

Faculty News and Notes

Coalition for Clean Air Honors Balmes

John Balmes, M.D., director of the Center for Occupational and Environmental Health, and longtime American Lung Association of California volunteer and air quality activist, was honored with the Coalition for Clean Air's Carl Moyer Award for Scientific and Technical Leadership. Every year, the coalition recognizes individuals or corporations that advance the cause of restoring clean, healthful air to all Californians. Balmes has spent his career conducting important studies on the health effects of air pollution. Over the years he has testified at countless state and national hearings on behalf of the American Lung Association. He regularly shares his expertise as a member of the American Lung Association of California Technical Advisory Group on clean air and serves as a volunteer media spokesperson, helping to raise public awareness of the connection between air pollution and health.

Barcellos Awarded Institute of Medicine Anniversary Fellowship



Lisa Barcellos, Ph.D., assistant professor of epidemiology, received an Institute of Medicine (IOM) Anniversary

Fellowship. The two-year fellowship, created to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the IOM's establishment, enables talented, early career health science scholars to participate actively in the work of the IOM and to further their careers as future leaders in the field. During this time, fellows continue their work at their main academic posts, while being assigned to a board of the IOM. Additionally, fellows participate actively in the work of an appropriate expert study committee or roundtable, including contributing to its reports or other products. The experience introduces fellows to a variety of experts and perspectives, including legislators, government

officials, industry leaders, executives of voluntary health organizations, scientists, and other health professionals.

For the past 10 years, Barcellos has participated in the design, implementation, and interpretation of human genetic disease studies. She has developed a strong research program funded by the National Institutes of Health that focuses on identifying genetic, social, and environmental risk factors for autoimmune diseases. She is a co-investigator for the International Multiple Sclerosis Genetics Consortium as well as a member of the Kaiser Permanente Autoimmune Disease Research Group and of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society Task Force on Prospective Studies of Risk Factors in Multiple Sclerosis.

Study Looks at Cardiovascular Disease Risk for South Asians in California



South Asians have higher mortality from coronary heart disease than other ethnic groups, and cardiovascular disease is the

primary cause of death among South Asians in the United States. However, most research on heart disease among South Asians has been conducted outside the United States. **Susan Ivey, M.D., M.H.S.A.**, associate adjunct professor, is first author on a study that looks at data from two population-based surveys of South Asians in California to compare risk factors for cardiovascular disease. "Prevalence and correlates of cardiovascular risk factors in South Asians: Population-based data from two California surveys" was published in the Autumn 2006 issue of the journal *Ethnicity & Disease*. One of the study's findings was that English-language use was associated with increased cardiovascular disease risk—suggesting that the effect of acculturation merits further research.

Minkler Named Pratt Foundation Fellow



Professor of health and social behavior **Meredith Minkler, Dr.P.H. '75**, was chosen as the 2006 International

Pratt Foundation Fellow and delivered the keynote address on June 20, 2006, in Victoria at the "Communities in Control" conference—Australia's largest annual gathering of community sector workers, volunteers, and supporters. The theme of the conference was "Challenging the Power of One." Previous Pratt Fellows have included **Professor Emeritus S. Leonard Syme, Ph.D.**, alumna and Harvard professor **Lisa Berkman, Dr. P.H. '77**, and **Shelley Martin, M.P.H., C.H.E.S.**, executive director of Health Research for Action.

Study Links Higher Income with Lower Disability Rates

Numerous studies have already established the link between extreme poverty and poor health, but a new study led by professor of health and social behavior **Meredith Minkler, Dr.P.H. '75**, has found that health disparities exist even among those with higher incomes. The study, published in the August 17, 2006, issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, found significant differences in the rates of limitations even among those in the upper income brackets. Among those who were 55–74 years old, even those at 600–699 percent of the poverty line had elevated odds of having a disability compared to those at 700 percent and higher. For example, women aged 55–64 in the 600–699 percent category had 16 percent higher odds of disability than women in the 700 percent bracket, and men aged 65–74 in the 600–699 percent group had 44 percent higher odds than men in the 700 percent group.

Co-authors of the study are **Esme Fuller-Thomson, Ph.D., M.S.W.**, associate professor of social work at the University

of Toronto, and **Jack Guralnik, M.D.**, chief of the Laboratory of Epidemiology, Demography and Biometry Section at the National Institute on Aging. The study was funded by a grant from the Retirement Research Foundation with additional support from the National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health.

Traffic Safety Center Presents Paper on Driver and Pedestrian Behavior



David R. Ragland, Ph.D., M.P.H. '80, director of the UC Berkeley Traffic Safety Center, and

Meghan Fehlig Mitman, graduate student researcher, were selected to present a paper titled, "What They Don't Know Can Kill Them: More Evidence on Why Pedestrian and Driver Knowledge of the Vehicle Code Should Not Be Assumed," at the 86th Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board, held January 2007 in Washington, D.C. The paper summarizes results from surveys and focus groups conducted in the San Francisco Bay Area as a component

of a larger study of driver and pedestrian behavior at crosswalks in California. Results confirm that a substantial level of confusion exists with respect to pedestrian right-of-way laws. This confusion was exacerbated by intersections that had unstriped or unmarked crosswalks. Implications for engineering, education, and enforcement countermeasures in light of these findings are discussed and areas for further research are proposed. The study is funded by the California Department of Transportation.

Neuhauser Addresses Surgeon General's Workshop

Linda Neuhauser, Dr.P.H. '88, co-principal investigator of the School's Health Research for Action center and a clinical professor at the School, spoke at the Surgeon General's Workshop on Improving Health Literacy, held Sept. 7, 2006, in Washington, D.C. The meeting examined the evidence about the health and financial impacts of low health literacy and ideas for a national agenda to address the problem.

Human Rights Center Releases Report on Katrina-Rebuilding Workforce

Adjunct professor **Eric Stover**, director of the UC Berkeley Human Rights Center, is



one of the authors of a report, *Rebuilding After Katrina: A Population-Based Study of Labor and Human Rights in New Orleans*, released in June 2006. The comprehensive study of more than 200 workers found that undocumented workers face several vulnerabilities—reduced access to health care, wage discrepancy, and unsafe working conditions—as they provide critical help to rebuild the city of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Almost half of the reconstruction workforce is Latino and 54 percent of that group is undocumented, meaning 25 percent of all workers are undocumented Latinos. The report recommends that workers without documents should be allowed to work legally in disaster zones and should receive the same protections as American workers. 6

Berkeley Hosts Conference for Fogarty AIDS Program Administrators

UC Berkeley hosted the fifth annual Fogarty AIDS International Training and Research Program (AITRP) Administrators Conference in November 2006, attended by more than 50 administrators of AITRPs from around the country. The UC Berkeley and UC San Francisco AITRP, directed by head of epidemiology **Arthur Reingold, M.D.**, provides multidisciplinary research training to physicians, dentists, pharmacists, scientists, and support personnel relevant to epidemiologic and behavioral studies related to AIDS, HIV transmission, and treatment in HIV-infected persons. Focus countries include Brazil, Peru, Thailand, India, Cambodia, Vietnam, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Ivory Coast.

