



USU CENTER FOR
HEALTH DISPARITIES
Building Partnerships for Better Health

The **G.O.S.P.E.L.** Program
Glorifying Our Spiritual & Physical Existence for Life



EQUAL HEALTH

VOL. 3, NO. 6 MAY 2009

The USU Center for Health Disparities newsletter funded by the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities

UMES' Dr. James Heimdal

■ *Christiane Minnick*

In the field of health disparities, a model exists called “community-based participatory research” (CBPR), which asks the community one intends to gather data from to be an equal partner in the process, rather than a subject. It can be a long process, built on trust, acceptance, and respect bestowed from the community or communities themselves. This type of research is a field of study in itself, and it’s been noted that not every researcher is suited to it – an infinite amount of patience and flexibility is required, as one of the basic tenets of CBPR is that the research must be directed by the interest from the community, and based on priorities and a time lines of their own.

This ability to roll with the punches, while not always easy, has nevertheless become second nature to James Heimdal, Ph.D., Chair of Exercise Physiology at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES), and a partner with the Center for Health Disparities at Uniformed Services University (USU). Not only has he built his career in health disparities



Dr. James Heimdal

SPOTLIGHT ON

on his flexibility and gifted capacity for seeing opportunities and building partnerships, his equanimity also helped him weather Hurricane Katrina, relocate to Maryland with his wife, their 2-year old son, and his in-laws, and wryly say of the experience, “If you were wanting to make a move, that was the time to do it.”

Heimdal’s career started in an underprivileged area of North Carolina in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, where his

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USUCHD in the Community-UMES Health Fair

■ *Liz Davenport Pollock*

On March 25, 2009, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore held their Spring Health Fair. The purpose of this event was to showcase health careers and provide health information and tips to its college students and community members. Members of the USUCHD-UMES Committee were there to support our partner in this effort. USUCHD Research Associates Chantel McGill and Paul Trotter, as

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Dr. James Heimdal, cont.

interest in health disparities was piqued, but his work in CBPR began to take shape in the inner city of Hartford, Connecticut, and later in the Mississippi Delta, at Louisiana Tech University. He chose UMES after Katrina, he says, because “I knew being at a HBCU (historically black colleges and universities) would be an ideal place to continue this type of work. The area around where I live, the eastern shore of Maryland and the Delmarva, has some of the worst health on any scale as anywhere in the country – as bad as the Mississippi Delta. I knew there was meaningful work to be done.”

The mission at UMES, Heimdal says, has been to build a comprehensive health institute. To that end, he began reaching out and creating partnerships in the community to support his own research initiatives, but also to lend his expertise to other initiatives, like the Tri-County Diabetes Alliance, made up of area health departments and hospitals. “Diabetes is one of the most, if not the most, important issues to address

in this area,” he says. “I wanted to contribute however I could,” while still keeping his focus on health disparities, which he asserts “is bigger than just one disease.” Yet Heimdal emphasizes that this is how partnerships build: From his work on one initiative with the diabetes coalition, he now has contacts in all of the primary care offices in the community. And in the past, partnerships like these have led to some of his most gratifying work.

As an example, Heimdal said, “I never thought I’d work on smoking cessation with pregnant woman. I knew a little about smoking cessation because of my cardiac patients, but I didn’t know anything about women’s health. But we had a big Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant, and so we got a coalition together – from the health department to dentists – and did some really strong stuff through the whole state of Connecticut. I’ve never seen anything better. We were able to get a lot of minority mothers off smoking during their pregnancies.”

*Continues on page 3***QUAL HEALTH**

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Suggestions for articles and
comments are welcome. Please
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UMES Health Fair, cont.

well as Liz Davenport Pollock, a USUCHD Research Assistant, provided blood pressure screenings, waist and hip circumference measurements, and body fat percentage tests to approximately 100-150 participants. Each participant received a USUCHD informational pamphlet with detailed explanations of each measurement to help them chart and understand their screening results.

“Of all the screenings we did, blood pressure was by far the most surprising to me,” comments McGill. “Approximately three-fourths of our participants had elevated blood pressures. This was a relatively young and educated population who were not aware that their blood pressure was in the hypertensive range.” Although some of the participants thought that fasting, dehydration, and/or physical activity (such as lifting weights) contributed to their elevated blood pressure results, these responses show the importance of educating young and old about how and when hypertension can actually develop. Many of the UMES students who received elevated blood pressure readings were interested in learning more about blood pressure and asked a number of blood pressure related questions of the USUCHD staff in attendance. “That was the really neat thing about the day,” said Davenport Pollock. “The students were so interested in learning about their health. They really wanted to know how they could improve it.”

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Dr. James Heimdal, cont.

“Wherever I was, I didn’t know how it was going to play out. I had an interest in working with African Americans in the inner city when I went to Hartford [Connecticut], but I didn’t have the experience. What I had was a willingness to contribute. I’ve always taken the approach of, ‘I’m here to help – what can I do?’ and that and God has led me down my path. I wanted to help poor people who didn’t have access to services. Now my focus has shifted to ethnic minorities, in particular African Americans, but to be honest, I’m here to help anyone who doesn’t have access to services or the knowledge to make healthful decisions – pregnant women, poor people, Hispanics, African Americans, wherever there’s a need.”

In addition to forming partnerships to address health disparities now, Heimdal has always been interested in who will continue the work in the future. “We want to get our students involved and develop individuals who are willing and able to contribute to the study of health disparities,” he said. “When I was in Connecticut, I wanted to hire an African American nutritionist or dietician to help me in the work I was doing. But I couldn’t find anybody. I was told there wasn’t an African American nutritionist in entire state – that was hard to believe. And it was the same story when I looked for African American health educators to help me with the work in Louisiana. We’re trying to improve the health of minorities, and I believe the messenger is as important as the message. There aren’t enough people to work in this field. That was one of the reasons I came to a HBCU – I want to train them. Maybe someday we’ll have a graduate program here with an emphasis of health promotion and health disparities. That’s where the academic side of things here at UMES is going.”

Heimdal’s partnership with the Center for Health Disparities at USU is helping towards that end, as well, by offering summer internships to UMES students. “The opportunity for me to place students in health disparity research has been my dream for a long time, and with our relationship with USU, I’m able to pick the very best.” He pauses before continuing. “My week was made when my best student – this young lady is so special and so smart – came

in crying with her letter of acceptance. These things are major steps. I get so excited about that. I’m trying to build their capacity and their interest, and then I’m going to send them to USU. And then they become the leaders of this research in the future. I mean, the leaders. That’s so neat, so exciting to have an outlet for your work.” ■

UMES Health Fair, cont.

Given the Center’s commitment to prevention through community awareness and education, USUCHD’s participation at the UMES health fair reminds us of the importance of educating community members. “As a result of participating in this health fair I am much more aware of the presence of elevated blood pressures in individuals you would not expect to be hypertensive,” McGill sum-



marizes. “I see why hypertension is often referred to as a silent killer. We need to focus more attention on young adults who appear healthy. This is a population of people that I would not have expected to have such high blood pressure and empowering them at this point of their lives would be beneficial to their health in the future”. Based on feedback from their experiences at the health fair, the USUCHD-UMES Committee has reaffirmed its commitment to assisting UMES in their health promotion efforts and look forward to returning for next year’s health fair. ■

Controlling High Blood Pressure

■ *Toni Harrison*

May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month, and USUCHD is committed to educating our community partners and empowering you to control this treatable condition.

50 million adult Americans have been diagnosed with high blood pressure, or hypertension. Hypertension is a condition where blood pressures are chronically higher than normal. Though there are some diseases which contribute to high blood pressure, the cause of this condition in most people remains unknown. A diagnosis is not made with just one reading, but it requires at least two readings of an elevated blood pressure on two separate occasions.

High blood pressure can occur without any signs and symptoms. In fact, many are unaware they have hypertension until they visit their doctor for a check-up or have their blood pressure taken at a community health fair or grocery store. Some of the symptoms that have been associated with having this condition are headaches (occurring near the back of the head), blurred vision, fatigue, dizziness, nosebleeds, shortness of breath, and chest pain. The risk factors associated with developing hypertension are cigarette smoking, being overweight or obese, not getting enough exercise, high cholesterol, diabetes, kidney disease, age, family history of heart disease, and the use of certain drugs like birth control pills or steroids. Left untreated, high blood pressure can lead to a number of diseases including coronary artery disease, stroke, heart failure, and kidney failure.

What do blood pressure readings mean?

Classification	Systolic Blood Pressure		Diastolic Blood Pressure
Normal	<120 mmHg	and	<80 mmHg
Prehypertension	120-139 mmHg	or	80-89 mmHg
Stage 1 Hypertension	140-159 mmHg	or	90-99 mmHg
Stage 2 Hypertension	≥160 mmHg	or	≥100 mmHg

Systolic blood pressure, the top number of a blood pressure reading, is the blood pressure produced when the heart beats. Diastolic blood pressure, the bottom number of a blood pressure reading, is the blood pressure between heart beats.

How your blood pressure is classified will determine what treatments your doctor may recommend. For those with stage 1 and 2 hypertension, your doctor may prescribe medication, but lifestyle changes will be suggested at all levels. In prescribing your treatment regimen, you doctor will have to know about any additional health problems and medications you are taking.

So, how can you help control or prevent high blood pressure?

1. Commit to stop smoking.
2. Lose the extra pounds. This could change your blood pressure by 5 to 20 mmHg.
3. Consume a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and lowfat dairy products, and could affect your blood pressure by 8 to 14 mmHg.
4. Limit your salt intake to 6 grams per day for a 2 to 8 mmHg change in your blood pressure.
5. Exercise. Try walking for 30 minutes on most days of the week, and your blood pressure could change by 4 to 9 mmHg.
6. Limit alcohol intake to no more than two drinks per day for men (one for women) and notice a 2 to 4 mmHg improvement in your blood pressure.

7. Inform your doctor of your other health problems and of any medications you are taking

Choose one (or more) of the suggestions on this list to begin today, you will be on your way to controlling your blood pressure. ■

Health Disparities Among African Americans

African Americans are at greater risk for obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, and cardiovascular disease than Caucasians. Day-to-day stress may contribute to these various diseases. The Human Performance Laboratory at the Uniformed Services University is studying why African Americans are at greater risk for these diseases by looking at measures of health (e.g. blood pressure), stress, lifetime experiences, lifestyle, and markers of health in blood and saliva.

To learn more about the study and how stress may affect your health, please call 301-295-1371 or email the humanperformancelab@usuhs.mil.

African American Coping Study

American University is conducting a study that investigates the concept of resiliency among African-Americans. The study involves completing questionnaires about anxiety, stress and coping, and religiosity and takes about 30-40 minutes to complete. Participants must be above the age of 18.

In order to participate, please email Kasaan Holmes at kh3898a@student.american.edu.

One out of every 50 participants will win a \$100.00 cash prize!

Menopausal women

What are some of the issues that affect sexuality during menopause? African American and Caucasian women are needed for a study addressing questions about menopause. Participation requires completing an online or paper survey that should take about 60 minutes to complete. Some volunteers who live in the Washington, DC metropolitan area may also be eligible to participate in a substudy that involves a small blood draw. Participants in the blood draw substudy may be compensated.

To see if you qualify, please send an email to menopausestudy1@gmail.com. We will then send you a link to the study screening questionnaire. For more information, please contact Robert Clark, MS, at 301-295-9666.

Parents of Teens!

Are you concerned about your daughter's eating? Is she above average weight, but not yet obese? Consider participating in a study at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Science (USUHS)/National Institutes of Health (NIH).

WHAT: To test how effective group programs are in the prevention of excess weight gain.

WHO: Girls aged 12-17 years who are above average weight and report loss of control eating.

WHERE: The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and the NIH Clinical Center in Bethesda, MD, just outside of Washington, D.C.

Eligible participants will be compensated.

For more information, call: 1-800-411-1222.

Refer to study 08-CH-0139.



Senior Health Insurance Counseling

DATE: Tuesday, May 12, 2009

TIME: 11:00 a.m.

LOCATION: Wheaton Library

A Maryland SHIP volunteer will meet with individual seniors and family members to answer questions about claims, supplemental insurance, Medicare, etc. Call 301-590-2819 to make an appointment.

Beginning Yoga for Adults

DATE: Saturday, May 16, 2009

TIME: 1:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Potomac Library

Participatory demonstration of beginning yoga lead by Jane Chente Wu Adams. Chairs provided for those with limited mobility. Please register in library or at 240-777-0690.

Blood Pressure Screening

DATE: Wednesday, May 20, 2009

TIME: 10:30 a.m.

LOCATION: Wheaton Library

This free service is provided by the American Red Cross and is available until 12:30 P.M.

Blood Pressure Clinic

DATE: Thursday, May 28, 2009

TIME: 1:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Kensington Park Library

Blood pressure reading and blood monitoring test for glucose. Offered for adults by a registered nurse from Arden Courts Assisted Living.

Senior Health Insurance Counseling

DATE: Tuesday, June 9, 2009

TIME: 11:00 a.m.

LOCATION: Wheaton Library

A Maryland SHIP volunteer will meet with individual seniors and family members to answer questions about claims, supplemental insurance, Medicare, etc. Call 301-590-2819 to make an appointment.

Blood Pressure Screening

DATE: Wednesday, June 17, 2009

TIME: 10:30 a.m.

LOCATION: Wheaton Library

This free service is provided by the American Red Cross and is available until 12:30 P.M.

Health Freedom: A Path to Wellness 5k walk

DATE: Saturday, June 13, 2009

(Rain date: Saturday, June 20th)

TIME: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Woodlawn Cultural Park, 16501 Norwood Road Sandy Spring, MD 20860

5K Walk (3 mile) at Woodlawn Cultural Park. Registration at 9:00 a.m.; Non-guided tours at 9:45 a.m.; Guided tours starting at 10:00 a.m. \$5 per person. Children 10 and under are free. Family rate - \$15 includes 2 adults and 3 children. Pre-register and receive one free Freedman's Tag key ring. Call 301-421-5445 for registration information. Note: This is a wooded trail and not conducive to strollers & wheelchairs.

Blood Pressure and Monitoring Glucose Count

DATE: Thursday, June 18, 2009

TIME: 1:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Kensington Park Library

Blood pressure reading and blood monitoring test for glucose. Offered for adults by a registered nurse from Arden Courts Assisted Living. 1:30 to 2:30 p.m..

African American Health Education Program/Diabetes

DATE: Tuesdays, July 7, 14, 21, 28, 2009

TIME: 5:00 p.m.

LOCATION: White Oak Library

Join us for a four part class, beginning on July 7, on the symptoms, prevention, and treatment of Diabetes.

Senior Health Insurance Counseling

DATE: Tuesday, July 14, 2009

TIME: 11:00 a.m.

LOCATION: Wheaton Library

A Maryland SHIP volunteer will meet with individual seniors and family members to answer questions about claims, supplemental insurance, Medicare, etc. Call 301-590-2819 to make an appointment.

Health Freedom: A Path to Wellness**WANTED!****Walking Group Leaders!**

Start a 6 week walking group

Raise funds for your organization or church

Celebrate your improved fitness at the Health Freedom Walk

WHEN: Saturday June 13, 2009**WHERE:** Woodlawn Cultural Park 16501 Norwood Road Sandy Spring, MD 20860**GROUP LEADER TRAINING, INCENTIVES, AND SUPPORT PROVIDED!**

The African American Health Program invites you to **Begin Your Journey** and start a Circle of Friends Walking Group at your church, worksite or organization. The training will be provided by the **Health Freedom: A Path to Wellness**. Be a part of this exciting adventure to a new and healthier you and develop leadership and fitness skills along the way.

Your **Preparation to Wellness** starts with six weekly 1-hour sessions designed to motivate your group to get in shape and stay fit.

Weekly Sessions Include:

- Health and wellness information
- History lessons of the Underground Railroad
- Weekly gifts to all members

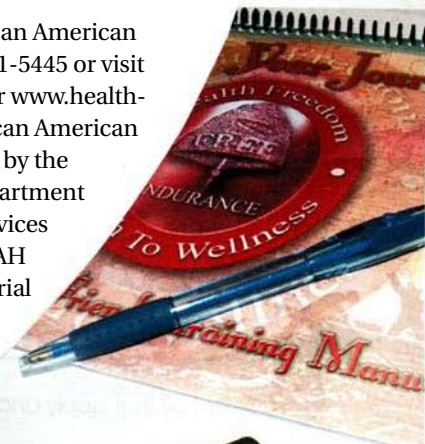
Your group's commitment and accomplishments on their journey to wellness will be celebrated at the Health Freedom Walk on Saturday, June 13, 2009 (Rain Date: June 20) at Woodlawn Cultural Park in Sandy Spring, MD 20860 .

Throughout the year, we encourage the group to continue their journey to wellness with monthly meetings for motivation and group support.

As a fund-raising opportunity: Your Circle of Friends group can raise funds for your church or organization by having your group collect donations from sponsors.

WHEN: Monday, March 23rd & Thursday, March 26th (both sessions required) 6pm-9pm at Colesville Center 14015 New Hampshire Avenue Silver Spring, MD 20904 OR Saturday, March 28th 9am-4pm at Department of Recreation 4010 Randolph Road Silver Spring, MD 20902

To sign up, call the African American Health Program at 301-421-5445 or visit www.onehealthylife.org or www.health-freedominc.com The African American Health Program is funded by the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services and administered by BETAH Associates, Inc. This material may be reproduced.



Recipe for a

Healthy Heart

Symposium



A G.O.S.P.E.L. Event

Free Screenings/Services Include:

- Cholesterol
- Glucose
- Blood Pressure
- Body Composition
- Oral Cancer
- Carbon Monoxide Testing
- Cessation Counseling

Presentation Topics Include:

- Heart Health
- Hypertension
- Stroke
- Healthy Cooking Demonstration



Saturday, May 30, 2009 | 9:30 am - 2 pm

**Suburban Hospital Auditorium
8600 Old Georgetown Rd.
Bethesda, MD 20814**

Lunch Will Be Provided | Free Parking

Registration required | 301.896.3939, option 2
Space is limited

Sponsors: ■ Adventist Healthcare ■ Department of Health and Human Service ■ Fit Solution ■ Holy Cross Hospital ■ Montgomery County Cancer Tobacco Initiative ■ Montgomery General Hospital ■ National Council on Patient Information and Education ■ Primary Care Coalition ■ Suburban Hospital ■ USU Center for Health Disparities

