



# CIRWH NEWS FLASH

Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Women's Health

SUMMER 2005

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL BRANCH

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 1

## From the Director's Desk



As I look back on National Women's Health Week 2005, "Overcoming the Wonder Woman Myth," I want to thank everyone who participated and attended the events designed to increase awareness of women's need to attend to their health.

The NWHW 2005 planning committee was chaired by Olivia Meyer of Galveston, a strong advocate for women's health issues. I would like to thank her for all her help and efforts in making this a successful event. Her successor for NWHW 2006 will be Mary Viegas, also a Galveston resident and member of the planning committee.

The three panelists on May 9, Drs. Karen Szauter, Ruth Levine and Jennifer Ellison, did an excellent job of explaining three of the most important issues related to women's health: fitness, depression and nutrition. All three have agreed to allow us to post their presentations on the center web site ([www.utmb.edu/cirwh](http://www.utmb.edu/cirwh)). Check these out and get inspired.

Between now and next May, we have discovered yet another opportunity for women to invest in their health. It's National Women's Health & Fitness Day on Wednesday, Sept. 28. This national event is organized by the Health Information Resource Center with the goal of encouraging women to take control of their health. On that day, from your computer, check out UTMB's

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## One spouse's health affects that of the other

Among married couples over age 65, one would expect their health status to reflect upon one another. This similarity, or concordance, may be a natural result of the life the partners experience together, as well as their joint exposure to the same diet, stressors and lifestyle—the effects of which accumulate for both over time.

Drs. M. Kristen Peek and Jim P. Stimpson saw this concordance examined among the white population, but not for older Mexican American couples. Based on data from a National Institutes of Health grant that Peek received to study this phenomenon, Stimpson, postdoctoral fellow in the Sealy Center on Aging, and Peek just published their findings, "Concordance of chronic conditions in older Mexican American couples," in *Preventing Chronic Disease*.

"Marriage provides the primary source of social support and economic stability for married individuals," writes Stimpson, primary author, "and this support and stability have been shown to be associated with physical health." Their study examined interviews with 553 couples in five Southwestern states: Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas, where about 85 percent of the country's Mexican American older adults live.



*Jim Stimpson, right, laughs as he and his mentor, Kristen Peek, discuss a study in Peek's office.*

For this group, "blood pressure was nearly identical, and this striking similarity extends to four of six chronic conditions," stroke, diabetes, cancer and heart condition, but not necessarily hypertension and arthritis. "Wives were more likely to have been diagnosed with hypertension and arthritis."

When the wife is diagnosed with one of these conditions, the husband's risk goes up. "The strongest effect found was for cancer; the husband's risk was 4.49 times [higher] when his wife had been diagnosed with cancer," writes Stimpson. On the other hand, "stroke was not statistically significant, but the wife's risk of developing [any of the other conditions was] positively associated with the husband's corresponding chronic condition."

Stimpson observes that health care providers should take note of this phenomenon. "Genetics is not an issue among couples," he said in an interview recently, "but physicians should get a

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## Researcher Profiles

**Name:**

Kristen Peek

**Title:**

Associate Professor

**Birthplace:**

Rome, Georgia

**Education:**

Ph.D. in sociology

**How long have you been at UTMB?**

7 years

**What is the focus of your women's health research?**

Gender and disability; gender differences in the effects of marriage and health

**What do you enjoy most about your work?**

Excitement of research and being able to potentially influence policy

**What do you enjoy least about your work?**

Stress of research and getting grants

**If money were no object, what would you be doing right now?**

Research and spending more time with my family.



**Name:**

Jim Stimpson

**Title:**

Postdoctoral fellow

**Birthplace:**

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

**Education:**

Ph.D. in sociology

**How long have you been at UTMB?**

1 year

**What is the focus of your women's health research?**

Influence of family on health

**What do you enjoy most about your work?**

Research

**What do you enjoy least about your work?**

Not having a permanent position

**If money were no object, what would you be doing right now?**

Research



## Spouse's health affects the other

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medical history on both partners, especially when they're older couples. They are likely to have similar health issues. Something about the marital relationship may be protective—or not protective."

Peek, associate professor of socio-medical sciences in the Department of Preventive Medicine & Community Health and CIRWH fellow, said patients need to be aware of the potential for having the same disease. "The take-home message when one partner is diagnosed with any of these chronic conditions," she said, "is that the spouse needs to be aware of her own (or his own) increased risk, as well."

Her team's next step, said Peek, is to look beyond Mexican American older couples to their Hispanic counterparts in Mexico and Puerto Rico, as well. She and her team also want to look at gender differences among this population. "For example," she said, "women's health tends to be more affected by family events, but men's health often is based on events that happen in the workplace. Research shows this is true for mental health, but we'd like to look at other health conditions."

## Faculty tips for women to take control of their lives

Three UTMB faculty members present ways for women to take control of their bodies and their lives on a DVD available for check-out at Galveston's Rosenberg Library and in other locations in the area.

The DVD includes Dr. Jennifer Ellison, assistant professor of physical therapy, presenting "Fitting in Fitness," with ways to include exercise in whirlwind schedules; Dr. Ruth Levine, professor of psychiatry and behavioral science, who explains how to recognize and address depression in "Depression: More Than Just the Blues;" and Dr. Karen Szauter, associate professor, internal medicine-gastroenterology, who sheds light on the Food & Drug Administration's new food pyramid, answering the question, "Do you know what you just ate?"

Their 20-minute presentations were recorded as part of the day-long kickoff of National Women's Health

Week at the University of Texas Medical Branch. Also on the video is a speech by Dr. Brent W. Bost, author of *The Hurried Woman Syndrome: A Seven-Step Program to Conquer Fatigue, Control Weight and Restore Passion to Your Relationship*.

His book and the DVD containing his suggestions for how women can take control of their lives are circulating at the Rosenberg Library.

Other copies of the video can be borrowed from UTMB's Moody Medical Library, Galveston College library, the Galveston Housing Authority Learning Center and the Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Women's Health at UTMB, sponsor of the program.

The DVD also is available on loan from the UTMB Women's Health Center at Bay Colony Town Center in League City. To reserve a copy, call the center at (281) 534-6414.

## Director's Desk

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Commit to Fit web site, <http://www.utmb.edu/getfit/video.htm>, where you'll find exercises you can do at your desk. If you have not done so already, take this first step to a more fit, healthy lifestyle. I look forward to seeing you again in 2006 during the week following Mother's Day for National Women's Health Week, May 14-20.

Yours in good health,

Abbey B. Berenson, M.D.

## Announcements

**Dr. Randall J. Urban**, professor of endocrinology, has been appointed chair of the Department of Internal Medicine. Urban has been interim chair of the department since June of 2004.

**Dr. Susan L. Rosenthal**, professor, pediatrics, and director, Division of Adolescent & Behavioral Health, recently became a member of the 2005–2006 class of fellows in the Hedwig van Ameringen Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine (ELAM) Program for Women. ELAM offers educational, networking and mentoring opportunities to support women leaders who aspire to administrative ranks in academic health centers. Rosenthal was one of 10 selected from a pool of candidates representing 64 academic institutions from across the U.S. and Canada.

**Dr. Elizabeth Reifsnider** recently was named associate dean for research and appointed to the newly endowed Constance Brewer Koomey Professorship in the School of Nursing. Her research focuses on maternal and child nutrition and growth, breast-feeding and diabetes, along with work with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). She has a strong interest in research with vulnerable and underserved populations.

The Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization in June designated the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston as a Collaborating Center on Aging and Health. **Dr. Kenneth J. Ottenbacher** is director of the new center, which will facilitate joint aging studies with Latin American researchers. **Dr. Kyriakos Markides** is the center's co-director. The mission of the center is to improve the health of Hispanic older adults through collaborative research, education and clinical training.

**Dr. Martha A. Hargraves**, associate professor and director, Health Policy and Health Services Research, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, recently was appointed chair of the Texas Health Disparities Task Force for a two-year term. She also was named to the steering committee for the Institute

*Fifteen students and three teachers from the Galveston–Houston area, across Texas, and as far away as Arkansas participated in UTMB's High School Summer Research Program. Students displayed and explained posters of their projects during a forum*



*at the conclusion of the eight-week program. Recognized for excellence were (from left) Allison Edwards, fourth place; Stephen Li, first place; Jesse Cline, honorable mention; Ilyse Kornblau, third place; and Megan Xue, second place. Dr. David Watson, right, is director of the campus-wide program. Doctoral students from the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences judged the posters. CIRWH sponsored the awards.*

of Medicine's Quality of Care Initiative resulting from the IOM's study entitled "Quality Through Collaboration, The Future of Rural Health."

### Honors and Awards

**Zobeida Cruz Monserrate**, graduate student and graduate assistant in Dr. Kathleen O'Connor's lab, received the Keystone Symposia Scholarship Award to attend the Keystone Symposium on Cell Migration and Adhesion in April. She also was selected to attend the Edward A. Smuckler Memorial Workshop: Pathobiology of Cancer in July.

### Invited Presentations

**Dr. Karin High**, professor, Department of Neuroscience and Cell Biology, will speak in September in Houston at a cancer pain conference, entitled "Mechanisms and Treatment of Cancer Related Symptoms," sponsored by University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. She also will present "Role of cation chloride cotransporters in joint inflammation and hyperalgesia" at a meeting in Soria, Spain, sponsored by the Institute of Health Science Studies of Castilla and Leon on Sept. 20, 2005.

**Dr. Shilla Chakrabarty**, assistant professor, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, presented "Peripubertal

hyperinsulinemia: A risk factor for polycystic ovary syndrome and ovulatory dysfunction?" at the 52nd Annual Scientific Meeting of the Society for Gynecologic Investigation in Los Angeles, Calif., 2005.

### Grants

**Dr. Terry McNearney**, associate professor, Departments of Neuroscience and Cell Biology; Internal Medicine; and Microbiology and Immunology, "Targeted HSV-1 gene therapy abrogates pancreatic pain." Private foundation, anonymous. 3 years. Plus "Electroacupuncture and mind-body interactions in scleroderma gastric dysmotility." Mind-Body Research Scholars Grant derived from NIA R21. 1 year.

**Dr. Terumi Midoro-Horiuti**, assistant professor, Department of Pediatrics, "Effects of environmental estrogens on allergic sensitization and reaction." NIEHS Centennial Center of Environmental Toxicology. Pilot Project Study Period: 05/01/05–04/30/06.

**Dr. Randall Urban**, professor and chair, internal medicine. "Effects of Weight Loss on Physical Function in Older, Obese Adult: Mechanisms Related to Skeletal Muscle." Wake Forest Health Sciences/National Institute on Aging P30 Subcontract.

## 2005–2006 Seminar Series

### CIRWH SEMINARS

Noon–1 p.m. in 2.312 Children's Hospital

#### October

*October 7:* National Women's Health Week 2005 first-place poster winners: Heather Littleton, Ph.D., "Coping with the experience of rape," Salama Salama, Ph.D., "Hormonal regulation of catechol-o-methyl transferase activity in uterine leiomyoma," and Min Chen, Ph.D., "Integrin 64 promotes expression of autotaxin/enpp2 autocrine motility factor."

#### November

*November 4:* Elizabeth Reifsnider, Ph.D., professor and associate dean for research, UTMB School of Nursing, "Beliefs about breastfeeding."

#### December

*December 2:* Rosemary B. Hughes, Ph.D., assistant professor, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, Baylor College of Medicine, "Depression self-management for rural women with disabilities."

#### January

*January 6:* Rebecca Reeves, Dr.PH., R.D., assistant professor, Medicine, Atherosclerosis & Lipoprotein, Baylor COM, "Weight management in minority women."

#### February

*February 3:* Florence Haseltine, M.D., Ph.D., director, Center for Population Research, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, NIH, "Sex matters in biology."

#### March

*March 3:* Susan Ramin, M.D., director, Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine, UT Health Science Center Houston, "The NIH MFMU Network ongoing trials."

#### April

*April 7:* Concepcion Arrastia, M.D., associate professor, Obstetrics & Gynecology, topic to be announced; and Kathleen O'Connor, P.D., assistant professor, surgery, "Breast Cancer Invasion: Lessons learned from the alpha6beta4 integrin."

#### May

*May 5:* Lewis B. Morgenstern, M.D., director, Stroke Program, associate professor, Neurology, Epidemiology, Emergency Medicine and Neurosurgery, University of Michigan Health System, "Gender differences in stroke."

The CIRWH News Flash is published quarterly by the Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Women's Health at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston.

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