

Building Research Connections

Spring 2008

Volume 4, Issue 2



Letter from the Director, March 2008

We are excited to announce that we are in the early stages of fundraising for new dissertation research fund at the Center for Research on Women and Gender. Alice Dan, Professor Emerita and CRWG co-founder and former director has generously donated \$10,000 in seed funding to establish an endowment to fund dissertation research for UIC students conducting research related to women and gender. The challenge for the CRWG is to raise at least an additional \$15,000 over the next three years to fully fund the endowment. When we reach our goal, our dissertation research fund that was established seven years ago will be sustained indefinitely without need for additional fundraising. We are thrilled about the potential to continue to fund students' research at this critical stage of their careers, and hope you will consider donating to the fund. To learn more, please visit page 12.

You are all invited to our event scheduled for April 7 to celebrate the release of the newest *Our Bodies, Ourselves* book focusing on pregnancy and childbirth. Author and Boston Women's Health Collective Co-Founder Judy Norsigian will be present to read from the book, and Carrie Klima from the UIC College of Nursing will give a brief history of health care for pregnant women in the United States during the past 100 years. The presentation will conclude with a book-signing and networking reception. More details can be found on Page 13.

The CRWG and its various programs – WISE, WISEST and the CoE – have been full of activity during the current academic year. Please continue reading to learn more. Thank you for sharing in our efforts to improve the lives of women and girls.

Looking to the future with good health and hope.

Stacie Geller, Director
Center for Research on Women and Gender and National Center of Excellence in Women's Health

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Featured Researcher: Barbara Risman, PhD

By Veronica Arreola

"Science for science sake" is not the mantra of Barbara Risman, Ph.D., head, UIC Department of Sociology. Dr. Risman believes that social scientists have an ethic to uphold, one that respects the subject. This also means that her science does not just study, but engages others by moving beyond her personal research goals. This is one reason given by Dr. Risman when I asked her why she chose to move to UIC two years ago. "The environment at UIC and in the department is very supportive of engaged research and collaborative work." She not only moved her research to UIC, but also the Council on Contemporary Families (CCF).



Dr. Risman is the executive officer of CCF, a non-profit organization that is just past its 10th anniversary and is growing every day. The CCF is dedicated to enhancing the national conversation about what contemporary families need and how these needs can best be met. UIC has been very supportive of the organization and has provided space and a graduate assistant - even Dr. Risman needs some help to run a national organization and a top sociology department. Founded out of the frustration felt after seeing excellent research on family issues taken out of context, misquoted, and twisted by corporate media or conservative think tanks, CCF is an offensive organization, not a defensive one. Dr. Risman tells of how writing corrective letters to the editors or speaking to media editors only exasperated her and colleagues frustration. Instead CCF publishes briefing papers on issues ranging from teen age pregnancy to women and money, and pitches them as stories to media producers (newspaper journalists, TV news directors, and so forth). In fact, if you have research that the world should know about, contact Dr. Risman to see how CCF can partner in getting your story out to the masses.

The CCF has an upcoming conference and it should really reflect what the organization is all about: the titles of sessions include "Young People Hooking Up- Should We Be Worried?" and "Cohabitation: Is it Good for Love and Marriage?" There is no political or philosophical litmus test. In fact, there are few issues members can all agree on.

Dr. Risman sees how traditionally viewed "women's issues" like healthcare and paid sick days have become mainstream issues as part of a long and slow evolution. "As we see changes in the family and the workforce become normal, we will see these trends moved forward." In my conversation with her, we discussed how men are increasingly embracing caregiving as a role and evolving this women's issue into a men's or mainstream issue, as well as a new generation of workers who expect to make a living AND raise a family.

Dr. Risman's current research is focused on how gender plays out in middle school girls and boys. She has found that the range of acceptable femininity is increasing, yet the range of acceptable masculinity has remained narrow and constrained on many boys and young men. At the same time, hyper-femininity is increasingly targeted as unacceptable. Thus girls are fine with dressing up as well as getting dirty on the ball field, but a girl who is a super "girly girl" is harassed. Despite the advances of feminism and the ability for girls and women to do multiple things, the body still remains and in fact is increasingly the focus of one's femininity. Sure one can be a star athlete, but you better darn sure look like a girl.

Dr. Risman isn't all business though. She recently finished reading *The Time Traveler's Wife* by Audrey Niffenegger and is currently reading *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini.

When asked what she would do if someone handed her \$1 million for UIC she responded with infrastructure - first class classrooms, a totally wired campus, elevators that work, and investing in teaching and research. She explained that this is a first class institution; we should have facilities that reflect that.

The addition of Dr. Risman to the UIC family is one that will pay off in spades. She has brought to UIC a growing organization that melds academic research with media with policy decisions. Dr. Risman and the CCF show that academics aren't living in their own world, but engaging with everyone to make sense out of our fast paced and evolving society.

The spring conference of the Council on Contemporary Families will be held at University of Illinois at Chicago on April 25-26, 2008. The theme will be "Family Issues in Contention". To learn more about the CCF or to register for the conference, please visit <http://www.contemporaryfamilies.org/>.



Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health

UIC BIRCWH Program Supports 3 Women's Health Scholars

The UIC BIRCWH Program is a women's health research career development program (National Institutes of Health K12 Grant) that was awarded to the UIC Center of Excellence in Women's Health in September 2007. The purpose of the BIRCWH Program is to optimize the success of junior faculty in developing a substantive and sustained research program in women's health science.

Three exceptional scholars are currently participating in the program, which is expected to include at least 8 scholars over the 5 year grant period. Applications are currently being reviewed to select a fourth scholar who will be named in the near future.



Joanna Burdette, PhD is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Medicinal Chemistry and Pharmacognosy in the College of Pharmacy. She also holds a courtesy appointment in the Department of Biopharmaceutical Sciences. Her research interests include understanding how ovulation-induced wounding is associated with early events in ovarian cancer, the engineering of steroids as intracellular magnetic resonance contrast agents, and the role of steroid and peptide hormones to regulate each other in breast cancer cells. Her past research projects have focused primarily on the role of hormones in the reproductive process and in aging, including characterizing several botanicals as alternatives for menopausal symptoms, the contribution of ovulation in ovarian cyst formation, and the stimulation of ovarian cellular proliferation in response to gonadotropins.

Colleen Corte, PhD, RN is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Health, Mental Health, and Administrative Nursing in the College of Nursing. The focus of her research has been on gender differences in cognitive vulnerabilities for early alcohol use and alcohol problems. With the support of the BIRCWH program, Dr. Corte will focus her research on determining whether impairments in the underlying structure of self-concept differ for socioeconomically disadvantaged adolescent girls of different race/ethnicities and different stages of development, and whether these impairments are differentially associated with early alcohol use and misuse. The long-term goal of her research program is to prevent early alcohol use and the development of risky patterns of drinking that lead to alcohol use disorders in at-risk youth, and girls in particular, given their higher liability to problem alcohol use. This work will lead to the development of not only gender-specific, but culturally and developmentally specific interventions aimed at self-concept to prevent early alcohol use and alcohol problems.



Bryna Harwood, MD, MS is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology in the College of Medicine. She recently joined the faculty at UIC to become Director of the Family Planning Fellowship. Her research has included epidemiologic research and Phase I, II, and III clinical trials in contraception and medical abortion. She also completed an independent research project investigating the use of buccally-administered misoprostol as a single agent for medical abortion, and her masters thesis entitled "Life Table Analysis to Estimate the Efficacy of Misoprostol in the USC Medical Abortion Trials" was the first such analysis of the largest dataset of misoprostol used as a single agent for medical abortion. Dr. Harwood aspires to continue health services research in areas including contraception and other family planning research that will ultimately result in fewer unplanned pregnancies and healthier women. This work would include not only research to evaluate the safety and efficacy of new methods of contraception, but also research measuring the efficacy of such methods in different populations, measuring health outcomes associated with different methods of contraception, and understanding patient and provider medical decision-making to improve choices, compliance, and efficacy.



The BIRCWH program will be sponsoring seminars every four to six weeks on a variety of topics related to women's health research. The first BIRCWH seminar, "Bridging Scientific World Views: Translation from Cells to Society", took place on January 28. Presenters Dr. Joan Shaver (UIC College of Nursing) and Dr. Karen Colley (UIC College of Medicine) led a discussion of how the health sciences disciplines differ in their world views and what is needed to create mutual appreciation in the interest of interdisciplinary scientific collaboration. On March 13, Julie Zerwic (UIC College of Nursing) and JoEllen Wilbur (Rush University College of Nursing) spoke about their work in the College of Nursing's Center for Reducing Risks in Vulnerable Populations at a seminar entitled "Working with Vulnerable Populations".

Future BIRCWH seminars have been scheduled on the topics Participating in Community Research (April), Gender Research (May), and Mentoring (June).

Please visit the BIRCWH website at <http://www.uic.edu/orgs/womenshealth/bircwh.htm> for additional information on the BIRCWH program, scholars and all of our upcoming events!

WISE PRE-COLLEGE OUTREACH

Inspiring and empowering girls K to 12

What's UP With WISE?

PRE-COLLEGE ACTIVITIES



Parents, teachers, and mentors gather



From left to right: Amy, Shaquita, Eboni and Kirsra enjoy the gumballs they won



Abigail and Linda won first place for math problem competition.



Shaquita and Amy are working as a team.

Sonya Kovalevsky High School Mathematics Day

On February 12th, the WISE pre-college outreach program welcomed students from Young Women's Leadership Charter School (YWLCS) and LakeView High School for an event to celebrate and honor the memory of Sonya Kovalevsky and learn about the challenges she faced and the barriers that she overcame to become a mathematician. Kovalevsky was a brilliant Russian mathematician who became a political activist in the 1860s so she could pursue a career in mathematics at a time when the Russian university system was closed to women.

At the Sonya Kovalevsky High School Mathematics Day students also had an opportunity to learn about how vital a strong mathematics background is in various careers. Kristin Taghon, a technical manager for software development firms and a long-term mentor in the WISE pre-college outreach program, stressed the variety of careers where mathematical training is key to success. Careers in marine biology, software design, and market analysis were included in a discussion about fields where mathematics training is an important foundational element in the college curriculum. Samantha Melchiori, a senior quality engineer for Caterpillar, Inc., described how she utilizes statistical analysis to resolve quality issues for Caterpillar equipment breakdowns out in the field. The Six Sigma system of eliminating defects was discussed in detail to help the students understand the importance of data collection and data analysis to improve quality.

Students also participated in a mathematics poster competition and a team problem solving competition. Congratulations to Linda, a sophomore at LakeView High School, who received first place in the poster competition with her poster entitled "Got Math." The poster focused on the many uses of mathematical skills in everyday life. Abigail, a junior at YWLCS and Linda teamed up to win the first place in the problem solving competition. Mathematical problems were selected to challenge students to work together as a team for speed and efficiency, allowing them to better understand how teamwork is beneficial in math-oriented careers.



Linda received first place for her "Got Math" poster

Sonya Kovalevsky Day was made possible through generous sponsorship from the Association for Women in Mathematics, the Caterpillar Foundation, Elizabeth City State University, the Motorola Foundation, the National Security Administration, and the UIC Women in Science and Engineering Program.

In addition to financial support from the above organizations, many volunteers contributed time and energy to making the day a success. The volunteers included WISE students Ekta Panchal and Erin Perkey, WISE staff members Ruth Czarnecki-Lichtstein, Tanisha Johnson, and Sarah Shirk, mentor volunteers Samantha Melchiori and Kristin Taghon, YWLCS math teacher Kamton Woodard, and several parents of our students. Thank you for supporting the mathematicians of the future!

What's UP With WISE?

COLLEGE ACTIVITIES

The fall 2007 semester flew by in the WISE office where we were packed in like sardines! With the growth of the WISE program we are up to four graduate assistants working on outreach, community college transition, and on-campus activities. A quick recap of the fall includes the most successful semester in the WISE Wing. Led by peer mentor, Beth Cowgill, the women living on the 3rd floor of Tower A of the James Stukel Towers have bonded and created a true living and learning community. They not only meet once a month for WISE events, but also on a regular basis for events such as "Cupcakes Not Cramming," a frosting topped evening of study groups; rock climbing in Student Recreation Facility; and science-related fun events like building a back-up battery for an iPod or cell phone from Altoid tins. The peer mentors enjoyed their dinner with alumna Patricia Frank (Biological Sciences) and have been great at meeting on a regular basis. The World of WISE Choices events have ranged from stress management to finding scholarships.

For the second year in a row WISE sponsored three students to attend the annual Public Leadership Education Network (PLEN - <http://www.plen.org/>) Women in Science/Technology Policy Conference in Washington, DC over the winter break. Two first year students and one graduate student spent a week meeting women with science and technology backgrounds –



A demonstration at the Consumer Product Safety Commission

representing agencies ranging from the National Institutes of Health to the Consumer Product Safety Commission – who help craft the policies that affect us all. The students are planning on presenting what they learned at a panel discussion to be held later this semester. Thank you to UIC Housing and the department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering for co-sponsoring the students to attend this amazing conference! WISE also sponsored students to attend the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing conference. WISE Director, Veronica I. Arreola, accompanied Elizabeth Langon (sophomore, civil engineering) and high school student, Jessica Zamora, to the Society for Women Engineers Regional Conference in Peoria, Illinois. It was a huge conference (800 attendees) and many engineering companies were there for the sole purpose of finding interns or employees. Elizabeth may have landed an internship from this trip too! WISE plans to continue to assist students in attending conferences that help push their careers to the next level.

Activities this semester include an evening of mentoring and bowling with the peer mentors, discussions on alternatives to medical school, and a visit from the Peace Corps on how engineers and scientists can change people's lives for the better. The WISE Wing students will continue to meet, but we can't say what will be covered because their programming is entirely student driven this year! If you know an incoming student, tell them to request the WISE Wing because it's a great place to live and learn. The next WISE Chics meeting will be Monday, April 7 in SCE Room 611.



UIC PLEN participants Samira Payne and Candace Gunby (They are also WISE Wing students and participate in the WISE mentoring program)

The end of another year full of hard work and many successes will be marked at our End of the Year celebration on April 10, 2008 at 6 pm in 605 Student Center East (formally CCC). Four WISE scholarships, Mentor Pair of the Year, Mentor of the Year, WISE Chic of the Year, and our many WISE Travel Grant recipients will be honored. Please join us as the students celebrate!

For more details about the WISE Program, visit <http://www.uicwise.org/>

WISEST FACULTY FOCUS
Helping women faculty *ADVANCE*

WISEST Supports Faculty Diversity in STEM Fields

We have been in a whirl of activities the past few months. The WISEST Executive Committee approved the use of startup funds to support the hiring of two new outstanding science, engineering, technology and math (STEM) faculty women in Chemistry and Computer Science next fall, and a new faculty member joined Electrical and Computer Engineering in January.

We are now six months into the first year of the two year “Post Doctoral Research Associates for Academic Diversity” initiative and have held five monthly seminars to help the post docs with essential career development skills. In January the post docs began a multi-part series on the job and career search process by engaging with a panel representing a liberal arts college, industry, and a national lab to understand what it is like to work in and build a career in these environments. The post docs also learned about the goals and process of a Research I search committee and how it evaluates candidates. In the February seminar, three scholars shared information on how to prepare proposals for the major federal grant agencies: NSF, DOD, DOE and NIH. In March, the post docs had an opportunity to receive feedback on one of their manuscripts and they participated in a panel discussion led by two Visiting Scholars from Earth and Environmental Science and Computer Science who addressed “How to Get Published”. The monthly seminars are for not only the WISEST Post Docs, but all women post docs in the STEM fields.

In February, the WISEST External Advisory Committee (EAC) re-convened at UIC. The committee consists of Sue Rosser, Georgia Tech (WISEST EAC Chair); Suzanne Brainard, University of Washington; Molly Carnes, University of Wisconsin; Daryl Chubin, AAAS; Robert Drago, Pennsylvania State University; Abigail Stewart, University of Michigan; and Virginia Valian, Hunter College and CUNY Graduate Center. The meeting also included the Chancellor, the provost, the deans of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the College of Engineering, and members of the WISEST Executive Committee. The EAC and others in attendance were brought up to date with the varied accomplishments of the WISEST program over the past year. Subsequently, the committee submitted a letter to the provost and the chancellor on their insights and recommendations for the future direction of the program.

While he was in Chicago for the EAC meeting, Dr. Robert Drago presented a WISEST Leadership Seminar talk entitled “Gender and Family in the Academy.” Dr. Drago addressed issues related to family commitments and academia. He provided detailed strategies for making the academy more responsive to commitments beyond an academic career including inclusive practices and work-life policies.

In March, STEM departments partnered with WISEST to host presentations with visiting scholars at UIC. Dr. Mary Lou Soffa, Professor of Computer Science at the University of Virginia presented “Path-Sensitive Analysis for Security” on March 13. Dr. Soffa’s talk was presented by the Computer Science Department. Dr. Lynn M. Walter, Professor of Geology at the University of Michigan presented “Carbonate vs. Silicate Mineral Weathering Rates: Significance of Dolomite for Riverine Mg Fluxes and the Global Carbon Cycle” on March 13. Dr. Walter’s talk was presented by the Earth and Environmental Sciences Department. Dr. Erin O’Shea, Professor of Molecular & Cellular Biology, Chemistry, & Chemical Biology at Harvard University, Investigator at Howard Hughes Medical Institute, and Director of FAS Center for Systems Biology presented “Mechanistic Basis of Oscillation in a Three-Protein Circadian Clock” on March 18, presented by the Chemistry Department.

To learn more about WISEST, please visit the WISEST website at <http://www.uicwisest.org>.



Photos from the WISEST
External Advisory
Committee Meeting,
February, 2008.





UIC CoE Implementing Postpartum Hemorrhage Prevention in the Developing World

India and Nigeria together account for a significant number of the world's maternal deaths. According to the World Health Organization, in 2005 India had the highest number of maternal deaths worldwide (117,000) followed by Nigeria (59,000).¹ Yet at 1,100 deaths per 100,000 live births, Nigeria's maternal mortality rate was significantly higher than India's at 450/100,000. In both Nigeria and India, maternal mortality is highest among the poor, non-literate, and rural women, and among those women who deliver outside the hospital setting without a skilled birth attendant.

The UIC CoE is involved in an \$11 million grant, in collaboration with Dr. Suellen Miller at University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and Pathfinder International (an international non-governmental organization) to implement a program for postpartum hemorrhage (PPH) prevention in the developing world. "Continuum of Care: Addressing Postpartum Hemorrhage in India and Nigeria" (CC-PPH) is a 4 year project to prevent and manage PPH that will support Indian and Nigerian women in accessing needed care. This project is a collaboration that developed based on the successful work by UIC CoE Director Dr. Stacie Geller and Dr. Suellen Miller, Director of Safe Motherhood Programs, Women's Global Health Imperative, UCSF.

CC-PPH combines three simple, research-based technologies to reduce the impact of PPH through early diagnosis and timely appropriate management:

1. Prophylactic use of misoprostol – a uterotonic drug administered immediately after childbirth that helps the uterus contract.
2. Measuring and collecting blood loss using a blood collection drape that allows for fast and accurate assessment of blood loss to diagnose postpartum hemorrhage.
3. Using the Non-pneumatic Anti-Shock Garment (NASG) to treat obstetric hemorrhage.

Dr. Geller's research demonstrated (1) that using the blood drape, a plastic bag-like tool to collect blood after the delivery of a baby, measured the amount of blood loss more accurately than the visual assessment of blood loss and may have a particular utility in the developing world for diagnosing PPH², and (2) that using Misoprostol to treat PPH when other uterotonics were not available was both feasible and effective.³ Misoprostol is an inexpensive drug that does not require refrigeration and can be administered orally, eliminating the need for needles or syringes. It helps the uterus contract squeezing the blood vessels closed and thus prevents excessive bleeding.^{4,5}



Blood Collection Drape

Dr. Miller studied the effectiveness of the Non-pneumatic Anti-Shock Garment (NASG), a lightweight neoprene and velcro device that resembles the bottom part of a wetsuit, for the treatment of obstetric hemorrhage. She found that use of the NASG was associated with a 50% decrease in measured median blood loss compared with standard clinical management of obstetric haemorrhage.^{6,7} The NASG can be manufactured inexpensively and is reusable. It can stabilize and resuscitate a woman, keeping her alive while being transported for further treatment or while waiting at a facility for care.



Non-pneumatic Anti-Shock Garment

continued

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COE Updates cont'd

The goal of CC-PPH is to develop and implement a PPH continuum of care model that incorporates an appropriate uterotonic, the blood collection drape, the NASG, and community level transportation and communication networks. The objectives of this intervention are to reduce maternal mortality by:

- Increasing awareness of community members and providers of the danger signs of PPH and knowledge of the three technologies that can be used to diagnose and prevent PPH
- Improving the capacity of community members and providers to make timely decisions to seek medical care for PPH
- Increasing the ability of community members and health care providers to identify and reach medical personnel or facilities for PPH treatment; and
- Improving the capacity of health care providers to provide high-quality, appropriate care to women with PPH

As part of the intervention activities at Nigerian and Indian health facilities, Pathfinder International, UIC CoE and UCSF are targeting their efforts to train health care providers at all levels of care to prevent and manage PPH early as a way to improve the quality and accessibility of care. All health personnel will be trained on using the blood drape and NASG, but training on the prophylactic use of Misoprostol will be given only to the skilled birth attendants who are allowed to give Misoprostol at home or at a primary health center (PHC) setting when other uterotonics are unavailable. All health personnel will also be trained on using NASG; however, only the physicians at tertiary level hospitals will be trained to remove the device and continue with emergency care.

The CC-PPH project is presently in its initial stages. For more information, please contact Mydhili Moorthie at mmoort2@uic.edu or 312-413-4255.

Heart Health Program Targets Rural Women

In the fall of 2007, the CoE was awarded a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health for the "Southern Seven Women's Initiative for Cardiovascular Health" (SSWICH), a gender-based collaborative program with the goal of improving the cardiovascular risk profile of adult women living in the 7 southernmost counties of Illinois. The CoE is partnering with the Southern Seven Health Department, the Illinois Department of Public Health Office of Women's Health, and The Cooper Institute to accomplish this goal by employing 3

strategies: (1) the enhancement of *Heart Smart for Women*, a theory-based educational program for women to increase physical activity and encourage healthy nutrition; (2) a peer education program for cardiovascular health conducted by women who have completed the HSFW program; and (3) a community-based media campaign to promote heart healthy behaviors among the women living throughout the 7 county region, as well as members of their families.

The first 6 months of SSWICH has been devoted to preparing for the implementation of the program by hiring new staff, developing evaluation protocols and tools, refining curricular materials, and arranging, publicizing, and implementing *Heart Smart for Women* classes.

The Cooper Institute was responsible for making enhancements to the *Heart Smart for Women* curriculum, which is being implemented by the Southern Seven Health Department through a grant from the Illinois Department of Public Health Office of Women's Health. *Heart Smart for Women* is a 12-week class available to adult women living in the southern seven counties of Alexander, Hardin, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, and Union. Currently, the Southern Seven Health Department is serving approximately 90 women who are enrolled in 6 classes at community sites throughout the region.

Women who complete the *Heart Smart for Women* classes will be invited to become peer educators in a new program called *Heart to Heart*. *Heart to Heart* is currently being developed by The Cooper Institute, and will provide volunteer peer educators with 8 modules that can be used to disseminate heart healthy messages to other women as well as men in their social networks. Peer educators will receive gift cards for local merchants based on the number of individuals they talk to. The Southern Seven Health Department staff members are actively promoting *Heart to Heart* in the *Heart Smart for Women* classes, and the program is expected to begin this summer.

To learn more about SSWICH, please contact Kris Zimmermann at kzimme3@uic.edu.





COE Updates cont'd



CoE Collaborations Promote Awareness about HIV/AIDS in Women and Girls

National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day is an annual observance that takes place on March 10 to bring attention to the impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls worldwide. In celebration of the 2008 National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, the CoE worked with organizations in the Chicago area to promote events to raise awareness about the impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls, prevent HIV/AIDS in at-risk women and girls, and provide support to women infected with HIV.

On Friday, March 7, Centro San Bonifacio hosted an HIV training event for its peer educator program. The event included an overview of HIV, including modes of transmission, prevention strategies, common myths, and screening and referral services. The event also honored and recognized HIV victims. The peer educators were given materials in both Spanish and English to for distribution.

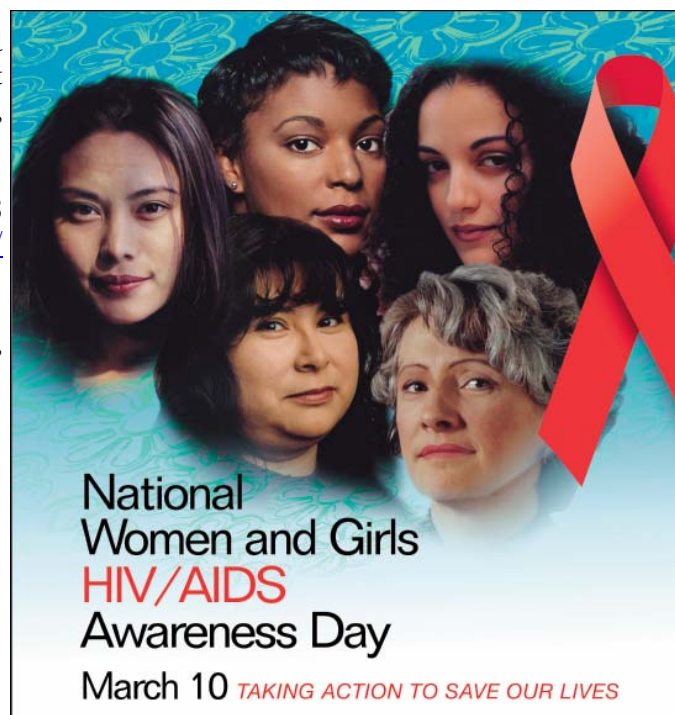
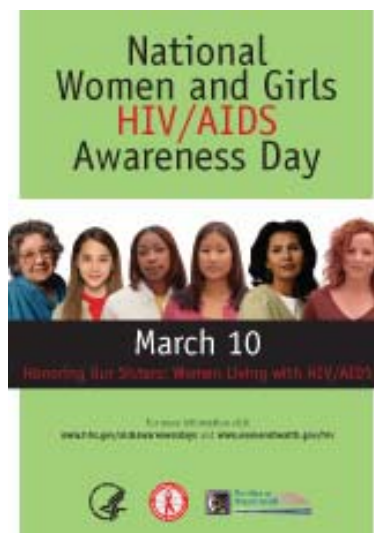
Also on Friday, March 7, the CoE was represented at a Concert in honor of International Women's Day, held at Spot6 in Chicago, where Hispanic teenagers were able to get information about sexual health resources and AIDS and ask candid questions in an informal environment while enjoying music from local ska bands like Doppelganger and Condenada.

On Saturday, March 8, the Chicago Women's AIDS Project teamed up with UIC's American Medical Student Association to host "Sisters Sharing Our Stories, Finding Our Strength: A Conference for HIV Positive Women". The conference included workshops and resources for women, inspiring performances and speakers, raffle prizes, and other activities for HIV positive women.

Also on Saturday, March 8, Proactive Community Services sponsored "Honoring Our Sisters: Women Living with HIV/AIDS." The event included preventative health education, HIV testing, guest speakers, entertainment, and food, and a performance by the Global Girls.

For more information about National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, visit <http://www.hhs.gov/aidsawarenessdays/days/woman/index.html>

To learn more about the events co-sponsored by the UIC CoE, contact Kris Zimmermann at kzimme3@uic.edu.



Viewpoints

Tapping into the Woman's Amazing Body: The Potential of NFP to Unleash Feminist Power

By Regina Rust, CRWG Graduate Assistant
MPH Candidate in Community Health Sciences

A recent survey showed that only 1 in 12,382 women could correctly answer questions about their reproductive life cycle (American Infertility Association (AIA) 2002). This is quite alarming, and intriguing when taken in the context of birth control use and method choice. Another study shows a relationship between body knowledge, which is culturally defined, and contraceptive method choice, suggesting that the greater the body knowledge, the less medicalized the method of birth control used (Shedlin 1979). With this in mind, it is not surprising to find that Natural Family Planning, a birth control method that indeed requires knowledge about the body, is not listed as one of the eight leading birth control methods in the National Survey of Family Growth, and is used by only 4-5% of contraceptive users (CDC 2004). It is a relevant question to consider what role processes like family planning play in the marginalization of the woman's body, and likewise what the possibilities are when this "hidden" power found inside the woman's body is unleashed, and the "voice" of her body is no longer silenced.

Natural Family Planning (NFP) could creatively be defined as a birth control method that puts the woman's body as star of the family planning show, and is based on the natural workings of the complex processes that occur inside the body. While there are many negative connotations (for example, with the calendar or 'rhythm' method, which by itself is unsuccessful), NFP is highly scientific - it has long been known that the timing of ovulation can be used to detect fertility, and recent research has increasingly found accurate ways to predict the fertile time of a woman (Ogino 1923 in Klaus 2002). Changes that occur within the body are recognized by signs such as hormonal changes in urine, saliva and blood, changes in resting body temperature, differences in electrical resistance of saliva and vaginal fluid, growth of the egg follicle, changes in the position and shape of the cervix, changes in pain, and changes in mucosal secretions produced by the cervix (DeNora 1996). By combining several of these methods of identification, NFP has a success rate similar to that of the pill (DeNora 1996).

Although the development of the pill was hailed by many feminists as a means of control over their bodies, there is another class of feminists who are coming forth to reclaim authority over their natural functions, questioning the increasing medicalization of their health, and putting natural processes in the realm of "medical problems" (Mueller 1974). One effect of medicalization is the idea of the medicated body as normal. On the other side of the coin, this must mean that the healthy natural body has somehow become alternative. The danger is that within this context, 'medicalized' becomes equated with 'best'. The latest advancements in medicine come to be seen as universally better, so that there is a continual search for 'more advanced' medicine, 'more advanced' birth control. It has been suggested that women especially may be subject to the medicalization of their health (Conrad 1992). This is due, in part, to the marginalization of the woman's body. Especially in the realm of health and medicine, women's bodies are more likely to be scrutinized, historically described as secondary to the male's body (Moore & Clark 1995). NFP fits well with this perspective, because it is a birth control method that relies on lay knowledge (DeNora 1996), which also makes it unique because it requires

technological judgment of the body directly rather than depending on an artifact, something created by science. In other words, the woman's fertile cycle contains a great deal of science to interpret, and it can be empowering for women themselves to be able to interpret their own bodies, giving them a sense of ownership over something that really is theirs.

I suggest that for healthy women of reproductive age, Natural Family Planning is an ideal method of expressing and being in touch with one's body. There are no side effects. It challenges the perspective of the necessity of a medicated body to be a healthy body. Instead, it puts the body at front-and-center, giving it authority and a real place in the dialogues that affect the woman's body and activities in which it takes part. In this context, the cervical mucus, for example, becomes the 'wonder liquid'. The sperm cannot survive without the mucus, which is a different angle than the penetration story we are usually given of male domination in the sexual script of the journey of the sperm to the egg.

This perspective also questions the biomedical idea of the body as a machine, that a woman cannot be healthy unless her body operates with mechanical 'regularity', and if it does not, that it needs to be controlled. Rather than denying the female fertile cycle, NFP celebrates it the cycle as a real reflection of a woman's health. The cycle is no longer seen as the annoying period of the month when you have to deal with menstruation, but the constant changes going on inside of the body, even those we can't see from the outside. The most exciting parts of the fertile cycle occur inside when we are not menstruating, as hormone levels rise and fall around the time of ovulation and other changes take place as the body prepares itself for possible fertilization.

Fertility awareness means listening to your body at all times. This can open up many possibilities and bring us to a greater awareness of the amazing capabilities of our bodies. NFP brings attention to the woman's body and its functions, which questions cultural norms of women's "spitting bodies" (the idea that her body fluids, menstrual blood and discharge are seen as undesirable) being taboo (DeNora 1996), and in turn transforms our bodies from something to be hidden to something that is a treasure. Giving our bodies an authoritative "voice" can be empowering to us not only as women, but as people in general.

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Featured Alumni

Cathy Song

My name is Cathy Song. I graduated with a Masters of Public Health and Masters of Business Administration at UIC in December, 2007. My association with CRWG goes back to the summer of 1999 when I was the project coordinator for a research project assessing the needs of HIV/STD prevention among Illinois women. Since then I have spent several years employed at the Health and Medicine Policy Research Group (HMPRG) in Chicago. During my employment at HMPRG I decided to enter graduate school.

In the final year of my graduate education, I was accepted into an internship program at the Chicago Foundation for Women (CFW). There I was able to become engaged again with women's health issues and witness the vast needs and opportunities for women in Illinois. As an intern, I was part of the program team and worked to coordinate several public education events and grantee capacity building programs, and I took part in reviewing grant applications. This experience offered an amazing opportunity to see the number of issues effecting women today and the resources that community organizations provide.

The lessons I learned from this experience were two-fold. First, the issue of violence against women is as pervasive as ever and there is a need for intervention in every aspect of society to affect change. Second, reproductive rights require persistent vigilance, because efforts are made every day to corrode the rights of women and girls to access services which will preserve their reproductive health. Even within the University, I witness the loss of access to affordable birth control due to the lack of a safety net assuring access to the drugs. Despite the many efforts of student led organizations, a semester passed without administrative action and the female student population was left without affordable birth control, and thus many went entirely without it.

As I now enter into the workforce, I hope to continue working toward health care for all, social justice and protecting reproductive rights, carrying with me all the lessons and inspiration from working at CRWG, HMPRG and CFW.

Grace Jeng

I graduated in 2003 with a master degree in Electrical Engineering and Business Administration. During my study in UIC, I worked as a graduate assistant for the Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) program.

After graduation, I worked as an application engineer for a food processing equipment company in California. My role was to provide technical assistance to the sales force and directly to customers and potential customers. My work included developing pre-sales technical proposals, drawings and specifications; project management after orders were received; and providing feedback to Sales, Customer Service, Marketing, Engineering, and Manufacturing about potential sales opportunities, industrial business information, Research & Development, and product improvement ideas.

In 2006, I moved to Washington state and started working for an electronics testing equipment company north of Seattle. My role is similar, but this time in the electronics industry, which aligns better with my educational background. I also have opportunity to travel within the United States and to China to talk about our products at trade shows.

While adapting the new working and living environment, I picked up a new hobby that the rugged Northwest offers the best: climbing and mountaineering. Like engineering, climbing is a male dominated sport but you feel so satisfied when you conquer the challenge at hand and your own fear. Here is a picture of me ice climbing the serac (a pinnacle of ice among the crevasses of a glacier) on Mt. Baker, located in the North Cascade mountain range.

While working for the WISE program in UIC, I learned about the benefits of a woman-focused program. WISE provides a support system for women in need. Women study with each other and network together. When you spend time with like-minded women in a male-dominated field like science and engineering, you feel so much more confident and supported. You are able to approach the challenges with a new refreshing perspective. I continue to experience the same benefits through my participation in similar organizations - from the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) to clubs for women climbers.



CRWG Campaign to Fund Dissertation Research Endowment

Thanks to a generous donation from former CRWG Director Alice Dan, a seed fund has been established to support dissertation research on women and gender at UIC students. The CRWG has begun a campaign to raise at least \$15,000 to fully fund the endowment. Please consider making a contribution or a pledge to help us build the fund!

Gifts can be made in your name or in honor or memory of someone important to you, such as an important teacher or mentor. Gifts will be listed in the *Building Research Connections* Electronic Newsletter unless otherwise requested. All contributions are tax-deductible.

Gifts can be made with a check payable to the "University of Illinois Foundation/CRWG" sent to (*please specify "Dissertation Fund" in the memo*):

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1640 W. Roosevelt, Rm. 503
Chicago, Illinois 60608

For more information on making a pledge to donate to the CRWG Dissertation Research Fund, please contact:

Stacie Geller, Director
Center for Research on Women and Gender (MC 980)
1640 W. Roosevelt, Rm. 503
Chicago, Illinois 60608
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Email: sgeller@uic.edu

2008 Alice J. Dan Dissertation Research Award - Call for Proposals

The Center for Research on Women and Gender announces the Seventh Annual Alice J. Dan Dissertation Research Award. The purpose of the award is to encourage original and significant research about gender and/or women by UIC students. The award is named in honor of the founding director of the Center for Research on Women and Gender.

The award is open to UIC doctoral students in any field who have completed the requirements for candidacy and have an approved dissertation proposal by March 1, 2008. The maximum award amount is \$1,500.

Applications must include:

A dissertation summary that includes an abstract (200 words or less), significance of research for women and/or gender, research methods, progress to date, timetable for completion, and budget. The dissertation summary should be no more than 5 double-spaced pages.

The following supporting materials, included as an appendix:

2 reference letters (one reference letter must be from dissertation advisor).

Applications will be judged on:

- potential for contribution to research on women and/or gender
- originality and significance to the major field
- applicant's academic preparation and ability to accomplish the work
- feasibility of timetable for completion
- feasibility of budget

Applications should be emailed to Pat Newton at patnewt@uic.edu or mailed or delivered to the CRWG office:

UIC-CRWG
ATTN: Dan Dissertation Award
1640 West Roosevelt Road (M/C 980)
Room 503
Chicago, IL 60608

The submission deadline is May 1, 2008 and winner(s) will be announced in July, 2008.

For more information call or e-mail: Sarah Shirk at (312)413-1636 or sshirk1@uic.edu.

UIC CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN AND GENDER

Presents

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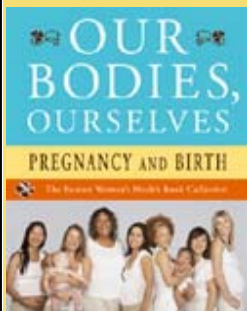
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Jane Addams Hull-House Museum

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Keynote Speakers:

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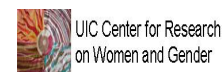
Carrie Klima, CNM, PhD, Clinical Assistant Professor, UIC College of Nursing

Please join us in welcoming the newest book from the creators of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, as we explore the history of health care for pregnant women in the United States, beginning with midwives and dramatic change that happened with physicians taking over pregnancy and childbirth, and the movement over the last 30 years to take back some of the control for women over their birthing experience.

For more information or to R.S.V.P. please call

Patricia Newton – 312-413-1924 or Regina Rust – 312-413-4255

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Staff Announcements

The CRWG extends a big Thank You to Claudia Morrissey, who recently resigned from her position of associate director of the CRWG to focus on her work in the School of Public Health. Claudia has been instrumental in helping to develop the WISE and WISEST programs as well as the Leadership Core of the CoE. We feel fortunate that Claudia will still contribute to WISEST and the CoE, and wish her success in her public health research!

The CRWG wishes farewell to Rose Lattyak, a master of public health student who has been working as a graduate research assistant at CRWG since fall of 2006. Rose left her CRWG position at the end of December when she was offered a full time position at Loyola University. Congratulations Rose!

We wish to welcome two new graduate student assistants - Regina Rust and Sara Shippee, both Master of Public Health students at UIC.

Congratulations to CRWG Director Stacie Geller who was recently promoted to full Professor in the UIC College of Medicine!

CRWG Staff

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