The epidemiology department is committed to supporting our junior faculty to maximize opportunities for their success. Two programs, both led by senior Epi faculty members, have been established that are dedicated to providing a mentoring system structured to do just that.

**Junior Faculty Mentoring Program**

The Junior Faculty Mentoring Program formalizes a mentoring system that historically has not been structured. In this program, all junior faculty are assigned a formal mentor by the Chair’s office, in consultation with both the potential mentor and mentee, and the mentor-mentee pair is encouraged to meet monthly to review the mentee’s progress. Paired together in the beginning of 2010, Drs. Guohua Li and Thelma Mielenz represent a terrific example from our inaugural cohort of mentor-mentee pairs.

**Dr. Guohua Li and Dr. Thelma Mielenz**

Dr. Guohua Li’s research interests are in injury epidemiology and epidemiological methods. Dr. Li was awarded the Kenneth Rothman Epidemiology Prize in 1999 and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2005. As the Finster Chair, he directs the research program in anesthesia and critical care and teaches clinical epidemiology. Dr. Li, who has worked with numerous students and junior faculty members over the past twenty years, says that he “regards mentoring as a responsibility as well as a privilege. To me, there is nothing more rewarding than making a positive impact on the lives and careers of his students and mentees.”

Thelma Mielenz, PhD, joined the Department last fall as an Assistant Professor. After completing her training at University of North Carolina, she received new investigator awards from Physical Therapy, Arthritis and Rheumatology Foundations. She is currently co-investigator on NIA’s Translational Research Institute on Pain in Later Life with Cornell. With research interests in aging and injury, Dr. Mielenz has found the mentorship of Dr. Li quite beneficial. She says, “Dr. Li focuses on obtaining NIH funding and helps keep me from over committing. The mentoring program provides an hour a month of a successful researcher’s attention to my goals - priceless.”

**Junior Faculty Grant Review (JFGR)**

In conjunction with the Mentoring Program, we also need a system whereby junior faculty can have access to grant review by senior faculty who can help guide them on their grant writing. This system is intended to provide an opportunity for informal, but structured, feedback on evolving grant proposals. Senior faculty members, Drs. Mary Beth Terry and Neil Schluger, have agreed to serve as JFGR reviewers for 2010. Both have an extensive grant funding and mentoring track record and are well suited to mentoring junior faculty in grant submissions. We thank Drs. Terry and Schluger for their help with this important step in supporting our junior faculty.
Welcome to the June Epidemiology Department Newsletter. In this newsletter we continue to highlight members of the faculty, staff, and students and to call attention to published articles, special events, and departmental news. In this issue we also summarize the department strategic direction and the areas in which we are moving forward together. In faculty meetings over the past few months we have found it helpful to organize our departmental activity into four areas. Each area represents a cluster of work on which we are advancing, and each area has a specific goal. Our areas of activity and the goals we aim to achieve as a department are as follows:

1. Reinforce the department’s areas of scientific strength and build new ones
   Goal: Innovative scientific contribution

2. Nurture faculty and create clear road maps for collaboration with partners inside and outside Columbia
   Goal: Engaged, productive faculty

3. Strengthen our educational programs
   Goal: Dynamic educational opportunities

4. Effectively manage the department’s administration
   Goal: Supportive administrative infrastructure

Throughout the issue we present elements of work that are underway to help us achieve these goals. The goals are, throughout the newsletter, highlighted in blue and presented near relevant activities. In upcoming newsletters, as we take more steps forward, we will continue to report on the department’s progress toward these goals. As always I want to thank all the faculty, staff, and students who are working hard to help us achieve our aspirations as a department.

I hope everyone is having a great summer.

Warm regards,

UPCOMING EVENTS: SUMMER 2010

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<td>Hess Commons</td>
<td>Special Lecture: Dr. Marco Egbring</td>
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<td><em>Information System Innovations for Improved</em></td>
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<td><em>Patient Safety and Treatment Effectiveness</em></td>
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<td>July 16</td>
<td>1-3pm</td>
<td>Hess Commons</td>
<td>Epi Faculty Meeting: Doctoral Committee</td>
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DEPARTMENT MISSION AND VISION

The future of academic epidemiology is in innovative interdisciplinary research and training that brings a broad cells-to-society approach to questions about population health and disease. We should be considering these questions within a global context and working with partners to make our findings accessible and translatable into practice. The real world impact of our findings should be central to our thinking. Building on the academic writing of many of our faculty, on our internal and external departmental reviews, and on consultation within the department, we have articulated our next steps as follows. We aim to:

1. Advance a new, integrative epidemiology that takes into account a cells-to-society approach to etiology
   - We need to move away from individual risk factors approach to a deeper understanding of how biology, behavior and society together affect health

2. Advance epidemiologic methods that help us address our more complex questions
   - Given the greater sophistication in our questions, we need new tools that help us tackle the questions; it is a core task of an excellent department to lead on methodologic development

3. Improve translation of our epidemiologic science into action via the progression of implementation science
   - We need to make research more responsive to population needs, and better translate science into practice. It is a critical point in time to develop a perspective on how our epidemiologic methods can inform public health action and we have an opportunity to lead in bridging the ‘population science to bedside’ gap

We aim to advance in these areas particularly in our five areas of departmental strength: (1) chronic disease epidemiology, (2) infectious disease epidemiology, (3) lifecourse epidemiology, (4) psychiatric and neuro epidemiology, and (5) social epidemiology. We also aim to encourage epidemiologic innovation in areas where we do not currently have, but aspire to, scientific strength.
DOCTORAL STUDENTS

This spring, seven students from our department defended their dissertations and graduated from the doctoral program here at Columbia. Aside from developing, defending, and depositing their dissertation, graduating doctoral students must take courses in epidemiology and biostatistics, pass two qualifying exams, and have teaching experience before they are awarded a degree. In order to graduate with distinction, the student’s dissertation must receive a unanimous vote from the doctoral committee.

Sarah Lomax Braunstein, PhD, who received the William Farr Award in Epidemiology at the 2010 Student Awards Ceremony, graduated with distinction this spring. Her dissertation, “The Added Value of Data on HIV Incidence Rates and Risk Factors, and the Promise of New Methodologies”, was sponsored by Dr. Denis Nash.

Julie Yip, BDS, DDS, MA, PhD, an associate professor of Periodontology and Implant Dentistry at NYU, graduated with a PhD in Epidemiology under the T32 training grant, the NYU Oral Epidemiology Research Training Program. Her dissertation, “The Role of Biosphosphonates, Implant Length and Location in Implant Failure”, was sponsored by Dr. Luisa Borrell.

Heidi Mochari Greenberger, PhD, RD, was a recipient of the Anna C. Gelman Award for Excellence in Epidemiology. Her dissertation, “Modifiers of the Effectiveness of a Diet Intervention in Family Members of Cardiovascular Disease Patients”, was sponsored by Dr. Mary Beth Terry.


Vivian Santiago Colón, PhD, a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health and Society scholar, graduated with distinction. Her dissertation, “Constructs, Course and Context: An Examination of Attention-deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder as a Harmful-dysfunction”, was sponsored by Dr. Sharon Schwartz.

Lina Titievsky, PhD, graduated this spring. Dr. Andrew Rundle sponsored her dissertation, “Neighborhood Walkability and Body Mass Index in New York City”.

Dana March, PhD was awarded the 2009 William Farr Award in Epidemiology. She defended her dissertation, “Place, Race, and Psychosis”, which was sponsored by Dr. Ezra Susser, in May of this year and graduated with distinction.

BRIEF MENTIONS: STUDENTS PRESENT WORK AT INTERNATIONAL MEETING

Ms. Jackie Lee’s paper “Examining social support as a predictor of body mass index in New York City” has been accepted for the Coders’ Corner of the Northeast SAS Users’ Group (NESUG) Conference 2010, to be held in Baltimore, MD, from November 14 - 17. Ms. Lee is an Epi student in the MPH track. The abstract was originally from her final paper for the class P8483 “Applications of Epidemiological Research Methods” taught by Dr. Charles DiMaggio.
Association found between Adiposity and Diabetes in Older Adults

Dr Jose Luchsinger and colleagues just published an article in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) that explores the relationship between adiposity and diabetes risk in older adults, age 65 and older. While adiposity and diabetes has been found to be associated for young and middle aged adults, this relationship has not been well described for older adults. The article analyses data from a prospective, population-based study with 12.4 average years of follow-up. It finds a strong association between measures of overall and central adiposity and diabetes in both men and women. Research also found that weight gain during midlife and in late life is an important risk factor for diabetes and that age modified the risk of diabetes associated with adiposity. This study demonstrates the importance of weight control throughout middle age as an important prevention for diabetes.


Village-level characteristics associated with PTSD symptoms in Liberia

The Republic of Liberia suffered through fourteen years of civil war, ending, in 2003, with more than 250,000 lives lost and more than one-third of the population displaced. Findings from the study, “Village Characteristics Associated with Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms in Post conflict Liberia”, showed that village-level factors were associated with posttraumatic-stress symptoms in the post-conflict setting, over and above the contribution of individual-level factors. The study suggests that community characteristics such as communal displacement and inequitable income distribution may be important determinants of mental health and well being in low-income countries exposed to conflict.


Brief Mentions: Faculty Paper Nominated

Faculty members’ paper nominated for Shepard Award

An article published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) last August, “Asthma and posttraumatic stress symptoms 5 to 6 years following exposure to the World Trade Center Terrorist Attack,” has been nominated for the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) 2010 Charles C. Shepard Science Award in the Assessment and Epidemiology category. The award recognizes scientific achievement at CDC/ATSDR and honors the memory of Dr. Charles C. Shepard, whose career was marked by the pursuit of scientific excellence. Drs. Steven Stellman and Lorna Thorpe, two Epi faculty members, are authors on the paper, which found that acute and prolonged exposures were both associated with a large burden of asthma and PTS symptoms 5 to 6 years after the September 11th attacks.
Dr. Heather Greenlee is Assistant Professor of Epidemiology and Medical Oncology (in Medicine) and a member of the Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center (HICCC). Her research focuses on the use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and lifestyle modifications for breast cancer prevention and control. She uses observational studies and clinical trials to study what women can do, beyond conventional treatment, to prevent breast cancer, decrease side effects of treatment and improve prognosis.

Dr. Greenlee trained as a naturopathic physician at Bastyr University, the leading science-based naturopathic medical school in the US. Dr. Greenlee completed a post-doctoral fellowship in cancer prevention at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, funded by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, and completed an MPH in Epidemiology at the University of Washington. In 2004 she came to Columbia’s Department of Epidemiology as both a PhD trainee and a post-doctoral fellow in the Cancer Epidemiology Training Program. In 2008, Dr. Greenlee completed her PhD and joined the Epidemiology faculty with a joint appointment in the Division of Hematology/Oncology. Her goal is to develop a comprehensive adult integrative oncology research program. Integrative oncology combines the best of evidence-based integrative therapies with state-of-the-art conventional oncology care.

Dr. Greenlee is currently studying the short- and long-term effects of antioxidant supplement use during breast cancer treatment. Many cancer patients use antioxidants, often at very high doses, despite concern that they may dampen pro-oxidant effects of chemotherapy and radiation therapy. There are limited data available to guide clinical guidelines on use of antioxidants and other CAM therapies during and after cancer treatment. She currently is conducting a series of phase I/II studies on the use of coenzyme Q10 to prevent cardiotoxicity associated with chemotherapy. Dr. Greenlee also uses data from the Pathways Study, a prospective cohort of breast cancer patients diagnosed within Kaiser Permanente Northern California (Kushi, PI), to study the long-term effects of antioxidant use during treatment on recurrence and survival. This work has been supported by a Columbia CTSA K12 Career Development Award (2008) and an NCI K23 Mentored Patient-Oriented Research Career Development Award (2009).

Dr. Greenlee is also interested in understanding whether lifestyle modifications after a breast cancer diagnosis can improve recurrence risk. Dr. Greenlee recently completed a trial testing a community-based exercise and dietary change weight loss intervention among minority breast cancer survivors. She is currently working within the NCI’s Southwest Oncology Group to move that intervention into the cooperative group setting.

Dr. Greenlee is an active member of the HICCC Clinical Breast Oncology Program, led by Dr. Dawn Hershman, and she serves as a co-investigator on multiple clinical trials of dietary supplements, acupuncture and lifestyle counseling to improve cancer survivorship.

In fall 2010, Dr. Greenlee will be teaching a new course in the Department of Epidemiology, Applying Epidemiologic Methods to Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

**BRIEF MENTIONS: EPI STUDENTS TAKE THE LEAD**

**Epi Postdoc Fellow elected to leadership role at SER**

Dr. Edgar Simard, a postdoctoral fellow in our department, was elected President of the Society for Epidemiological Research (SER) Student Caucus. The SER annual meeting was held in Seattle, June 23-26. Congratulations to Dr. Simard!

**Epi Student to Co-chair Conference**

Anita Radix, MD, a physician and an Epi student, has been chosen to be a co-chair of the Caribbean session at the XVIII International AIDS Conference, which will be held this year in Vienna, Austria on July 18-23.
The AIDS International Training and Research Program (AITRP) began in 1988 as one of the first of a new generation of research training programs sponsored by the John E. Fogarty International Center for Advanced Study in the Health Sciences. The primary goal of the program is to build multidisciplinary biomedical, behavioral and social science research capacity for the prevention, care and treatment of HIV/AIDS and HIV related conditions for those adults and children affected by HIV/AIDS in the collaborating country. Grants are awarded to U.S. Institutions with strong HIV-related research training experience and with HIV-related research collaborations with institutions in low- and middle-income countries.

Since 1993, Columbia University has been a key participant in the National Institutes of Health Fogarty AIDS International Training and Research Program (AITRP). This program supports HIV/AIDS and related TB international training and research for foreign health scientists, clinicians, and allied health workers from developing countries and emerging democracies. The Columbia University-Southern Africa AITRP (CU-SA AITRP) builds on the strong historical ties between our faculty and South African health professionals. The overall goal of CU-SA AITRP is to build the capacity to conduct HIV/AIDS and TB research in South Africa, Namibia, Swaziland, and Lesotho in order to enhance and sustain continuing efforts to counter the HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis epidemics in these countries, the region of southern Africa, and globally.

The CU-SA AITRP has just been renewed for another 5 years, an outstanding accomplishment by the PI, Dr QUarraisha Abdul-Karim. In addition, we have received a supplement grant from the Center for Disease Control (CDC). This supplement supports one-year traineeships for South African health professionals to develop expertise in implementation research specifically in KwaZulu-Nata. This supplement, which totals nearly $300,000, attempts to fill the gap of translation of research findings to policy and practice to impact the HIV and TB epidemic.
STAFF PROFILE: NEIL RHODES

As Business Manager for the Department of Epidemiology, Neil Rhodes has a variety of responsibilities under Departmental Administrator Kathy Dodd, but the role that most of us see him in day-to-day is as pre-award grant administrator. Neil is the guy you go to when it’s time to prepare a grant application. The complexities of the submission process can be daunting for even the most seasoned investigators and administrators. From application to application, the specifications often vary enormously, or they can differ in small, easy-to-overlook ways that can spell trouble in the final hours before the submission deadline. Neil is there to assure that each grant submission meets the criteria to the letter, and that all the peripheral players and elements are brought into line. He offers a kind of one-stop shopping model for investigators, helping to develop the budget and budget justification, liaising with human resources and faculty affairs administrators to assure grant personnel are properly accounted for, and working closely with the Sponsored Project Administration (SPA), as well as investigators and administrators from collaborating departments at Columbia and other institutions. “Neil’s exceptional competence, his work ethic, and his superb attention to detail make him a pleasure to work with” says his supervisor, Departmental Administrator Kathy Dodd, “but I have to admit, it’s his sense of humor that keeps me going when the pressure is on!”

Professor of Epidemiology Steve Morse agrees: “Neil is a joy to work with. He anticipates your needs, and is always ready to help. If he’s doing the job, I know it’s going to be done right -- and often he’ll have it done even before I knew I needed it!”

Neil truly enjoys his role, the fast pace, the “smart, interesting, and funny” people he gets to work with every day, and even the intensity of the pressured deadlines. In his personal life, he satisfies his appetite for intellectual stimulation through extensive travel with his partner Brian Offutt – if Neil isn’t in the office, you can be pretty sure he’s on another continent somewhere. And at home, “We live with two master jewel thieves,” says Neil. The fact that the jewel thieves are both under a year old should make you no less wary if you visit: Taffy and Rhoda are two extremely clever young African Grey parrots, who will stop at nothing to relieve you of your earrings, watch, rings, or actually anything remotely shiny you might have on your person.

Being fun to work with has certainly contributed to Neil’s enormous popularity in the Department, but what matters most to his numerous clients is that he will always come through in the clinch. He personally assembled more than 90% of the 180 grants submitted by Epidemiology in fiscal year 2009-2010. Project Officer Christina McCarthy sums up the opinions of her colleagues when she says, “Neil is both an asset to the department and a delight to work with. He is extremely knowledgeable, always willing to share his expertise, and has more than once provided comic relief in stressful and difficult situations. My job would certainly be a challenge without him.”

BRIEF MENTIONS: FACULTY AWARDS AND NEW ARRIVALS

Epi Professor Awarded Teacher of the Year
Rachel Gordon, MD, MPH, an Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine and of Clinical Epidemiology, was awarded the Distinguished Teachers Award by the College of Physicians and Surgeons Class of 2012. Each year, the various P&S classes elect Teachers of the Year to whom they wish to express gratitude for excellence in teaching and service above and beyond the call of duty.

Baby Lovasi has arrived!
Emma Helene Lovasi was born June 15, 2010, weighing 6 lbs, 12 oz, to Dr. Gina Lovasi and her husband, Laszlo Lovasi. Congratulations to the Lovasi family!
EPI DEPARTMENT CLUSTERS

What is a cluster?
A group of faculty and students with related interests. Cluster members meet regularly to promote academic discourse and to catalyze innovative scientific ideas. Clusters have dedicated administrative support, both locally and with central departmental administration.

What are the benefits of clusters?
1. Create opportunities for scientific discourse and innovation around cluster topic
2. Provide an academic home for students and faculty, centered on shared scientific interest
3. Establish more efficient department operations and administrative support

What do cluster leaders do?
1. Lead department science in cluster topic
2. Mentor junior faculty and students in cluster
3. Facilitate monthly seminars
4. Liaise with departmental central administration

Cluster Organizational Chart
EPIDEMIOLOGY BY THE NUMBERS

Number of students in the department of epidemiology: 203

Number of faculty: 152

Number of administrative and support staff: 61

Number of fundamental areas of departmental strength: 5

Number of program areas under development: 5

Total grants submitted for fiscal year 2009-2010: 180

Rank among Mailman School departments in number of grants submitted: 1

Current year grant funding: $14,031,712

Active funded projects: 72

Total dollar value of active funded projects: $ 73,200,454

Number of peer reviewed scholarly articles published by faculty: 12,842

Number of centers of excellence led or co-led by faculty: 13

Number doctoral/postdoctoral training programs led or co-led by faculty: 9

Number of collaborating departments and centers across the university: 48

2010 Grant Attestation Due Dates

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