



UIC News Release

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601 S. Morgan St., Chicago, IL 60607-7113, (312) 996-3456, www.news.uic.edu

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Media Contact: **Sherri McGinnis González**, (312) 996-8277, smcginn@uic.edu

UIC Receives \$8.1M for Public Health Research, Training

The University of Illinois at Chicago has received \$8.1 million in grant funding from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for three innovative public health research and training projects.

Three separate grants were funded:

Prevention of Disease

The Illinois Prevention Research Center at UIC received a five-year, \$4.1 million grant from the CDC to help eliminate health disparities and create healthy communities through research, training and sharing knowledge. The grant will fund the center's largest research project, aimed at preventing and controlling diabetes in Latino and African-American populations.

The project uses awareness campaigns, education, nutrition and physical activity to target high-risk populations on the city's Southwest Side through a partnership with the Latino Organization of the Southwest.

The center also serves as a resource to address national, regional and local public health priorities through participatory research.

"We work with the community on the front lines to improve the health of Chicagoans and beyond," said Susan Curry, director of the Institute for Health Research and Policy and principal investigator of the project.

The center is part of the Institute for Health Research and Policy at UIC and is one of 33 Prevention Research Centers established and funded by the CDC. It is the only Prevention Research Center in Illinois.

Training Tomorrow's Researchers

The UIC School of Public Health received a three-year, \$2.7 million grant to train a key group of public health research scientists skilled in disease prevention and disaster preparedness.

The Illinois Public Health Research Fellowship Program will recruit 12 postdoctoral trainees and four doctoral students to address issues faced by public health departments in urban, high-risk environments.

"The researchers will be trained using a team approach across all divisions of public health," said Dr. Rosemary Sokas, director of environmental and occupational health sciences at UIC and principal

investigator of the project. "They will learn to look at issues through different lenses."

UIC, in partnership with the Chicago Department of Public Health and the Illinois Department of Public Health, will prepare qualified scientists to lead public health research in the future. The group will focus on public health issues to ensure that all people, regardless of race, culture or income, live in a safe, healthy environment.

"To address issues like obesity, intentional violence, health disparities and bioterror threats, you need to gather people together in different disciplines to provide thoughtful insight," said Sokas. "None of these problems have one-stop answers."

Health Promotion Research

The Center for Research on Health and Aging at UIC received a three-year, \$1.3 million grant to study cost-effective health promotion for older workers.

"Our study will help us begin to understand the best way to successfully engage older adults, while they are still working, in health promotion activities," said Susan Hughes, co-director of the Center for Research on Health and Aging at UIC and principal investigator of the study.

"The aging workforce and their related health issues is a concern for future health expenditures in this country," said Hughes. "As huge numbers of older adults reach retirement age in the next few years, it could really bust the budget for the United States."

According to a 2003 General Accounting Office report, the number of workers over age 55 is expected to increase from 19.2 million in 2002 to 31.8 million by 2015.

These workers often have increased risk factors for chronic conditions, yet there are very few studies looking at the effectiveness of health promotion and behavior change in older, working adults.

UIC researchers will randomly assign approximately 450 UIC support staff, ages 50 to 59, to one of three groups.

The first group will receive a "high touch" health promotion and behavior change approach with risk assessments and personal follow-up with public health educators. The second group will receive a "high tech" approach with risk assessments and Internet-based health education materials. The third group will receive only health education materials.

The study will provide much-needed data on the cost-effectiveness of health behavior change programs specifically designed for older workers. Study participants will also report on psychosocial and physical outcomes.

"We hope that our study will have a big payoff to society as well as employers," said Hughes. "The goal is to help employers make better choices in their wellness programs for older, working adults before they have significant health issues in retirement."

The center is part of the Institute for Health Research and Policy at UIC.

UIC ranks among the nation's top 50 universities in federal research funding and is Chicago's largest university with 25,000 students, 12,000 faculty and staff, 15 colleges and the state's major public medical center. A hallmark of the campus is the Great Cities Commitment, through which UIC faculty, students and staff engage with community, corporate, foundation and government partners in hundreds of programs to improve the quality of life in metropolitan areas around the world. For more information about UIC, visit www.uic.edu