



COUNTRY SIDE

*Newsletter from the Rural Health Care Research Center
at the University of Virginia School of Nursing*

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Fall 2007

THREE NEW PILOT STUDIES UNDERWAY

The Center's Year 4 Pilot Studies now under way include *Increasing Activity in Rural Dwelling Adults with Heart Failure*; *Blue Ridge Mental Health Initiative Screening Program*; and *Being Tobacco-Free in Rural Virginia: Beliefs and Strategies of Male Adolescents*. All are interdisciplinary collaborations that will determine feasibility of larger studies. To learn more about these studies, visit www.nursing.virginia.edu/research/

Stepping Up to Heart Failure Needs

Heart failure is the only cardiac diagnosis on the increase in the United States - 1 in 9 people after age 40 are diagnosed with it and 1 in 5 will die within two years of diagnosis. According to Medicare records, the most common hospital discharge diagnoses for rural patients are heart failure and stroke. Exercise is known to benefit these patients, but rural residents are often unable to participate in cardiac rehabilitation since Medicare does not cover it.



Principal Investigator Assistant Professor **Kathy Haugh, PhD, RN**, explains that the goal of *Increasing Activity in Rural Dwelling Adults with Heart Failure* is to improve the quality of life for these patients by encouraging an increase in the number of steps they take during the day.

Study participants receive the usual discharge patient education, but two groups receive a pedometer and instructions about keeping a daily log of the number of steps they manage to take; one group is also provided with a nurse advisor to encourage them by telephone.

Photo at right (L to R): Debbie Williams, Peggy Whitehead, Linda Kellogg, Emily Hauenstein and Irma Mahone.

Addressing Gaps in Rural Mental Health Care

What are the mental health needs for residents of Nelson County? Thomas A. Saunders III Professor of Nursing and Director of the School's Southeastern Rural Mental Health Research Center **Emily Hauenstein, PhD, LCP, RN**, is Principal Investigator in a collaborative study with community agencies and private practitioners to identify depression and other common mental health problems among rural residents using primary health care centers in Nelson County. They have made it a high priority to close the gaps in mental health treatment among low-income rural residents.

One component of the study is the use of eScreen, an interactive user-friendly computer questionnaire provided to patients in the waiting room through a Tablet PC. By the time the provider sees the patient, s/he can see the survey results and know if they should pursue further questions that could lead to a diagnosis.



PILOT: WHY Do They Just Say “No?”

Male teens smoke or use smokeless tobacco at a higher rate than girls; the highest rates of use are in the rural South. Despite a daily total of more than 3,900 young people under 18 trying tobacco, more than 44% of male high school students still report they have never even puffed a cigarette. There have been numerous studies about factors that influence teens to smoke and that have documented gender differences, but few studies have examined teens’ attitudes, beliefs and strategies that promote the decision not to use tobacco.

UVA Associate Professor **Pamela Kulbok**, DNSc, APRN, BC, and Virginia Tech William E. Lavery Professor of Human Development **Peggy Meszaros**, PhD, are Co-Investigators of *Being Tobacco-Free in Rural Virginia: Beliefs and Strategies of Male Adolescents* which aims to ultimately develop novel interventions that will reduce morbidity and mortality from tobacco use. The team also includes **Nisha Botchwey**, PhD, Assistant Professor of Architecture who specializes in community development and health and **Ivora Hinton**, PhD, specialist in data analysis and interpretation.



L to R: Meszaros, Botchwey, Kulbok and Hinton

Since previous studies have shown boys to be more reluctant than girls to talk about their thoughts and feelings, the investigators plan to use Photovoice technology to make it easier for them to articulate their thoughts; one of their aims is to determine that technology’s effectiveness. This interdisciplinary study conducted with Carilion Health System and county extension agents in Charlotte and Dickinson Counties, resulted from an earlier Carilion-funded UVA/VT project.

Frontier Mental Health Papers Accepted

“Frontier” counties in the United States are those with population size, infrastructure and access to resources even more limited than the smallest “rural” counties. To increase capacity for research in frontier mental health services, the National Institute of Mental Health’s Office on Rural Mental Health requested concept papers that could lead to fundable research projects. The Southeastern Rural Mental Health Research Center submitted three papers; all were among 11 accepted for consideration at a June conference. NIMH paid all expenses and provided expert reviews and consultation for these young investigators. Research Assistant Professor **Irma Mahone**, PhD, RN, submitted *Serious Mental Illness and Medication Management*; Associate Professor **Larry Merkel**, MD, PhD, wrote *Comparative Study of Models of Mental Health Delivery in Frontier and Rural Communities*; and Research Assistant Professor **Ishan Williams**, PhD, proposed *Older Adult African Americans and Mental Health Services Use on the Frontier*.

Annual Conference Rated Success

The more than 80 participants who attended the Third Annual Conference held last May gave enthusiastic reviews. According to survey results, they especially appreciated the variety of the conference content and the amount of practical information they could use later. Comments included: “... pleased with the interest of the presenters in enlisting the help from the audience to get the word out and offer their availability to the community... learned a great deal, and am grateful for the opportunity to learn more about rural health care and for the incredible networking opportunity ... extremely effective in demonstrating the importance of health literacy and cultural competence.”



The next annual conference – Innovations in Rural Health Research: Community Partnerships and Translational Research – is scheduled for April 30, 2008.

HIGH TECH'S HEALING TOUCH IN RURAL VIRGINIA

The word “rural” is more often associated with hayfields than technology, yet hi-tech has come to the countryside to bridge the gaps in health care for rural residents. As seen in our new pilot studies, sometimes that technology is as low-tech as a pedometer or simple computer devices and programs. Telemedicine delivers clinical consultations (including patient consultations, remote diagnosis, and patient care in over 30 specialties) and teleradiology (transmission of diagnostic quality radiographic images and interpretation by UVA radiologists) to rural residents throughout Southwest Virginia. Home health applications are being added, including monitoring of patient vital signs, follow-up care, monitoring and educational services.

Telemedicine also brings in-service training programs to nurses in remote areas with continuing education (CEU) classes offered on topics such as infection control and patient restraints. With most rural clinics staffed principally by nurses, **Eugene Sullivan**, Director of the Office of Telemedicine, observes, “Nurses are the key component to the telemedicine program since they provide the continuity of care to rural patients and since they are nearly always with the patient during a specialist consultation. They can interpret the physician’s comments to the patients and assure that the patient’s situation is fully communicated to the doctor.” **Karen Rheuban**, MD, Medical Director of the Office of Telemedicine, also serves on the Advisory Board for the Rural Health Care Research Center where her expertise will develop and expand interdisciplinary programs to serve rural patients.

Recently, the FCC announced \$2.7 million in funding under a three-year national initiative to give outlying health care facilities broadband access to experts and equipment at leading medical institutions. UVA Telemedicine will serve as Virginia’s lead organization in a collaborative effort. Once this pilot program’s new high speed internet links are in place, it will be possible for health care providers to transmit patient records, video files and other images for diagnosis and ongoing care across the state and the nation. Additional funds will come from Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and from the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification Commission. Additional recent funding will improve rural stroke care through VAST (Virginia Acute Stroke Telehealth network) and another program is enhancing access to cancer screening, treatment, clinical trials, and collaborative tumor boards.



Dental Health, Mental Health and Immigrant Health issues formed the agenda for the Virginia Rural Health Association’s 2007 Annual Conference in November. Participants explored collaboration opportunities, learned about important research on rural health problems and identified areas for future research. Keynote speakers included **Elizabeth Merwin**, member of the VRHA Board, who presented *Enhancing Rural Mental Health Care: Strategies from policy and research*. Visit www.vrha.org for posted presentations and other details.

Elizabeth Merwin, PhD, RN, FAAN, Madge M. Jones
Professor and Associate Dean for Research and
Director of the Rural Health Care Research Center.



RECENT PRESENTATIONS, POSTERS & PUBLICATIONS

- **Campbell, C.** & Ash C.R. (2007). Keeping faith. *Journal of Hospice and Palliative Care Nursing*. 9(1), 31-41.
- **Campbell, C.** (2007). Respect for persons: Engaging African-Americans in end of life research. *Journal of Hospice and Palliative Care Nursing* 9(2), 74-85.
- Delaney, K. R., Hanrahan, N. P., **Merwin, E. I.** (2007). Using Data to Increase the National Presence of Psychiatric mental Health Nursing. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 112-115.
- Flattery, M. P., Baker, K. M. **Haugh, K. H.**, Maltby, M. C., Salyer, J. (2007). Caregiving for patients requiring left ventricular assist device support. Research abstract presentations from the American Association of Heart Failure Nurses 2007 Annual Meeting: Global Aspects of Heart Failure. *Progress in Cardiovascular Nursing*. 22(2): 118.
- **Laughon, K.**, & Sutherland, M.A. (2007). Intimate partner violence against rural women: Severity and consequences. *Rural Clinician Quarterly*, Newsletter of the National Rural Health Association.
- Radford, A., Slifkin, R., **Baernholdt, M.**, Schur, C., Cheung, K. (2007) 340B Drug Pricing Program Results of a Survey of Eligible but Non-Participating Rural Hospitals. A Joint Publication of the North Carolina Rural Health Research & Policy Analysis Center and NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis.
- Rhee, H., Wenzel, J., **Steeves, R. H.** (2007). Adolescents' Psychosocial Experiences Living with Asthma: A Focus Group Study. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, Volume 21, Issue 2, March-April 2007, Pages 99-107.
- Schur, C., Cheung, K., Radford, A., Slifkin, R., **Baernholdt, M.** (2007). 340B Drug Pricing Program Results of a Survey of Participating Hospitals. NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis.
- **Utz, S. W.** (2007). Beating Diabetes: Lower Your Blood Sugar: Lose Weight, and Stop Diabetes and Its Complication in Their Tracks. *Family & Community Health* Vol 30(4), 366-367.
- **Campbell, C.** (2007, February) *Creating partnerships and building bridges*. In E. Merwin (Chairperson), Participants in Rural Minority Communities: What Works? Symposium presented at the 21st Annual Conference of the Southern Nursing Research Society, Galveston, Texas.
- **Campbell, C.** (2007, October) *Factors Influencing end of life decision-making by Rural Dwelling Elderly African-Americans with Advanced Cancer*. Paper Presentation. University of Virginia Symposium on Race and Society. Charlottesville, VA.
- **Jones, R.** (2007, October) *Decision-making for Prostate Cancer Screening among Rural African-American*. Paper Presentation. University of Virginia Symposium on Race and Society. Charlottesville, VA.
- **Utz, S.** (2007, October) *Testing a Group Intervention for Managing Diabetes with Rural African-Americans*. Paper Presentation. University of Virginia Symposium on Race and Society. Charlottesville, VA.

COMING EVENTS

- February 6 **Think Tank Meeting**
- March 5 **Think Tank Meeting**
- April 30 **Annual Conference** (Visit www.nursing.virginia.edu/research/rhcr/events.aspx)

www.nursing.virginia.edu/centers/rhcr

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