The Center for Research on Women and Gender

Building Research Connections

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Chicago Foundation for Women Funds Report on Year 2000 Status of Women and Girls in Chicago
In response to the challenge of monitoring the economic, social, and health status of women and girls, the Chicago Foundation for Women has committed $20,000 to fund the Year 2000 Status of Women and Girls in Chicago Report project. The project will be conducted by the Center for Research on Women and Gender under the direction of Dr. Alice J. Dan, director of the Center. The aim of the project is to disseminate applied research and raw data to the public via the world wide web. The main objective is to improve the status of women and girls in the Chicago area by presenting data in an objective, comprehensive, and accessible way that is in turn empowering to women and girls.

The status report will incorporate information in the following categories: education, health/aging, violence, employment, caregiving, networks, and policy. One of the intended impacts of this report is to bridge the gap between research data in these fields and community advocacy. As part of the community outreach component of the project, several grassroots organizations will be invited to attend a workshop on accessing pertinent information on the web. A presentation to Chicago and Illinois legislators will also be completed at the project's conclusion.

Upon completion, the report will be placed on the Research Information Network for Women and Girls in Illinois website (RIN). This website is designed to direct cyberspace information seekers to data sets that are responsible, reliable, and current. Stop by for a visit on your next cyberspace tour at the website http://www.uic.edu/orgs/rin.

UIC-Center of Excellence Participates in Illinois Needs Assessment for HIV/STD Prevention in Women's Health Project

From May through August 1999, the UIC-Center of Excellence in Women's Health participated in the development of a public information campaign aimed at increasing awareness about STD/HIV among sexually active Illinois women outside Cook County
who may not consider themselves to be at risk. The project to develop the information campaign was sponsored by the Illinois Department of Public Health's Office of Women's Health. The project was based on the recognition that a major factor contributing to the increase in AIDS among women is a lack of awareness and understanding of both risk and effective prevention. The IDPH project targeted women living in smaller cities, suburban and rural areas, who tend not to perceive themselves to be at risk of HIV/STD infection.

The Center of Excellence produced three informational brochures dealing with HIV/STD risk factors among women, suitable for placement in local Health Services offices and health clinics in targeted counties; developed a marketing plan for increasing awareness about sexually transmitted diseases; and created an evaluation plan to assess the effectiveness of the public information campaign. Project staff included Dr. Alice Dan (Principal Investigator), Cathy Song (Project Coordinator), Dr. Sara Loeyv (Focus Group Consultant), Dr. Mary Utne O'Brien (Focus Group Consultant), Dr. Marion Howard (Data Analysis), Dr. Janise Hurtig (Evaluation Planning), Erika Allen (Brochure Design), Mary Badinger (Brochure Design), Sandra Drabant (Brochure Design) and Isolde Daig (Intern).

Cathy Song also coordinated and edited a final report entitled "Illinois Needs Assessment for HIV/STD Prevention in Women's Health." The report includes a literature review, key informant interviews, Behavior Risk Factor Survey System (BRFS) data analysis, focus group analysis, marketing and evaluation plans.

CRWG Seed Grant Competition Continues

The Center for Research on Women and Gender announces its third seed grant competition, intended to stimulate and increase the level of externally funded research on issues related to women and gender. Awards will support pilot studies that promise to lead directly to the development and submission of research proposals to federal funding agencies. The one-year awards will range from a
maximum of $15,000 for individual investigators to a maximum of $25,000 for multidisciplinary research teams. Proposals must be prepared on forms obtained from the Center for Research on Women and Gender and must be returned to the Center's office (Room 503, 1640 West Roosevelt Road) by 4:30 p.m., November 15, 1999. Recipients of seed funding will be notified by January 15, 2000 and funding will begin February 1, 2000.

For more information or to request an application form, call Mary Lynn Dietsche at 413-3785 or look at the CRWG homepage: http://www.uic.edu/depts/crwg/funding.htm

Research Seeks to Unravel the Mysteries of Fibromyalgia Syndrome

(prepared for BRC by JoEllen Wilbur, PhD, RN, CS, FAAN, Associate Professor, College of Nursing; Joan Shaver, PhD, RN, FAAN Professor and Dean, College of Nursing; and Randy Parker, PhD, RN Project Director, Fibromyalgia Studies, College of Nursing)

In June of 1998 Dr. JoEllen Wilbur and Dr. Joan Shaver, faculty at the UIC College of Nursing, received a Center for Research on Women and Gender Seed Grant Award to examine the effects of a nutritional supplement on the relief of symptoms in women with fibromyalgia. The study, to be completed in January 2000, will provide a protocol for future testing of the nutritional interventions as a complement to other therapeutic regimens such as exercise, sleep enhancement, and drug therapy. Currently several studies are being conducted through the College of Nursing's Office of Fibromyalgia Studies to learn more about what causes fibromyalgia and how to effectively treat the debilitating symptoms associated with this syndrome.

Fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) is the third most commonly documented rheumatic condition and is estimated to affect about five million Americans and account for 15 to 40% of referrals to rheumatologists. Fibromyalgia is five times more common in women than men (prevalence range 3.4%-10.5%) and those...
seeking health care are most likely between 40 to 60 years of age. Diagnostic criteria for fibromyalgia syndrome include generalized muscle aching over time, multiple, reproducible tender points at specific muscle insertion points, nonrestorative sleep and fatigue. Diagnosis is based solely on clinical symptoms and no clear underlying muscle pathology is detectable. Some studies show that people with fibromyalgia syndrome are unable to perform as much as 60% of the work of normal people; moreover, women experience pain and fatigue up to 90% of their waking hours. This syndrome is accompanied by a high prevalence of other symptoms such as functional bowel distress (irritable bowel syndrome), chronic headache, sensitivity to cold, numbness, tingling sensations, joint pain & swelling, and modulation of symptoms by activity, weather, stress or other environmental/behavioral factors.

No known cure for fibromyalgia exists. Clinical manifestations are characterized by periodic exacerbations and remissions of symptoms. Current treatments for fibromyalgia syndrome are multiple, but they are less than effective and little studied. Of 35 FMS clinical trials reported between 1980 and 1994, 28 were pharmaceutical tests, mostly psychotropic, anti-inflammatory, and pain medications. Non-pharmacologic trials in the analysis included only tests of EMG- biofeedback, cardiovascular fitness training, patient education and hypnotherapy. Approximately 25% of individuals with fibromyalgia syndrome show modest improvement with therapies; however, the effects are not sustained over time. Because of the lack of research, women are making decisions to use alternative therapies with little or no knowledge of the risks or benefits. Nurse researchers at the UIC College of Nursing hope their ongoing efforts to unravel the mystery of fibromyalgia will enable women to access scientifically grounded information about safe and effective treatments for fibromyalgia.

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CRWG Evaluation Program Updates

Among the resources the Center for Research on Women and Gender offers organizations providing services to women and girls in Illinois, is program or project evaluation. Over the past three
years CRWG has collaborated with the Girl's Best Friend Foundation in running bi-annual evaluation training workshops for Foundation grantees. During the workshops CRWG staff and GBF staff work with grantees to generate girl-centered evaluation plans and reports for their programs.

CRWG staff have also served as evaluators for several Chicago-based non-profit organizations that offer programs and services to women and girls. Janise Hurtig and Vadie Brock, both CRWG staff, are currently completing a second year evaluation of the "Chicago Commons Adolescent Health Promotion Program," an "abstinence-only" sexuality and lifestyles curriculum run by the Mary McDowell Settlement House located on Chicago's south side. Dr. Hurtig also worked with Lorri Clark, a doctoral student at the University of Chicago, to evaluate a TANF caseworker training program piloted by the Chicago Women in Trades as part of their larger "Welfare to Economic Self-Sufficiency Project." Most recently, Dr. Hurtig and Christine Burns, a UIC graduate student in Art Therapy, have initiated a year-long evaluation for A Sporting Chance Foundation, a non-profit organization which offers sports and fitness opportunities for girls in Chicago and surrounding communities.

Whether working with community organizations, foundations, or university programs and departments, CRWG views evaluation as a learning partnership, and recognizes the value of evaluation in the effective development and sustainability of any program or research project. CRWG evaluators also emphasize the importance of gender-centered research approaches for programs that aim to serve and empower women and girls.

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CIC/WISE Update

Over the summer, Alice Dan and Veronica I. Arreola attended the final American Association of Colleges and Universities Women and Scientific Literacy conference in Washington D.C. The new publication, "Frequently Asked Questions About Feminist Science Studies," was distributed. To obtain a copy, contact Alice Dan at
Many women in science events will take place this fall. The first is a collection of recent Ph.D.s to be included in the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) Directory. The directory lists women who have recently completed their Ph.D.s at a CIC University in the fields of science, engineering, and mathematics. The cost of the 1999 directory is $20.00 plus $5.00 shipping and handling. To order a copy of the directory, or if you have any questions, contact Cindy Chastain: 217/244-5565 (chastain@uiuc.edu).

1999 CIC WISE Student Leadership Conference will take place October 29-31. See "Upcoming Events" in this newsletter for more information.

October 1st, applications for CIC WISE Student Travel grants will again be available. These $250 matching grants are available for undergraduate or graduate students to use to travel to a professional meeting and present their work. Applications will be due on November 1st and awardees will be notified by December 1st. For more information on the CRWG women in science and engineering projects, please visit the WISE Website.

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UIC's National Center of Excellence in Women's Health: Update

New Clinical Care Center
In August 1999 the Women's Health Center opened on the 4th floor of the new UIC Outpatient Care Center, on the southeast corner of Taylor and Wood streets. This innovative facility includes services previously offered at both the Women's Care Center and the Women's Health Associates practice. Reproductive endocrinology and infertility services are adjacent. Easily accessible via bridge from the parking lot on Wood Street, the Women's Health Center features an attractive waiting area with information kiosks offering pamphlets on many topics. For more information, or to make an appointment, call 1-800-UIC-1002.
Health Exchange
Another affiliated clinical service for women will be offered in the Wellness Center on the 1st floor of the new Outpatient Care Center. The Wellness Center offers health information and educational resources, screening and referral. Drop in after October 1, 1999, when the Wellness Center opens.

National Forum
The U.S. Public Health Service's Office of Women's Health in Washington, DC is sponsoring a national forum, November 1-2, 1999, to share information and strategies from all 18 National Centers of Excellence in Women's Health. Designed to describe how other academic health centers can replicate a Center of Excellence program in their communities, the Forum is open to all. Invited speakers include Dr. David Satcher and Dr. Bernadine Healy. UIC's CoE will be represented by Dr. Alice Dan, Director; Dr. Richard Derman, Clinical Director; Dr. Rosalie Sagraves, Curriculum Director; Dr. Jacqueline Walcott-McQuigg, Research Director; and Dr. Joan Shaver, Research Co-Director. For more information, e-mail kristenm@esilsg.org.

Summer Retreat
On July 20, 1999 more than 35 faculty and staff from across UIC departments participated in a day-long retreat to plan for the future of the UIC Center of Excellence in Women's Health. Goals of the retreat included:
1. To align CoE project activities and outcomes in ways that foster communication and investment among all participants.
2. To promote a high level of cooperation, collaboration and community engagement that affirms the mission of the UIC Center of Excellence.
3. To fully realize all intentions of the CoE, including engagement of minority and underserved populations, and the development of leadership roles among health care practitioners and others in the College of Medicine, the UIC campus and the community at-large. The retreat was facilitated by Maggie McGlynn of Chapel Hill, NC, who had organized a retreat for the sister CoE at Wake Forest University in Salem, NC.

Illinois Sponsors Women's Health Conference
The First Annual Women's Health Conference sponsored by the Illinois Department of Public Health will be held in Springfield, IL,
Summer Intern Isolde Daig Writes on her Experience with CRWG

"German Student" are the first words most people would hear from me, during the two months (July and August) I was an intern at the UIC Center for Research on Women and Gender. I had several occasions during my stay to introduce myself to a variety of people involved in women's health research. On the first day Alice Dan, director of the Center, welcomed me and gave suggestions as to what I could do during my internship. She gave me several projects to choose from, and I decided to take on an interesting project for the Illinois Department of Public Health entitled "Illinois Needs Assessment for HIV/STD Prevention in Women's Health." [See article beginning on page 1.] I had the opportunity to work with Cathy Song, the project coordinator, who introduced me to the details of the project and guided my research. My participation in this project included a literature review, brochure design, and follow-up correspondence.

In addition to the HIV/STD project I had the opportunity to observe a variety of projects and programs in other university departments. These observations included a weight loss group run by Dr. Susan Oros, Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology; a weight management clinic run by Dr. Charles Baum, director of Clinical Nutrition at the UIC Medical Center and Associate Professor Nutrition, Medicine and Surgery; and a smoking cessation discussion group led by Dr. Lori Wilken, the Clinical Assistant Professor for Pharmacy Practice. The most memorable of my experiences was having the opportunity to observe brain surgery performed by the Head of the Department of Neurosurgery, Dr. James Ausman, M.D.
The staff at CRWG and the Center for Excellence in Women's Health were all helpful and friendly, making me feel comfortable and at ease during my stay. I was able to participate in weekly staff meetings, a press conference, and roundtables. I also attended a team building retreat for the CoE on July 20, at the Hotel Allegro.

I am very grateful that I have had the chance to spend my summer in an amazing city like Chicago with such a motivated team of researchers. This has given me many memories and experiences to take home to Berlin.

Congratulations to RIN Logo Contest Winners

A web page logo contest for the Research Information Network (RIN) on Women and Girls in Illinois was held in the Spring semester 1999. All students were invited to submit a logo that reflected the content of this website. The final winners were:
1st place -- Alfonso Guerrero, College of Architecture and the Arts.
2nd place -- Daniel Law, College of Business Administration.

Thanks go to all the contest participants. Look for the new logo to appear soon at the RIN Website.

CRWG and CoE Host Continuing Education Series for Primary Health Care Providers

During the past spring, UIC's Center of Excellence in Women's Health conducted a series of conferences on women's health designed for primary health care providers. The series, "Women's Health Issues: A Multidisciplinary Approach" (WHIMA), was ground breaking in that it combined biomedical and psychosocial...
aspects of illness in a holistic manner while addressing issues of life span and diversity. The goal was to enable primary health care providers to prevent and manage women's health problems in the context of women's lives, apply various perspectives, include preventions and patient education in their practices, and link with community resources and other health care providers.

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), which provided initial funding for the conferences, identified six areas of women's health as priority areas in the state: breast cancer, cardiovascular disease, domesticity violence, mental illness, osteoporosis, and depression. The WHIMA program addressed the first three of these areas. Each session featured a keynote speaker, panels and workshops on various clinical and psychosocial aspects of the topic, and a survivor who presented the topic from the patient's perspective. The keynote speakers were Elizabeth Marcus, M.D. (Cook County Hospital); Marla Mendelson, M.D. (Northwestern University Medical School); Vesna Skul, M.D., F.A.C.P. (Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center); and Carole Warshaw, M. D. (Cook County Hospital). Additional WHIMA faculty represented a range of disciplines and Chicago institutions and had expertise in the biomedical and psychosocial aspects of illness. Representatives from Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization, the American Heart Association, and a domestic violence advocacy organization provided information about patient experiences with the health care system and as survivors.

Many organizations collaborated on the development of the WHIMA program. The Planning Committee, led by Mary Kleinman, coordinator of WHIMA, was composed of representatives from the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians and members from several UIC colleges and departments. Professional and advocacy organizations also provided support with marketing the conferences. An anonymous donor provided funds that enabled health care students to attend the conferences at a reduced fee.
Program for Mexican Immigrant Women in Chicago

Dr. Marcia Farr, a faculty member in the English Department, and Dr. Janise Hurtig of the Center for Research on Women and Gender, have received a small grants from the Center for Urban Educational Research and Development (CUERD) at UIC to conduct ethnographic research which will be the basis for developing a Spanish-language, social-contextual family literacy program for Mexican immigrant mothers and their children. The program will serve mothers and their pre-school children living in the neighborhood of Little Village (South Lawndale) who are participants in PAUSA, a community drop-in center and parent education program. The study will take place at the community center and in participants' homes, and will use a participatory methodology, engaging participants as co-researchers to collect and analyze ethnographic data.

Dr. Farr, the project's principal investigator, has been conducting sociolinguistic and ethnographic research in Chicago and Mexico on culture, language and literacy among one social network of Mexican origin families for over ten years. The co-principal investigator, Dr. Hurtig has conducted ethnographic research in Venezuela and in Chicago's Mexican communities focusing on gender, formal and informal education, literacy and religion. Dr. Jane Samuelson, founding director of the PAUSA program and Project HOPE, its umbrella organization, will serve as co-investigator and collaborator on the project.

Roundtable Discussion on Internet Resources

On August 2, 1999 the Research Information Network on Women and Girls in Illinois (RIN) staff and other members of the UIC research community were invited to participate in a seminar entitled "Serendipity or By Design?" The talk was given by Beth Stafford, Women's Studies and Women in International Development Librarian from the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign. Ms. Stafford spoke about feminist scholarly resources...
currently available via the internet, focusing on several organizations and individuals committed to promoting the overall welfare of females. UIC library staff and RIN faculty advisory committee members participated in the roundtable discussion. Two of the highlighted links included web pages sponsored by the National Women's Studies Association () and the UIUC Women's Studies Searchable Database ().

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CRWG Staff Updates

Allyse Sturdivant and Natalie Humphrey, participants in the Summer Research Opportunities Program, worked on projects at CRWG this summer. Sturdivant worked on the Center's evaluation of the Adolescent Health Promotion Project at Mary McDowell Settlement House and Humphrey conducted a meta-analysis of research on cultural differences in attitudes toward breast feeding. Congratulations to Vadie Brock, research assistant with CRWG, who was accepted into the Graduate Program of the School of Publich Health at UIC. Vadie will continue to work at the Center on the evaluation of the Adolescent Health Promotion Project at Mary McDowell Settlement House. Cecile Lardon, former research assistant at the Center, successfully defended her dissertation in August and has accepted a position at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. Mary Kleinman, coordinator of Women's Health Issues: Multidisciplinary Approach, has taken a position in the Medical Education Department of the College of Medicine. Catherine Song, coordinator of the HIV/STD awareness project, will join the staff of the Health and Medicine Policy Research Group. Isolde Daig, a graduate student at the Free University in Berlin, Germany, spent her internship at CRWG assisting on the HIV/STD awareness project. Sandra Drabant (Art Therapy) has joined the Center of Excellence in Women's Health staff. Christine Burns (Art Therapy) will be working on various Center projects related to girls. Hongmei Shi has accepted research assistantships in the Colleges of Nursing and Business Administration.