Faculty News and Notes

Lisa F. Barcellos, Ph.D., assistant professor of epidemiology, has received funding from the NIH National Institute of Neurological Disorders & Strokes for "Genetic and Non-genetic Risk Factors in MS," a large population-based study of several candidate genes, exposure to cigarette smoke, gene-environment interactions and reproductive risk factors in MS susceptibility and disease progression. Novel analytical methods will be used to identify the presence of multiple interacting risk factors.

Michael Bates, Ph.D., M.P.H., adjunct professor of epidemiology, has assumed leadership of "High Capacity SNP Genotyping in Arsenic Induced Disease," a project which seeks to identify genes that influence susceptibility to the toxicity and cancer-causing properties of inorganic arsenic. At present, biochemical mechanisms underlying arsenic's effects are unknown, but identification of susceptibility genes may point to critical metabolic pathways. The project is supported by the NIH National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

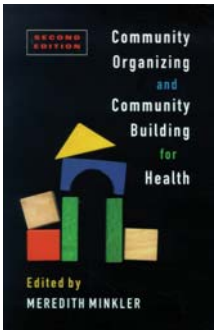
John Colford, Jr., M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H., associate professor of epidemiology, and colleagues published a study in the March 1, 2005, issue of the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, looking at tap water and gastrointestinal illness. The study found that, in homes served by well-run water districts, an in-home water treatment device provided no additional protection from gastrointestinal illness. In the year-long randomized and blinded intervention trial, researchers found no significant reduction in symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting or abdominal cramps in those who used the home-filtered water compared with those who used a placebo device.

In October 2004, Colford announced findings from another study, this one looking at the health risks of water at San Diego beaches. Researchers interviewed 8,790 beachgoers about how much contact they had with the water. Ten days to two weeks later, the participants were asked if they had contracted any illnesses. The water was tested several times each day. The study concluded that despite the history of high bacteria readings, the beaches were safe for aquatic recreation. Researchers also discovered no link between the illnesses contracted by beachgoers and the types of bacteria public health officials test for and cite when posting beaches for contamination, suggesting that traditional testing methods may not be reliable indicators of whether water is safe for recreation.

Denise Herd, Ph.D., associate professor of behavioral sciences, has been named the School's new associate dean for student affairs effective June 1, 2005, succeeding Barbara Abrams, Dr.P.H., R.D. Herd leaves the position of associate dean for public health practice, in which she will be succeeded by Jeff Oxendine, M.B.A., M.P.H., director of the School's Center for Public Health Practice.

Fenyong Liu, Ph.D., associate professor of virology, has received funding from the NIH Insitute of Dental Research for "AIDS-Associated Viral Infections in Human Oral Tissues." This project will examine how the molecular mechanisms of identified viral determinants function in supporting human cytomegalovirus (CMV) infections in cultured buccal and gingival tissues. Study results will provide insights into the mechanism of CMV pathogenesis and the development of novel strategies for treatment and prevention of CMV transmission as well as infections in the oral cavity.

Sangwei Lu, Ph.D., assistant adjunct professor, is a member of the new Food Safety Research and Response Network, a multi-institutional, multidisciplinary team of more than 50 food safety experts from 18 colleges and universities, who will investigate several of the most prevalent food-related illness pathogens. The network is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



The second edition of *Community Organizing and Community Building for Health*, edited by Meredith Minkler, Dr.P.H., professor of health and social behavior, was published by Rutgers University Press in October 2004. The revised edition includes updated versions of a number of the original chapters, as well as new chapters and appendixes, addressing areas such as using community organizing to impact policy; using the arts in community building and organizing; online activism; and the role of cultural humility and systems change in building effective partnerships between local health departments and community residents.

In October 2004, Minkler received the 2003 Dorothy B. Nyswander Award for Leadership in Health Education by the Northern California Chapter of the Society for Public Health Education. The award recognizes health educators who demonstrate the qualities and performance standards of Dorothy B. Nyswander, longtime UC Berkeley School of Public Health professor and health education pioneer.

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Linda Neuhauser, Dr.P.H., clinical professor, and S. Leonard Syme, Ph.D., professor emeritus, are leading a California study of eldercare, which will examine the needs of seniors and their family caregivers and will provide recommendations to improve home care after hospitalization. The study is funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. William A. Satariano, Ph.D., M.P.H., professor of epidemiology and community health, and School of Social Welfare professor Andrew Scharlach, Ph.D., are also collaborators.

Neuhauser and Syme are also examining the impact of a community-based initiative to prevent falls among seniors in Pennsylvania. The study, funded by the State of Pennsylvania, will test the effectiveness of a new resource: *Pennsylvania's Healthy Steps for Older Adults: A Guide to Preventing Falls,* developed by the School's Center for Community Wellness.

Other projects at the Center for Community Wellness include development of *UC Berkeley Parents Guides* in Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean. This effort, funded by the California First 5 Children and Families Commission, will make the new guides available free to all new parents in California who speak these languages. The center has also received funding from the State of Arizona to develop a *Parents Guide for Arizona Families,* which will be distributed to new parents in Arizona later in 2005. And in another project at the center, Karen Sokal-Gutierrez, M.D., M.P.H., and colleagues are working with UC Davis on a CDC-funded grant to study the cost-effectiveness of breast-feeding programs in California.

Emily Ozer, Ph.D., assistant professor, community health and human development, has received funding from the MetLife Foundation-ASPH Healthy Schools Initiative to develop and rigorously evaluate a model of promoting student nutrition in an instructional garden program in an urban middle school. The model improves upon current school garden curricula by adding a family component intended to strengthen the links between expected gains in nutrition knowledge at school with changes in actual eating behavior outside of school. The study will use a within-school design in which half of the garden classes at a middle school with an existing nutrition garden program will be randomized to receive the parent component. Quantitative and qualitative methods will be used to assess program impact on student nutrition knowledge, self-efficacy for healthy eating, self-reported nutritional and caloric intake, BMI, and abdominal fat. The findings from this pilot study will be used to support further research to study the impact of growing practice of school garden/nutrition education in California and nationally.

David R. Ragland, Ph.D., adjunct professor of epidemiology and director of the UC Berkeley Traffic Safety Center (TSC), was awarded a grant from the California Highway Patrol through the Office of Traffic Safety. The project will map five years of motor vehicle collision data in California and identify geographic areas where there is a high concentration of DUI (alcohol-related) collisions. Currently there is no centralized data source for geographically referenced motor vehicle collisions at the state level. Attempts to map these data have proven difficult due to poorly recorded collision location descriptions and out-of-date street maps of local areas. Ragland and his group developed a method to estimate valid collision locations across California and to identify several areas with exceptionally high number of alcohol-involved collisions.

Along with William A. Satariano, Ph.D., M.P.H., professor of epidemiology and community health, and former research associate Kara MacLeod, M.A., Ragland has published a series of articles on various aspects of driving in seniors based on data from the Study of Physical Performance and Age-Related Changes in Sonomans, a long-running epidemiology study of seniors in Sonoma, California, headed by Satariano and Ira Tager, M.D., M.P.H., professor of epidemiology. Two articles are on driving limitation and avoidance among older drivers. *The Gerontologist* published "Reasons given by older people for limitation or avoidance of driving" in its April 2004 issue, and the *Journal of Gerontology* published "Problems with vision associated with limitations or avoidance of driving in older populations" in its September 2004 issue. Another article, "Driving

cessation and increased depressive symptoms" will be published in the *Journal of Gerontology* later this year. These articles based on data from the Sonoma study are part of larger program of research on older drivers being conducted by the TSC.

Lee Riley, M.D., professor of epidemiology and infectious diseases, is lead author of a study published in the January 15, 2005, issue of *Clinical Infectious Diseases,* which found that a string of urinary tract infections (UTIs) were likely caused by drug-resistant *E. coli* bacteria in meat or milk. Between October 1999 and January 2000, a single strain of *E. coli* was discovered to be responsible for drug-resistant UTIs in university communities in California, Minnesota, and Michigan. Researchers studied nearly 500 specimens of *E. coli* obtained from non-human sources such as cows, turkeys, dogs, sheep, and water. They found that one-quarter of the specimens were microbiologically indistinguishable from comparable human strains of *E. coli*. A more refined test showed that, of the drug-resistant specimens, one from a cow had a 94 percent similarity to a UTI-causing human strain of *E. coli.* The researchers concluded that the cause of the outbreak was probably foodborne.

Richard M. Scheffler, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor of Health Economics and Public Policy and director of the Nicholas C. Petris Center on Health Care Markets and Consumer Welfare, has received support from the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association for "Defining the California Population Who Need Assistance Regarding Access to, or Affordability of Prescription Drugs." The three-month study will determine the numbers of individuals and families of four at different income levels who lack health insurance in California. It will also look at how these populations break out geographically across the state, and at factors such as race and gender.

Scheffler has also received funding from the UC California Policy Research Center for "Designing Policies to Improve Medical Care for Underserved Minority Populations in California," a six-month study to examine the supply of African American and Hispanic physicians in California by mapping historical migration patterns for these physicians, and projecting the future need for them given the state's growing minority population. The study will also seek to determine the characteristics of geographic areas that these physicians leave and go to as they decide where to practice.

Mark van der Laan, Ph.D., professor of biostatistics and statistics, has received the Van Dantzig Award, presented once every five years by the Netherlands Society for Statistics and Operations Research to a young researcher who has made exceptional theoretical or practical contributions to the field. Van der Laan received a medal with the portrait of Van Dantzig, who is seen as the founder of the scientific research in mathematical statistics in the Netherlands.

Julia Walsh, M.D., D.T.P.H., adjunct professor of maternal and child health, has received a grant from the Albert B. Sabin Vaccine Institute for "The Controversy and Obstacles Surrounding the Introduction of the Three Rotavirus Vaccines," which looks at how to hasten the widespread use of new biotechnology discoveries in poor countries. She is assessing the process used by Mexico in certifying the new GlaxoSmithKline rotavirus vaccine in 2004 and its planned use in a national program later this year. Mexico is the first country in the world to approve and use this new vaccine. Other new pharmaceuticals can use the lessons learned from this study to shorten the usual 15–20 year wait between a drug's approval by the U.S. FDA and its use in poor countries where the medical need is greatest.