Two areas of health converged at the Capital city this October for the Fourth Annual Health Policy Summit: Public Health and Health Information Technology, interspersed with a healthy dose of Nutrition Policy during the luncheon. A much-anticipated annual event, the summit helps to fulfill the Center for Health Policy’s mission of improving health care delivery and policy. The conference brings together those practicing in the field, policy makers, physicians and those at academic institutions.

Dr. Ned Calonge, Chief Medical Officer, Colorado Department of Health and Environment, Chair, U.S. Preventative Services Task Force opened the morning session with a focus on evidence based medicine (EBM), explaining it as “The conscientious, explicit and judicious use of the best current evidence in making clinical decisions about the care of individual patients”. Calonge cited successes of EBM and attributed it to forming best practices for cervical, colorectal, and breast cancers. He linked the importance of EBM to forming tobacco and obesity initiatives in Missouri when creating health policies. In ending, Calonge posed the question “When do we move from personal choice to public policy?”

Following Dr. Calonge was discourse on Public Health Challenges in Missouri. Panelists represented a variety of organizations, including Missouri Foundation for Health, St. Louis University, and state and local health departments. Missouri’s public health rankings, health disparities, access to care and finding the right information are the challenges the panelists found facing the state.

In the lunch hour, Dr. Margo Wootan, director of nutrition policy at the Center for Science in the Public Interest, enlightened the crowd about the power of food marketing, especially that directed to school-age children. “Parents are at a disadvantage when we try to compete with food companies — we don’t have SpongeBob, sports stars, contests, and the latest market research tools to help us persuade our kids to eat their fruits and vegetables”, noted Dr. Wootan.

The afternoon keynote, Dr. Scott Young, Chief Medical Director of Kaiser Permanente Care Management Institute, (Oakland, CA) presented on the potential applications of Health Information Technology (HIT). HIT can improve patient outcomes and providers’ quality of care. Using a case study, he profiled the importance of accessibility of patient records for all parties involved with medical decisions. One-third of all patients maintain their personal medical records, according to Dr. Young. He also noted that it takes an average of 17 years before new knowledge is fully adopted and implemented. Young ended his presentation emphasizing the positive impact HIT can have for patient care quality.

Ending the day was a panel discussion on health information technology in Missouri. Innovative companies, IT directors and Telehealth added a state and local perspective on the topic. The consensus of the group was to continue support for health information sharing through the latest technology available.

Thank you to presenters and panelists for another successful Health Policy Summit!

To view presentations: http://healthpolicy.missouri.edu/summit06/HPS_06_Powerpoints.html
MORE THAN ABCs: HEALTH LITERACY

Health literacy is “the ability of an individual to access, understand, and use health-related information and services to make appropriate health decisions.” For all individuals, their level of health literacy directly influences the quality of care they receive. Recent research has found health literacy to be a better predictor of health status than age, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

**Individuals with low health literacy...**

- Are less likely to use preventative services
- Know less about managing a health problem
- Are less likely to take their medications correctly
- Have higher overall health care costs

The cost of low health literacy affects more than just patients. In 2003 it was estimated that the health care industry spent $73 billion a year in misdirected health care services due to poor health literacy among patients.

Unfortunately, it isn’t a small population of individuals with poor health literacy. In 2003 it was estimated that more than 90 million Americans could not adequately understand simple health care information. According to the National Adult Literacy Survey, about a quarter of the adult population has poor health literacy.

While the problem may seem overwhelming, there are opportunities to increase the health literacy skills of both providers and patients.

**Proven best practices include...**

- Including health literacy in preexisting quality improvement campaigns
- Providing funding for health literacy research
- Creating a “shame-free” environment where patients aren’t afraid to ask for help, and assistance is routinely offered.

It’s estimated that public programs absorb approximately 63 percent of the costs of low health literacy. Between 2001 and 2005, Missouri’s Medicaid expenditures increased by almost 50 percent (from $4.2 to $6.3 billion). For the state of Missouri, poor health literacy has considerable implications when it comes to health care and the state budget.

On local, state, and national levels, there is a push to improve our overall health care system. Programs such as the more recent Medicaid Part D are being set up in the hopes of improving health care for targeted populations. But if these individuals have poor health literacy, their ability to utilize these programs will be compromised. Establishing new programs and initiatives without addressing health literacy will only increase current waste and misuse. But if steps are taken to target health literacy in the state of Missouri, it could lead to reduced health care spending and better quality of care for all of its citizens.

For a complete list of references used in this article, please visit us on the web: www.healthpolicy.missouri.edu

A study of 483 asthma patients found that although two-thirds reported graduating from high school, only 60% could read above the sixth-grade level. Reading ability was the single strongest predictor of asthma knowledge. Twice as many patients reading below the third-grade level had poor metered-dose inhaler technique as patients reading at high-school level (89% vs. 48%).


References:


CHP AFFILIATE SPOTLIGHT: DOMINGO MARTINEZ CASTILLA OF THE CAMBIO CENTER

Dr. Domingo Martinez Castilla is an indefatigable man with many missions. His list of projects extends well beyond his work as a research associate with the Office of International Agriculture at the University. An agricultural economist by trade, he worked for 15 years, until 1990, as an assistant and associate professor at the Universidad Nacional Agraria (La Molina) in Lima, teaching and doing research in agricultural development in many areas of Peru. Until 1994, he consulted on or carried out small farm research in 10 Latin American and Caribbean countries and also East Africa. After his journeys throughout the world, Castilla came to MU, where he founded the Cambio Center in 2004 and continues to serve as a coordinator.

Cambio Center’s mission extends beyond the borders. Their aim is to understand the international nature of different immigration processes, the cultures and institutions (economic and social) of Latin America, as a major source of the Latino labor force in our state.

Current Projects: Annual Cambio de Colores Conference (focus on integration of immigrants and changing community landscapes); Brown Bag Luncheon Series; Visiting Scholars; Research on Latinos, Communities, and Economic Development. Education & Training: in disciplines relevant to cultural competence in a diverse Missouri. Outreach: to strengthen the network of community-based and business organizations, practitioners, educators, and researchers through Cambio de Colores in the state and the Midwest.

Building on Successes: The Cambio Center continues to build upon its education and outreach. Though the Center is going onto its third year in existence, the Cambio de Colores Conference has been underway for six years and continues to look toward the future. The conference brings together researchers and policy makers to discuss issues related to the current Latino immigration in Missouri and the Midwest. The themes and focus are on: change and well-being; civil rights; education; health; and youth, families and communities.

Castilla’s Literary Side: In addition to his work at the Cambio Center, Castilla directs, edits and publishes Ciberayllu, a well-established publication in literature and the humanities. Ciberayllu is known worldwide and is listed in many virtual libraries (Library of Congress, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and Humbul of Oxford). It has also been presented at La Sorbonne, in Paris, in 2004.

Missouri & Health Disparities - A Snapshot

The Department of Health and Human Services defines health disparities as “all differences among populations in measures of health and healthcare.” In a report entitled Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Healthcare, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) maintained that in our nation, minorities’ health status and access to care lagged behind that of non-minorities, even when controlling for socioeconomic and access-related factors. Racial and ethnic disparities are a critical problem across the nation, and it is no different for Missouri. In 2004 and 2005, the Missouri Foundation for Health (MFH) released two reports entitled Minority Health Disparities in Missouri.

In the state, efforts are already underway to try to conduct research and develop programs addressing racial and ethnic health disparities. The Center for Health Policy at the University of Missouri and Washington University have partnered to share ideas, resources and strategies targeting health disparities.

All of Missouri’s citizens should be guaranteed equitable health care. But as long as health disparities persist, racial and ethnic minorities are not receiving the quality care they deserve.

Activities & Involvement:
- Cambio de Colores, director
- Founder and former president of MU’s Hispanic & Latin American Faculty & Staff Association (HLAFSA)
- Directs, edits, and publishes Ciberayllu, a publication in literature and the humanities

On the Web:
www.cambio.missouri.edu

- The rate of inadequate prenatal care (per 100,000 births) is 8.5 for whites, in comparison to 13.2 for Hispanics, and 21.9 for African Americans.
- The rate of diabetes deaths (per 100,000) is 23.2 for whites, in comparison to 35.1 for Hispanics, and 49.9 for African Americans.
- African Americans are seven times more likely to have HIV or AIDS than whites.
MU’s Center for Health Policy presents IMPACT, an e-newsletter about timely local, state and national health policy issues and initiatives. MU’s Center for Health Policy is dedicated to helping Missourians achieve better health care through objective analysis and in-depth understanding of key policy issues facing our state.

Recent Publications, Presentations & Honors:


Philip G. Peters, Jr, University of Missouri-Columbia, is working on a series of articles that reexamine what we know about medical malpractice litigation and the implication of those data for future malpractice reform. The first, Doctors and Juries, will appear in the MICHIGAN LAW REVIEW next summer and the second, Doctors and Settlement, will be published IOWA LAW REVIEW.

Sable, M.R., Miller, W.B., Csizmadia, A. Wantedness of pregnancy and the toddler’s subsequent attachment: are they related? American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, November 6, 2006, Boston, MA. (oral presentation)


Sable, M.R., Schwartz, L.R., Dannerbeck, A., Campbell, J.D. Using Photovoice to improve family planning services for Hispanic immi-

SAVE THE DATE: 2nd Annual Achieving Health Equity Conference April 17th & 18th, 2007 To be held in Kansas City, MO, at the Kaufmann Conference Center. More information will be available in the upcoming months, at www.healthpolicy.missouri.edu.

New Items at the CHP Website

The Center for Health Policy will be unveiling a new website at the beginning of 2007. A new logo is in the works of being created, and will be used in forthcoming publications. It will reflect the mission and values of Health Policy Center as we forge ahead for the years to come.

The website will be more streamlined and contain a focus on the five areas the Center for Health Policy concentrate:
- Medicaid
- Health Disparities
- TeleHealth
- Health Literacy
- Health Insurance & the Uninsured

A Special congratulations Pamela P. Kelly, Interim Assistant Director of Marketing and Clinical Activities, Missouri Telehealth Network. Ms. Kelly received her MBA, with an emphasis in Human Resource Management this November, from William Woods University.

Melinda Hemmelgarn, M.S., R.D. completed a two-year Kellogg Food and Society Policy Fellowship which focused on reducing childhood obesity and increasing sustainable food systems. She presented her work with Robert Wood Johnson’s Healthy Eating by Design grant project on the role of media, media literacy and childhood obesity at the Community Food Security Coalition annual conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, and at the Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood annual meeting in Boston.

Hemmelgarn & Jan Wolterman (Kidwell Enterprise, Cincinnati, /OH) co-authored a new children's book which promotes eating a variety of fruits and vegetables, gardening and watching less TV, titled: “Treasure Hunt with the Munch Crunch Bunch.” For more information see: www.munchcrunchbunch.com.

Hemmelgarn is working with the MO Dept. of Health and Senior Services’ 5-A-Day/More Matters Campaign to promote fruit and vegetable consumption to improve public health.

In the mean time, please continue to visit us and pardon the mess during the “under construction” phase of our rebuilding.

New Items on the Website:
- Presentations from the 2006 Health Policy Summit.
- Video clips of the 2006 Health Policy Summit will be available on the website, as well.