

# SPM NEWS

## Department of Social & Preventive Medicine

School of Public Health and Health Professions (SPHHP)

State University of New York at Buffalo

<http://sphhp.buffalo.edu/spm>



October 2009

Marcia Wopperer, editor

### *The Director's Corner*

We would like to welcome our new and returning students to the department. The incoming class for SPM includes 22 students: four Ph.D., two M.S., and 16 M.P.H. We wish all our students every success in their studies!

Congratulates to **Heather Ochs-Balcom**, Ph.D., on her new position as assistant professor in the Department of SPM. Dr. Ochs-Balcom is well known to many of us in that she has been serving as a research assistant professor in the department for the last two years. She received an M.S. in biology from Clarion University of Pennsylvania, and a Ph.D. in Epidemiology and Community Health from the Department of SPM. Following her graduate work, she completed post-doctoral training at Case Western Reserve University in the Division of Genetic and Molecular Epidemiology. Her research focuses on the role of genetic factors in chronic disease epidemiology.

We are also happy to announce that **Jean Wactawski-Wende**, Ph.D., has been appointed UB's Vice Provost for Strategic Initiatives effective September 1. As vice provost she will work with the UB 2020 leadership teams to help the university reach its strategic goals for the next decade, and will facilitate creation of cross-discipline initiatives critical to reaching those goals. She will also continue to hold her appointment as associate chair in the Department of SPM, as well as continue with her teaching and her research in women's health.

The School's response to the accreditation site visit has been submitted to the Council on Education in Public Health (CEPH). We hope to hear back from CEPH about our accreditation status in November.

- *Carl Li, M.D., M.P.H.*

### *Honors and Awards*



**Ted Brasky**, Ph.D., was awarded a postdoctoral fellowship from the Cancer Prevention Training Program in Nutrition, Exercise, and Genetics at the University of Washington and Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

### *Faculty/Student Research*

**Heather Ochs-Balcom**, Ph.D. received a NIH/NCI Career Development Award. The title of her five-year \$822,179 grant is "*Estrogen Receptor 1 Gene, Adiposity and Breast Cancer.*" The goals of the project include performing a genetic association study to evaluate the estrogen receptor 1 (ESR1) gene variants and breast cancer, with investigation of adiposity as a modifier. ESR1 copy number variation will be characterized in germline and tumor DNA to better understand the prevalence and development of copy number variation in Caucasian and African American women.

**Pavani Ram**, M.D., was awarded a two-year \$79,250 grant from the National Institute of Health (NIH) entitled "*Childhood Illness and Risk Perception: Opportunity to Improve Handwashing.*" The major goals of the project are to establish whether acute illness in a child represents an opportunity to motivate the household to improve a fundamental health behavior, namely hand washing, for prevention of future diarrheal episodes.

**Jean Wactawski-Wende**, Ph.D., is principal investigator for a \$954,397 two-year NIH/NIDRC grant entitled "*Arra: Saliva and Serum Inflammatory Biomarkers in Periodontitis: A Prospective Study in Older Women.*" The goal of the study is to measure a series of inflammatory biomarkers in saliva and serum to examine to what extent

non-invasive salivary biomarkers can be used to characterize those same biomarkers measured in serum.

## *Faculty/Student Presentations*

**Katherine Dobson**, B.S., will present two posters at the 137<sup>th</sup> Annual American Public Health Association (APHA) meeting held in Philadelphia, PA, November 7-11. The title of her posters are “*The Economic Impact of Hawaii’s Smoke-Free Law*” and “*WNY Parents’ Knowledge Levels and Attitudes Towards HPV and the HPV Vaccine.*”

**Brian King**, M.P.H., was an invited speaker at the Clearing the Air: An Institute for Policy Advocacy Conference hosted by the Americans for Nonsmokers’ Rights Foundation in Lake Tahoe, CA, September 20-23. The title of his talks were “*A Multiple Stakeholder Evaluation of Secondhand Smoke Exposure in Multi-Unit Housing*” and “*Evaluating Secondhand Smoke Exposure in Different Micro-environments.*”

**Yanli Li**, B. Med., presented a poster entitled “*Major Sports Events in Tobacco Control – Experience from the Beijing Olympics*” at the 2009 National Conference on Tobacco or Health held in Phoenix, AZ, June 10-12.

**Donald Rowe**, Ph.D., will present a paper entitled “*Water, Land Use Conflict and Regulatory Reform: A Case Study*” at the 137<sup>th</sup> Annual American Public Health Association (APHA) meeting held in Philadelphia, PA, November 7-11.

## *Preventive Medicine Residency Program*

**Robert Diaz Del Carpio**, M.D., was selected by his peers to serve as the representative to the Graduate Medical Education Residents’ Committee for the Preventive Medicine Program.

**Jeffrey Serbin**, M.D., joined the Preventive Medicine Residency Program on September 9 as a PGY II. Dr. Serbin received a B.A. in psychology from Northwestern University, an M.A. in biomedical sciences from Touro College, and an M.D. from Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. He completed his PGY I in the Transitional Program at St. Barnabas Medical Center.

## *News and Notes*

**Po Yin (Curtis) Chan**, **Katherine Dobson**, **Daniela Geba**, **Katie Hootman**, **Kelly Kamm**, **Yanli Li**, and **Michelle Sahli** were awarded graduate assistantships with tuition scholarship for the 2009-2010 academic year.

**Heather Ochs-Balcom**, Ph.D., was appointed to the Susan G. Komen for the Cure, Western New York Affiliate Board of Directors; and also co-chair of the Grants Committee.

**Lisa Rafalson**, Ph.D., was selected by the International Diabetes Epidemiology Organization Committee to attend the 2009 IDEG Training Course. The course will be held October 14-18 in Quebec City.

## *SPM Graduate Student Association*

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) of the Department of SPM elected new officers for the 2009-2010 academic year: **Stephen Feikls** (president); **Laura Becker** (vice president); **Priyanka Dua** (treasurer); **Alyssa Irla** (secretary); and **Roberto Diaz Del Carpio**, M.D., (senator).

## *Alumni News*

**Elisa Bandera**, Ph.D. ('95) has been promoted to associate professor at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey.

## *New Students*

### Ph.D. in Epidemiology

**Po Yin (Curtis) Chan**, B.Sc. health studies, University of Waterloo; M.P.H., University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

**Katherine Dobson**, B.S. biology, Canisius College. M.P.H. (expected 2/2010) University at Buffalo.

**Katie Hootman**, B.S. dietetics, University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point; M.S. clinical nutrition (expected 2/2010), University at Buffalo.

**Michelle Sahli**, B.S. environmental issues, The City University of New York (CUNY).

### M.S. Epidemiology

**William Lainhart**, B.S. biological sciences, Cornell University.

**Elizabeth McLean-Plunkett**, B.A. anthropology, University at Buffalo.

M.P.H. (Epidemiology)

**Alyssa Irla**, B.S. biology, Siena College.

**Jennifer Meng**, B.S. biological sciences, University at Buffalo.

**Olubukunola Okulate**, B.A. health and human services, University at Buffalo.

**Jeffrey Serbin**, B.A. psychology, Northwestern; M.A. biomedical sciences, Touro College; M.D., Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

M.P.H. (Environmental Health)

**Mark Glasgow**, B.S. biotechnology, University at Buffalo

M.P.H. (Health Services)

**Sohaib Aleem**, M.B.B.S., Aga Khan University.

**Laura Becker**, B.S. health care studies, Daemen College.

**Roberto Diaz Del Carpio**, M.D., Universidad Catolica de Santa Maria.

**Priyanka Dua**, B.S. biotechnology, University at Buffalo.

**Stephen Feikls**, B.S. chemistry, Gannon University.

**Stacy King**, B.S. health care studies, Daemen College.

**Karen Morris**, B.A. psychology, Buffalo State College.

**Caroline Mylotte**, B.A. environmental design, University at Buffalo.

**Nicole Noyes**, B.A. English and creative writing, New England College.

**Jennifer Thompson**, B.S. health care studies, Daemen College.

J.D./M.P.H. (Health Services)

**Katelyn Dieffenderfer**, B.A. journalism and mass communication, St. Bonaventure University.

## *September 2009 Graduates*

The following students successfully completed all degree requirements established by the Department of SPM and the University at Buffalo for September 2009 degree conferral. Congratulations to our graduates!

Ph.D. in Epidemiology

**Ted Brasky**, M.S., “*Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs, Cyclooxygenase-2 Genetic Variation, and Breast Cancer Risk.*” Ted is currently a postdoctoral fellow in the Cancer Prevention Training Program in Nutrition, Exercise, and Genetics at the University of Washington and Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

M.S. Epidemiology

**Melanie Ruszczyk**, B.A., “*The Associations Between DNA Repair SNPs and the Outcomes After Treatment with Platinum-Based Chemotherapy in Ovarian Cancer Patients.*” Committee members include Drs. Kirsten Moysich (major), Lara Sucheston and Matthew Bonner. Melanie is continuing her studies in the RPCI Cancer Prevention doctoral program.

**Philip Smith**, B.A., “*Evaluating the Corrective Statements Proposed in the Court Case U.S. Department of Justice vs. Philip Morris U.S.A., et al.*” Committee members include Drs. K. Michael Cummings (major), Maansi Travers and Richard O'Connor. Philip is continuing his studies in the Ph.D. Program in Community Health and Health Behavior at UB.

M.P.H. (Epidemiology)

**Yoly Gonzalez**, D.D.S., “*Assessment and Management of Smoking Status: Program Development and Follow-up.*” Committee members include Drs. K. Michael Cummings (major) and Dennis Bertram. Yoly is an assistant professor in the Department of Oral Diagnostic Sciences at the University at Buffalo.

## *New Course for Spring 2010*

### **SPM 522 Selected Topics: Public Health Genetics** (1 credit)

Instructor: Heather Ochs-Balcom, Ph.D.  
Wednesdays 10:00-10:50

This course will bridge the gap between the rapidly expanding field of genetics/genomics and the need to educate public health practitioners about prospects for the use of genetics for public health benefit. Topics include the human genome project, genetic science and technology, genetic epidemiology, pharmacogenetics, genetic testing and screening, ethical, legal and social implications of genetics, and policy implications.

Prerequisites: none