and/or policy makers 2) merging of community assets to develop and operate effective programs 3) creative use of agriculture and food industries, outdoor sports and recreation, schools and higher education, health care facilities, and volunteers and 4) advocacy for policies that encourage physical activity and healthy eating among children and youth.

Innovative community approaches contain at least two of the characteristics of prevalent approaches but are not equivalent to a proven, effective approach, even though they have the potential for being effective (see sidebar for state examples).

The project also included a brief survey of state chronic disease program directors on the nature of their collaborative activities to prevent childhood and youth obesity with communities or other state health agencies. Twenty-five of the 58 state and territorial chronic disease directors returned the survey for a 43% response rate. State program directors describe the nature of their relationship with community programs as working side-by-side and actively pursuing opportunities to work together. They describe their relationship with other state agencies in the area of childhood obesity as collaborative. State education, Cooperative Extension Service and transportation agencies were those most often mentioned as partners for chronic disease programs.

Though many states have no state plan for childhood and youth obesity prevention, state chronic disease program directors indicate that they collaborate on planning, funding, policy and media activities and share data with community groups and other state agencies on children and youth physical activity and nutrition interventions. Support for communities to mobilize resources is an important area for potential funders, private or public. Funding support is also vital for local capacity building and technical assistance on topics such as planning, organizing, media advocacy, fund-raising, and evaluation.

Blindness Prevention and Public Health

NACDD, Prevent Blindness America and CDC Collaborate in a Recent Workshop to Sow the Seeds for National Vision Plan

The increasing burden of blindness and low vision and its public health impact has led to a set of recommended activities that public health organizations can implement to address this problem, as outlined in the report *Vision Problems in the United States: Recommendations for a State Public Health Response* (available for download from NACDD's website at http://www.chronicdisease.org/NEW/chronic_disease_reports.htm). This report suggests the important role public health can play in coordinating these activities with community organizations and health care providers who already perform activities such as data collection and screening. NACDD, Prevent Blindness America (PBA), and CDC have partnered since 2004 to identify potential collaborative roles for state PBA affiliates and state chronic disease programs in blindness prevention.

Unlike most major chronic diseases, blindness and low vision currently are not addressed through their own programs in state health departments, except for diabetic eye disease in diabetes prevention and control programs. To begin laying the groundwork for a national vision plan for states, NACDD, PBA, and CDC met for two days in late October at the Rensselaerville Institute Conference Center in New York.

Representing NACDD were Appurathai Balamurugan (AR), Ladene Larsen (UT), Chris Maylahn (NY), Magon Mbadugha (GA), Maureen Spence (NY), and staff Barbara Larsen and David Yum; PBA was represented by five of its state and regional affiliates and national staff. Michael Duenas, O.D., of CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Diabetes

Translation and coordinator for the Division's National Vision Program also attended to share CDC's perspective on how states can best respond to address the burden of blindness and low vision.

The two main objectives of the workshop were (1) to develop action steps which would lead to the establishment of state-based vision programs; and (2) to formulate concepts for a vision preservation program in its initial stages of development. Action steps were carefully aligned with recommendations from the above-mentioned report. State level surveillance and research, coalition building, professional development, public education, and evaluation were the concepts most commonly identified, recognizing that state chronic disease programs have already been successful in incorporating such concepts in efforts addressing other problems.

Most importantly, however, workshop participants were unanimous in voicing support that blindness prevention efforts would be most effective if they are integrated with

other chronic disease programs and organizations. PBA and NACDD representatives defined appropriate roles for state chronic disease programs and service-delivery organizations in vision preservation and characterized an ideal collaboration with PBA affiliates. Workshop participants also realized that each organization brings certain strengths, whether through their organizational frameworks, resource bases, key leadership, and influence with policy makers about the importance of vision preservation programs.

To maintain the momentum derived from the workshop, each organization will continue to present findings at national conferences and meetings and update their respective membership on developments toward a national vision plan. Workshop participants also realized the importance of continuing health promotion and education activities, targeted to groups such as providers and policy makers. Finally, a white paper summarizing action steps and concepts from the workshop will be produced and disseminated in Winter 2006.



Chris Maylahn (NY), one of five NACDD state representatives at the workshop on blindness prevention and public health.

NACDD, YMCA, Steps Collaborate to Train 41 Local Communities

The NACDD partnership with the YMCA of the USA (Y-USA) continues to grow and engage more state public health partners in collaboration with local YMCAs. Last year, YMCAs offered 559,044 programs in communities through 2,594 local sites (see www.YMCA.net). The major efforts involving YMCAs and public health that are one part of Y-USA's Activate America Initiative are the YMCA/Steps/NACDD partnership and *Pioneering Healthier Communities*. NACDD worked directly with the Y-USA to plan an October workshop for 16 YMCAs and their partnering Steps Communities. At the end of the workshop, YMCAs were eligible to apply for \$10,000, made available through a cooperative agreement with YMCA and Steps, to work with Steps programs to promote health and reduce chronic diseases. The workshop was held Oct. 5-7 at the Blue Ridge Assembly Center in Asheville, N.C.

Since 2004, a total of 41 local programs have participated in these collaborative workshops. Reports to Y-USA indicate the local efforts are highly successful in leveraging resources to sustain prevention and control programs. The NACDD partnership with the Y-USA promises to be an important link to communities and families. Please share the link to locate your nearest YMCA, www.YMCA.net, with programs in your state and local communities.

Dennis Shepard, Project Manager for the Y-USA explains that many of the programs funded in 2004 have made progress in enhancing community programs in collaboration

with state and local health departments. One such example is the YMCA of Pueblo, Colorado. The Pueblo YMCA Marketing Director, Janelle Markert, and Cathy Dehn from the Pueblo City-County Health Department have worked together to plan and implement a "Corporate Cup Challenge" to promote healthy eating and physical activity in the worksite. For a consecutive 5 week period, participants recorded the number of fruit and vegetable servings per day and minutes of continuous vigorous activity. In all, 25 companies and over 1,650 individuals participated in the kickoff events held at Colorado State University, Pueblo.

"Fitness on the Riverwalk" was held for a two week period during the Challenge to raise awareness of community resources and the health benefits of increased physical activity – even at moderate levels. Free fitness classes were held for two weeks to encourage previously inactive individuals to try a variety of fun activities. Fitness offerings included Yoga, Tai Chi, Walk Class, Muscle Mix, Boot Camp and Resistance Training. Targeted activities in worksites included family events like the Rocky Mountain Steel Mills Corporate Sunday, and the Colorado Mental Health Institute Sunday. Both were opportunities for employees to spend quality time at the Y with their families.

Janelle Markert from the Pueblo YMCA says, "It has always been the mission of the YMCA to promote community activities that focus on improving the quality of community life. Through our collaboration with *Steps to a Healthier Pueblo* we were able to leverage existing strengths and resources

to achieve a common goal – a healthier Pueblo community. We couldn't be happier with our success!" Her sentiments are echoed by Cathy Dehn from the Pueblo City-County Health Department: "The collaboration with the YMCA for the Corporate Cup Challenge was ideal. It helped *Steps to a Healthier Pueblo* meet its already established action plan objectives of increasing physical activity and improving nutrition in worksites. The 'Fitness on the Riverwalk' program also allowed the YMCA and Steps to collaborate with another community partner, the Historical Arkansas Riverwalk Project (HARP). The HARP wants to continue and expand these programs next summer and has offered assistance because the classes were so successful." For more information, contact Ellen Jones, NACDD Program Consultant at (601) 853-9899.

Building State Epidemiological Capacity

Five States Make Significant Progress Towards Sustaining a Chronic Disease Epidemiologist

Having a full-time chronic disease epidemiologist (CDE) position greatly enhances a state health department's capacity to provide critical services including data collection, surveillance, and research expertise for public health practitioners and key stakeholders. Chronic disease epidemiologists also play a vital partnership role with state and community agencies to plan and implement public health programs. Since 2003, NACDD, in partnership with CDC's State-Based Epidemiology for Public Health Program Support (STEPPS) program, has provided funding for five chronic disease epidemiologists located in Hawaii, Minnesota, New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Tennessee. Ann Pobutsky, PhD of Hawaii and Yinmei Li, MD, MS of Tennessee began as state chronic disease epidemiologists in their respective health departments in 2003, while Mary Winnett, MD, MPH of Minnesota, Ludmilla Anderson, MD, MPH of New Hampshire, and Jacy Clarke, MPH of South Dakota all began in 2005. Each of the states contributes an increasing share of the salary support over the duration of the funding commitment from NACDD.

Funding through this partnership with the five states allows these epidemiologists to network with other chronic disease epidemiologists and share cutting-edge project ideas through monthly conference calls within both STEPPS and NACDD's Science and Epidemiology Committee. NACDD member lead for this partnership and Science and Epidemiology Committee Co-Chair Chris Maylahn of New York has guided technical assistance and mentoring efforts for these states since the program's inception.

NACDD is proud to feature the work of chronic disease epidemiologists in Hawaii and South Dakota in this issue of the *Chronicles*, and the Spring

2006 issue will highlight chronic disease epidemiologists' accomplishments in Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Tennessee.

Hawaii

Ann Pobutsky has been involved with several different partners to discuss policy development and methods of program implementation. Within the Hawaii Department of Health, Ann is a voting member of the Institutional Review Board and a member of the Immigrants and Migrants Task Force. Ann also participated in the Department of Health/Healthy Hawaii workshop to design the statewide physical activity and nutrition plan. Other groups in which Ann contributes are the Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children's Pediatric Obesity Task Force and Chronic Disease Data Work Group which is comprised of epidemiologists, program coordinators, the state BRFSS coordinator, and the Hawaii Health Survey (HHS) coordinator.

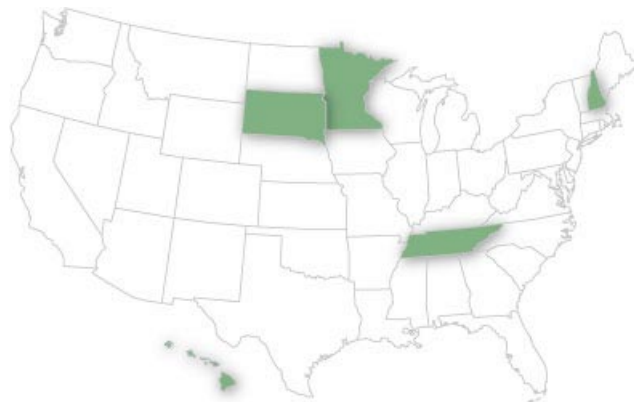
Ann helped conduct and publish several studies on childhood overweight and obesity including making two presentations at the Hawaii Global Public Health Conference in June 2005. The Community Health Division has included Ann as a key partner in their development of an integrated chronic disease prevention and control plan and is currently

planning a report on the chronic disease burden in Hawaii for 2006. Ann has also assisted the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) with their Epidemiology Capacity Assessment since 2003, which has shown the Hawaii Department of Health to be at the recommended capacity.

South Dakota

Jacy Clarke is currently involved with several important data collection and surveillance activities, including the state's Youth Tobacco Survey and Oral Health Survey. Jacy is also analyzing data for South Dakota's Physical Activity and Nutrition Plan and has been an active participant in strategic planning for the Diabetes Prevention and Control Program. Jacy's expertise has been invaluable in the community as she has helped the *Growing Healthy Initiative* with their program planning efforts.

Outreach and education is another important aspect of Jacy's work, having contributed frequently to the South Dakota Public Health Bulletin. She has also led courses in epidemiology and biostatistics for staff in the Office of Health Promotion. Jacy has helped the Well-Integrated Screening and Evaluation for Women Across the Nation (WISEWOMAN) program in South Dakota with their efforts to make prescription drugs more widely available at a lower cost to Medicaid patients.



NACDD Member and Project Team Receive Awards

The National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention honored David Hoffman, member from New York, and the Project Officer of the Future team at the 53rd Annual CDC & ATSDR Honor Awards Ceremony in September. David received the Partner in Public Health Improvement Award “for creating, managing, and expanding programs to prevent and control chronic diseases.” The James Virgil Peavy Workforce

Development Award went to the Project Officer of the Future team “for engaging stakeholders and university partners over 18 months to better define what project officers need to know and their functions projected 10 years into the future.” Congratulations to Amy Slonim of Michigan, Project Officer of the Future member lead, and Sandy Adams, Project Officer of the Future staff consultant for this well-deserved honor. The work of the awardees exemplifies the great job the Association and its members are doing to improve chronic disease policies, practices and programs.



Project Officer of the Future Team—James Virgil Peavy Workforce Development Award (l-r): Dennis Shepard, Sandy Adams, Amy Slonim, Fran Wheeler, Ellen Jones



David Hoffman, (NY)—Partner in Public Health Improvement Award

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