Recent Grants and Contracts

Exercise for Bone Health: Young Breast Cancer Survivors

$1,017,156 from the NIH/National Cancer Institute Competitive Supplement

PI: Joan Bloom, Ph.D.

More young women diagnosed with breast cancer in their pre-menopausal years are becoming long-term survivors as incident rates remain steady and mortality rates decrease. The five-year relative breast cancer survival rate in U.S. women under age 50 is almost 81 percent for women diagnosed between 1995 and 2001. The increase in survival has occurred for all racial/ethnic groups as a result of greater utilization of screening mammography, and improved treatment. This raises new challenges in that successful breast cancer therapy may put this group of women at risk for long-term health consequences. This three-year study will determine whether exercise intervention is effective in improving biomarkers altered by chemotherapy weight gain that are related to increased risk of non-breast cancer morbidities as well as breast cancer recurrence and mortality. An interdisciplinary research team from UCSF, UC Berkeley, and the Northern California Cancer Center is conducting the project at the UCSF/Mt. Zion clinic.

Breast Health Behaviors of Immigrant Afghan Women

$70,481 from the California Breast Cancer Research Program

PI: Joan Bloom, Ph.D.

Despite evidence that early detection leads to decreased breast cancer mortality, minority women—especially new immigrants—continue to underuse breast health services. Research shows that Muslim immigrant women are less likely than other women to use these services and are more likely to die from breast cancer. Due to the ongoing war in Afghanistan, there has been an increase in the number of immigrants to the United States from this country. It is estimated that there are more than 60,000 Afghans in the United States, with approximately half living in the Bay Area. This project examines immigrant Afghan women's beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes about breast health care and early detection as well as barriers to care. Face-to-face interviews will be conducted with 50 first-generation immigrant Afghan women who are age 40 and older, have limited English proficiency, have no personal history of breast cancer, and live in Northern California.

Epidemiology Study of Swimming-Related Illness at Non-Point Source Polluted Beaches

$1,375,011 from Cal EPA Water Resources Control Board

PI: John M Colford, Jr., Ph.D. '96, M.P.H. '92

This epidemiology study will quantify the risk of swimming-associated illnesses and will test indicators of that risk at beaches polluted by nonpoint sources of fecal contaminations. Fecal indicator bacteria (FIB) have long been used by public health managers to evaluate marine recreational water quality for warning swimmers or closing beaches. Humans are not the only source of FIB; they are shed by most warm-blooded organisms. Water quality regulators have been working diligently to find and eliminate human sources of fecal contamination in marine waters. The success in remediating point sources has led to a relative increase in the number of beaches that are impacted by nonpoint sources of fecal contamination, much of which is thought to be nonhuman. Yet, the fecal contamination inputs to Doheny Beach have resulted in this shoreline being frequently listed as the most polluted beach in California, while Malibu Surfrider State Beach has been listed as one of the 10 most polluted beaches in California based on the magnitude and duration of high bacteria densities, length of beach contaminated, and number of swimmers. During the summers of 2008 and 2009, 17,600 beachgoers at Doheny State Beach, Avalon Beach, and Malibu Surfrider State Beach will participate in a beach study survey. A follow up computer assisted telephone interview will be conducted to gather health related information.

PBDEs, DDT, and Neurodevelopment in School-Aged Mexican-American Children

$1,968,685 from NIH/National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

PI: Brenda Eskenazi, Ph.D.

This four-year award will provide valuable information on modes of exposure to dicholorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) and polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), as well as the independent or interactive effects of these two compounds on neurodevelopment. The Center for the Health Assessment of the Mothers and Children of Salinas (CHAMACOS) is a birth cohort study of environmental exposures and health in children aged 0 to 7 years living in a predominantly Mexican immigrant, agricultural community in California's Salinas Valley. This new study will evaluate DDT, DDE, and PBDE exposure in the CHAMACOS mothers and children and determine whether these factors are associated with poorer neurodevelopment in school-age children to determine whether Mexican-American children in the United States have higher blood levels of PBDEs and lower blood levels of DDT/E than children in Mexico; factors predicting PBDE exposures in pregnant women and children; whether maternal PBDE exposure is related to pregnancy thyroid hormone levels; and whether in utero DDT and in utero and postnatal PBDE levels are associated with poorer neurodevelopment in school age children.

Worker Health and Safety in Chinatown Restaurants: A Community Based Participatory Research Study

$367,777 from CDC/National Institute for Occupational Health & Safety

PI: Meredith Minkler, Dr.P.H. '75

The Bay Area is a gateway for Chinese immigrants, who are among the largest and fastest growing immigrant populations in the United States. In many urban areas, restaurants are the largest single employer of Chinese immigrants. Given the high rates of work-related injury and illness for restaurant workers and the likely compounding of these problems in a poorly educated, heavily immigrant population, Chinese restaurant workers may have particularly high rates of occupational illnesses and injuries. This community-based participatory research project will look at worker health and safety in Chinatown restaurants to develop an effective partnership between community, health department, and academic partners; create and train a restaurant worker leadership group; conduct a study of the association between physical and psychosocial restaurant conditions and occupational illness and injury in Chinese restaurant workers; provide culturally relevant worker education; use project findings to help inform subsequent research and action; and evaluate the project using both conventional and participatory approaches.

Training and Rider Experience Among Motorcyclists in California

$280,299 from the California Office of Traffic Safety

PI: David Ragland, Ph.D., M.P.H. '80

This project will generate new information on motorcycle crashes and design injury prevention activities that are more effective and efficient. Between 1999 and 2004 in California, fatal motorcycle collisions increased 58 percent, and injury collisions increased 46 percent. Fatalities of motorcyclists (operators or passengers) aged 34 years or younger increased 41 percent, while fatalities of motorcyclists aged 35 years or older increased 74 percent. The changes in death rates appear to be too great to be explained simply by the aging of the motorcycling population. In addition, the increase in deaths is accompanied by a decrease in the proportion of motorcycle operators under the influence of alcohol. The trends may have resulted from middle-aged riders entering motorcycling in larger numbers than in previous years, a decrease in the number of motorcyclists who enroll in rider safety programs, or changes in the type and performance of motorcycles ridden by new motorcyclists.

Childhood Leukemia International Consortium

$124,809 from NIH/National Cancer Institute

PI: Patricia Buffler, Ph.D. '73, M.P.H. '65

The Childhood Leukemia International Consortium (CLIC) was recently established to overcome limitations of studies with limited sample size, especially for rarer childhood leukemia subtypes. The consortium seeks to combine anonymized data from the Northern California Childhood Leukemia Study (NCCLS) with data from five other comparable case-control studies in Canada, the United Kingdom, France, and Australia, resulting in a collection of more than 3,300 cases and 4,400 controls. The information will be used to evaluate the role of maternal folate intake, maternal alcohol consumption, and genes involved in folate metabolism, and to assess the interactions between these factors. The data will be pooled at the NCCLS offices at UC Berkeley, and the common datafile will be shared with collaborating researchers for joint analyses. Through this joint research, the project plans to elucidate the etiologic role of folate and specific genes, while establishing a proof of principle for the consortium approach in childhood leukemia research.

Medi-Cal Access Project

$3,100,000 from the California Department of Health Services

PIs: Susan Ivey, M.D., M.H.S.A., and Linda Neuhauser, Dr.P.H. '88

Project Directors: Carrie Graham, Ph.D. and Beccah Rothschild, M.P.A

The goal of the Medi-Cal Access Project is to develop and test communication interventions to help several million California seniors and people with disabilities on Medi-Cal make more informed decisions about their health care options. The project's first phase will use participatory design methods to engage English, Spanish, and Chinese speaking Medi-Cal members to work with Health Research for Action to create a consumer guide. In the second phase, the guide will be tested among these populations in a randomized controlled study in three counties. The study findings will inform the implementation design for a statewide roll-out of the guide and development of additional communication interventions to benefit these populations. A 24-person project advisory group, with representatives from state agencies and advocacy organizations that serve Medi-Cal consumers, will offer guidance on all phases of the project. The project is also expected to provide recommendations to help other states improve communication with their Medicaid populations.

Immigration, Acculturation and Health Disparities Research Initiative

$46,326 from the Berkeley Research Futures Grant Program, UC Berkeley Vice Chancellor for Research

PI: Sylvia Guendelman, Ph.D., LCSW

Studies have shown that immigrant health declines over time and across generations. This is surprising, given that the longer immigrants live in the United States, the greater the likelihood that they will experience better education, higher income, and improved access to health services—all of which are associated with better health outcomes in other populations. Assimilation to U.S. social norms and values, including negative health behaviors, have been suggested as one potential explanation for increases in risk factors and poor health outcomes among immigrants with increased time spent in the society. However, the process of acquiring values, norms and behaviors of a new society (i.e., acculturation) is complex and may not follow along a linear path for all immigrant groups. Acculturation is not well understood. There is controversy among researchers on what constitutes its key domains and how to measure it. Yet, there is widespread agreement that it is at the core of the immigrant—and specifically Latino—health paradox. The new Immigration, Acculturation and Health Disparities Research Initiative, which will be housed at the Institute for the Study of Social Change, will examine the role that acculturation plays in immigrant health.