We have all been busy working on so many exciting projects, that it just doesn’t seem possible that half a year has gone by since our inaugural newsletter. HPSSR faculty have been hard at work not only on their own research projects, but also with helping students with their projects and providing a forum for them to present their work. In this issue, we share with you the James Scholar Honors program and the students who have been developing their projects over the last year. In the time I have chaired this program it has grown from a handful of students up to 45 students, with 30 currently involved. This could not have happened without the work and enthusiasm of the James Scholar committee members, including HPSSR’s Drs. Alesia Jones, Manu Khare and Kim Hart. At the same time, under the direction of Dr. Alesia Jones, Research Day has also experienced tremendous growth. Please take some time to read about the 20th Annual Research Day and the many wonderful presentations and posters that were presented. We are very excited that Dr. Manu Khare along with her colleague Dr. Martin MacDowell in collaboration with the Stephenson County Health Department received funding to develop a project to promote healthy lifestyles using an evidence based, multi-level program. You can learn more about this project in this issue. Finally, we are proud to highlight our community partner, Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling, Inc. As you will read, we have had a long-standing relationship that remains strong.

Best Wishes,

Sherry A. Falsetti, PhD
Professor and Associate Head
Department of Family and Community Medicine
Director, Division of Health Policy and Social Science Research
University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford
HEALTH SYSTEMS RESEARCH

- Offers community assessments, feasibility studies, market analyses, customer satisfaction, survey research, data requests (health, demographic, economic), census guidance, and technical assistance for evaluation
- Current and past-year projects located in blue colored counties
- Among organizations served in 2014/2015
  - Crusader Community Health
  - Rockford Public Schools
  - City of Rockford
  - Sinnissippi Centers
  - Freeport Park District
  - Rockford Park District
  - Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau
  - Kreider Services
  - Highland Community College
  - Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Illinois
  - Illinois Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs
  - MidAmerica Center for Public Health Practice
  - Rockford Register Star
  - McHenry County Department of Health
  - Winnebago County Health Department
  - Whiteside County Health Department

Locations of Clients 2014/2015

CONTACT US for your data needs and/or evaluation services dlischwe@uic.edu or 815.395.5639
Violence against women is a significant public health concern in the U.S. Epidemiological studies estimate approximately 1.5 million women are physically and/or sexually assaulted in the U.S. every year. Rates are highest among women of reproductive age. Violence increases the risk for developing depression and posttraumatic stress disorder, posing detrimental health risks for the woman and her fetus (Gavin et al., 2005; O’Hara, 1999; Seng et al., 2009). Unfortunately, routine inquiry around victimization is often not implemented in primary care settings and primary care research investigating posttraumatic stress disorder is less developed than primary care depression research.

Dr. Jones recruited sixty-two women receiving prenatal care in a community-based clinic and family practice clinic to identify the prevalence of childhood and adult violence exposure, and assess for depression and posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms associated with victimization. Participants completed the self-report version of the Trauma Assessment for Adults, Edinburgh Depression Scale (EDS), and the Modified PTSD Symptom Scale.

Dr. Jones found that over half of expectant mothers (51.6%) received a positive depression score on the Edinburgh Depression Scale. Higher mean scores were found for feeling overwhelmed and blaming self unnecessarily. Approximately 21% of expectant mothers met criteria for PTSD based on the Modified PTSD Symptom Scale with higher mean scores for items related to feeling irritable or having anger outbursts, and feeling intensely emotionally upset when reminded of the trauma event.

The type of victimization most reported by expectant mothers was a history of sexual assault (figure 1). Approximately 32% of expectant mothers experienced a sexual assault before the age of 18. Chi square analyses revealed that women who reported pressure, coercion, or physical threat to have sexual contact occurring before the age of 18 were more likely to report experiencing a physical assault (p=.029) but not a sexual assault (p=.94) in adulthood. Univariate analyses revealed that expectant mothers who experienced any form of violence had higher scores on the Modified PTSD Symptom Scale (p=.003) and EDS (p=.031) than nonvictims.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (1999) recommended routine screening of all pregnant women for intimate partner violence. Current findings suggest the need for screening of multiple forms of violence. The current findings underscore the importance of healthcare providers to be trained to identify victims and screen for mental illness. Considering the frequent contact with healthcare providers during pregnancy, routine screening during this period may serve as an important opportunity for identifying victims, assessing mental health, and engaging women in treatment.

Dr. Jones is currently involved in a qualitative study examining healthcare providers’ views on screening routinely pregnant women for violence experiences and mental health. Dr. Jones’ research is supported by the University of Illinois Underrepresented Faculty Recruitment Program.

Note. CSA: child sexual abuse; ASA: adult sexual assault; CPA: child physical abuse; APA: adult physical assault

Fig. 1. Prevalence of violence exposure among pregnant women

References


Welcoming the New James Scholar Students

Each year at the Rockford Campus, the James Scholar committee hosts a dinner for the second year medical students who are in the top 25% of their class to introduce them to the James Scholar honors program. At this dinner, students have the opportunity to learn more about this research program, hear from current students who are in the program and meet potential research advisors. Dr. Falsetti, chair of the James Scholar Committee then meets with each student individually to discuss research interests and potential research advisors. The first year of the program is spent developing a research proposal and getting it approved. The students are asked to submit a brief proposal and meet with the committee to determine the feasibility of their studies. The next step is developing a final proposal, which usually goes through a couple of revisions and it is presented at a James Scholar Committee meeting with student’s advisors in attendance. In 2014, fourteen students were eligible for the program and 12 completed their full proposals which were recently accepted by the committee. These students will spend the next two years completing their research projects, which will be presented at conferences, our campus Research Day, as well as to the James Scholar committee. The projects are diverse and exciting!

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Hospital and Long-term Outcomes Following Aortic Valve Replacement
Student: Andrew Crawford; Advisor: John Myers, MD, SwedishAmerican Hospital, Rockford, IL

Lavage Efficacy and Patient Satisfaction on a Low Residue Diet with Magnesium Citrate or PEG-ES (Nulytely) for Bowel Preparation in Colorectal Cancer Screening Colonoscopic Procedures
Student: Adam Lake; Advisor: Chandrashakhar Turkral, MD, PhD, Gastroenterology Assoc., Cancer Screening Colonoscopic Procedures, Rockford, IL

Chest Flap Reconstruction for Coverage of Complex Hand Injuries with Severe Soft Tissue Loss
Student: Anthony Logli; Advisor: Brian J. Bear, MD, Rockford Orthopedics, Rockford, IL

Placental Pathology: Is It Really Necessary?
Student: Paige Love; Advisor: Antoun Khabbaz, MD, Crusader Community Health, Rockford, IL

Exploring the Impact on Outcomes in Implant Based Breast Reconstruction with a Novel Manipulation of Acellular Dermal Matrix
Student: Lawrence Yen; Advisors: Sarah Hagarty, MD, OSF Specialty Clinic, Rockford, IL; Manorama Khare, PhD, Research Assistant Professor, U of I College of Medicine at Rockford, Rockford, IL

The Relationship Between Mid-luteal Phase Progesterone and Fasting Insulin Levels in Women of Reproductive Age
Student: Ryan Beardsley; Advisors: John Holden, MD, and Manorama Khare, PhD, Research Assistant Professor, U of I College of Medicine at Rockford, Rockford, IL

Comparison of Intrawound and Intravenous Antimicrobial Prophylaxis for Surgical Infections in Sprague-Dawley Rats
Student: Craig Forsthoefel; Advisor: Fred Sweet, MD, Rockford Spine Center, Rockford, IL

Teachers’ Knowledge of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Outcomes of a Teacher Training Program
Student: Sonali Khurana; Advisor: Manika Bhateja, MD, Sherry Falsetti, PhD, and Alesia Jones, PhD, U of I College of Medicine at Rockford, IL

Role of VEGF/VEGFR Autocrine in Mediating EGFR TKI Resistance in Non-small Cell Lung Cancer
Advisor: Leo Lin; Student: Neelu Puri, PhD, U of I College of Medicine at Rockford, IL

Results of a Strabismus Surgical Skill Workshop on Resident Performed Surgeries
Student: Jordyn Lucas; Advisor: Fred Sweet, MD, Department of Ophthalmology, University of Illinois at Chicago

Incidence and Impact of Post-operative Hypertension On Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) Outcomes and a Candidate Parameter for the Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) Care Pathway
Student: Jordan Sharlin; Advisor: Randal Dull, MD, PhD, Department of Anesthesiology, University of Illinois at Chicago

Long-term Prognosis of Early vs. Delayed Coronary Artery Bypass Graft Surgery for STEMI and NSTEMI Patients in Winnebago, Ogle and Boone County
Student: Alexander Yeung; Advisor: John Myers, MD, SwedishAmerican Hospital, Rockford, IL

If you are interested in serving as a research advisor for a student in the James Scholar Program, please contact Dr. Sherry Falsetti. We will be hosting the next James Scholar informational dinner for the incoming second year medical student class in August 2015.
This year marked the 20th anniversary of the University of Illinois Rockford (U of I Rockford) Research Day. Students and faculty from the Colleges of Medicine, Nursing, and Pharmacy, and researchers from affiliated and regional institutions shared their research projects. Research Day is an event that promotes trainee and faculty development through the sharing of innovative and exciting research. It also provides an opportunity to exchange ideas and network with other researchers, and present to the campus and the larger research community. Researchers present poster presentations that cover critical public health issues and unique scientific discoveries. The full day forum is hosted by the campus research committee, chaired by Alesia O. Jones, PhD, assistant professor, director of research, department of family and community medicine, University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford (UICOMR).

The forum showcased a diversity of scientific study including basic science, clinical research, social science, community research, and clinical cases. A total of 82 posters were presented, 20 more than the previous year. Sixty-five first author posters represented researchers from U of I Rockford campus programs: medicine, MBT, pharmacy, and nursing. Four posters were presented by researchers from U of I Rockford’s sister campus in Peoria, Ill., and 13 posters were presented by researchers from other academic institutions (i.e., Northern Illinois University, Saint Anthony College of Nursing, University of Chicago, and Rockford University).

The morning session began with a panel discussion focused on a comprehensive view of lung cancer and experts in pathology (Gary Anderson, MD, UICOMR), diagnosis and treatment (Shyleendra Sreenivasappa, MD, OSF Saint Anthony - Center for Cancer Care), community outreach and engagement (Karriem Watson, MPH, UIC Cancer Center), and research (Neelu Puri, PhD, UICOMR) provided their unique perspectives. John Nitiss, assistant dean of research for UIC College of Pharmacy was the discussant and Zachary Crees, a 4th year medical student, moderated the event.

Dr. Stagnaro-Green, regional dean of the College of Medicine at Rockford, provided the keynote address, “Thyroid and Pregnancy: An Evolving Story,” presenting his research on thyroid and pregnancy. He shared his experience developing his program of research and the impact of his work on research advances and patient advocacy.

Students Zachary Crees and Kendall Marszalek from the College of Medicine, Andrew Gibbs and Jing Li from the College of Pharmacy and Steve Knutson from the Master of Science in Medical Biotechnology Program presented their research. The event ended with the announcement of award winners.

Research Day is supported by the U of I College of Medicine at Rockford’s office of the regional dean and the generosity of local organizations, Winnebago County Medical Society, Rockford Anesthesiologists Associated, LLC and Rockford Ambulatory Surgery Center.
2015 RESEARCH DAY AWARDS AND WINNERS

Best Basic Science Research Poster Award
Sponsor: Thermo Fisher Scientific
Category: Basic research in health related sciences
Poster title: Modulation of the IL-6 Receptor a Underlies GLI2-mediated Regulation of Immunoglobulin Secretion in Waldenström Macroglobulinemia Cells
Winner: David Jackson

Best Case Report Award
Sponsor: Rockford Anesthesiologists Associated
Category: Demonstrates unique aspects of medical or surgical clinical case; provides clear clinical and/or educational significance
Poster title: A Case Report on the Acute Rupture of Sertoli-leidig Cell Tumor in a Nulligravid 18 Year Old Female
Winner: Maria Saavedra

Best MBT Student Research Poster Award
Sponsor: MBT Program and Department of Biomedical Sciences
Category: Excellence in basic research
Poster Title: Nanotechnology Delivery and Mechanism of Action of Telomere Oligonucleotides in Melanoma
Winner: Luke Wojdyla

Best Medical Student Technical Poster Award (Tie)
Sponsor: Winnebago County Medical Society
Category: Research and research presentation demonstrating quality
Poster title: Assessing Loneliness and Quality of Life in Native American Elders: Role of Generativity in Later Life
Winner: Mina Tanaka (RMED Project)
Poster title: Implementation and Evaluation of a Hydration Initiative in a Rural Youth Athletic Program
Winners: Kendall Marszalek and Andrew Gibbs

Best Use of Literature in a Student Research Project
Sponsor: Crawford Library of the Health Sciences
Category: Use of literature review in a research project
Poster title: Referrals to a Medium-sized, Non-profit Hospice in Semirural Northern Illinois
Winner: Jordan Wood

(continued)
James Scholar Award
Sponsor: James Scholar Program
Category: High quality basic science, clinical research, social science or other health related sciences
Poster title: The mTOR Signaling Pathway: A Prognostic Biomarker in Late Stage Non-small Cell Lung Cancer
Winner: Zachary Crees

College of Pharmacy Outstanding Poster Award
Sponsor: UIC College of Pharmacy
Category: Basic science research
Poster title: The Processing of Topoisomerase II(TOP2)-DNA Covalent Complexes for Repair of DNA Damage Induced by TOP2-targeting Drugs
Winner: Yilan Sun

Supporting Model Public Health Practices – Research Award
Sponsor: Winnebago County Department of Public Health and its Board of Health
Category: Research that expands the evidence-base for public health practice
Poster title: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Curriculum in Medical School and its Effect on Competent, Compassionate, and Knowledgeable Care of LGBT Patients
Winner: Taylor Stanton

Sister Mary Linus Nowak Research Award
Sponsor: Saint Anthony College of Nursing
Category: Quality research in the nursing profession
Poster title: Student Nurse Practitioner Awareness of Migrant Farm Workers Occupational Health Risks
Winner: Nicole Gonzalez

“Participating in the College of Medicine’s Research Day was an invaluable experience during my medical education. I learned valuable lessons in reading and writing scientific literature while generating data that will hopefully improve individual patient’s health. Furthermore, I enjoy the process of presenting my research to colleagues as well as hearing about all the exciting work that other students are conducting around the Rockford area. I know the Annual Research Day made all this possible for myself as well as many other students.”

– Zachary Crees
Dr. Manorama M. Khare, research assistant professor and Dr. Martin MacDowell, associate professor in the department of family & community medicine, in collaboration with the Stephenson County Health Department, the Carroll County Health Department, and the Freeport Health Network Hospital have been awarded a 3-year $600,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (USDHHS/HRSA), Federal Office of Rural Health Policy.

The overall goal of the project is to promote healthy lifestyles using an evidence-based, multi-level program to reduce obesity and chronic disease risk for adult men and women living in rural Stephenson and Carroll Counties in Illinois. The project goal will be addressed by implementing programming using three strategies focused at the individual, community, and systems level. By implementing this program, it is expected that participants’ awareness and knowledge regarding obesity, chronic disease, and its relationship to physical activity, healthy eating, and lifestyle behavior change will increase.

Dr. Sherry Falsetti was awarded a grant from NCI Pearson to test a web-based mental health assessment tool to be used in primary care. She has served as the Principal Investigator for the study, An Open, Non-Randomized Evaluation of Innerview, an MHCDST Tool used to Report Symptoms and Functioning Related to Common Mental Health Disorders in the Primary Care Setting. This study has been taking place at the family medicine residency with Drs. Joe Ross and Elizabeth Mendeloff serving as co-investigators.

Dr. Falsetti also currently serves as a consultant on a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs funded proposal that was awarded to Dr. Ellen Teng who is at the Houston VA and serves as the PI. The grant, Multiple Channel Exposure Therapy for Recently Deployed Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Panic Attacks, is entering its 5th year. A consultant on this grant, Dr. Falsetti has assisted in modifying the treatment that she developed for PTSD and panic attacks for veterans, Multiple Channel Exposure Therapy (MCET). She helped to revise her treatment manuals to target combat related trauma.

Dr. Alesia Jones is conducting a mental health needs assessment for the Hanover Township Mental Health Board designed to identify the needs and gaps in mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disability services. The assessment involves conducting focus groups with community providers and local residents, and developing a household survey that will be distributed to residents of Hanover Township. In addition, Deborah Lischwe is conducting a comprehensive analysis of secondary data about demographics, social, and economic indicators, prevalence of mental illness, and substance use among adolescents and adults that will be incorporated into their township’s assessment of mental health and substance use needs.

HEALTH SYSTEMS RESEARCH (HSR) has recently completed or received contracts for the following projects:

- ROCKFORD ARTS INFUSION, Rockford Public Schools. Evaluation of a federal grant designed to coach local artists about teaching practices which they use to integrate art concepts into math classes at selected middle and elementary schools. The intent is to improve student attendance, discipline, and academic performance. Deborah Lischwe serves as external evaluator for this grant.

- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ARTS EDUCATORS, Rockford Public Schools. This grant funded by U.S. Department of Education provides arts educators working in Rockford public middle and high schools professional development aimed at integrating art into the core curriculum including a technology component. Among the professional development opportunities are programs offered by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Students are expected to show improvement in their math and reading scores as well as stronger enrollment in fine arts electives. Deborah Lischwe serves as external evaluator for this grant.

- FREEPORT PARK DISTRICT. A project to develop and implement a randomized schedule of observation periods over a 12-month period to estimate park usage at six parks, the Wetland Preserve and Oakdale Nature Center. Among the characteristics of park user that are being collected and will be analyzed are number of visitors, age, residence, and activity during the park visit. These observation data will be used to allocate resources and decide about additions and renovations at these parks. Deborah Lischwe leads this project.

- ROCKFORD PARK DISTRICT. A survey of area residents about participation in their programs, interest in recreation and leisure activities, and rating various aspects of the parks and services. This survey was sent to 6,000 randomly selected households in the Rockford Park District service area and available as an online link. Survey results are used to guide Rockford Park District Board of Commissioner in funding decisions. Deborah Lischwe leads this project.

- ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU. Conduct a survey of local residents about potential tourism initiatives and certain quality of life aspects of living in Rockford. The survey was sent to 6,000 randomly selected households in Winnebago County and available online. Results assist the RACVB Board in guiding the future directions and activities of RACVB. Deborah Lischwe leads this project.

- ROCKFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS, Illinois Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs, and Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Illinois for the 46 21st Century Community Learning Center after school program sites. Michelle Bunyer provides grant reporting and technical assistance for the 54 sites. Tasks performed include evaluation planning, survey design, analysis of academic and survey data, reporting of data to the Illinois State Board of Education, and collaboration with the organizations to produce evaluation reports describing after school program operations and student outcomes.
FOCUS ON COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY PARTNER

ROCKFORD SEXUAL ASSAULT COUNSELING, INC. (RSAC)

Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling (RSAC) was established in 1977 through the efforts of two medical students from University of Illinois College of Medicine. The medical students felt it was wrong to have sexual assault survivors enter the emergency room without the provision of support and information. Since 1982, RSAC has received funding from the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault and additional funding was obtained from Rockford United Way since 1984. RSAC has grown into a professional and volunteer nonprofit agency that serves Winnebago, Boone and Ogle Counties. RSAC provides comprehensive services including 24-hour crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy support for children, adolescents, and adult survivors of sexual assault and their significant others. In addition, RSAC offers prevention education programming and professional training in Winnebago, Boone and Ogle Counties in Illinois. RSAC’s relationship with the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford continues to be strong. Dr. Sherry Falsetti has been on the board of directors of RSAC for over 12 years, and is currently serving as board president. Dr. Alesia Jones has served on the board for five years, and has served as interim treasurer. Two years ago, the board decided to honor the past by recruiting medical students to serve on the board as well. Drs. Taylor Stanton and Kelley Williams, both medical students, recently completed their board terms.

There has been on-going collaboration in other areas between the two organizations. In 2009, Dr. Falsetti wrote a grant that supported an RSAC counselor to provide services to women at the Winnebago County Resource Intervention Center, as well as provided funding for probation officers at this center. That grant was successfully funded through the United States Department of Justice Office of Violence Against Women. In 2010, the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault, of which RSAC is a member along with 28 other centers, worked with Drs. Falsetti and Jones to conduct a three-year evaluation of their rape crisis centers in Illinois to give those who were receiving services an opportunity to evaluate the center and the services received. Many centers continue to use the findings from the evaluation on an annual basis to document the positive outcomes of their work and as a tool for improving services. Dr. Falsetti has provided trainings throughout the state on sexual assault, particularly to assist health care providers in identifying sexual assault and understanding the health impact of assault.

Maureen Mostacci, director of Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling, said, “Working with University of Illinois has helped improve the agency and its services. The knowledge and experience on our board provides a resource we value and utilize to help educate the community about sexual violence and the available resources. University of Illinois recognizes the value in educating new physicians about sexual violence and how to work with survivors.”

By working together to provide education and services to survivors of sexual assault and to the health care providers who work with them, we hope to make our community and the world a safer, healthier place.
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Jefree Schulte, MD

Jefree Schulte, MD, is a second year resident studying pathology at the University of Chicago.

Participating in research while in medical school at U of I College of Medicine at Rockford (UICOMR) has helped me immensely since entering residency. I participated in rural public health research while in medical school. The experience was great. I was able to serve as a principal investigator and I was involved in all aspect of the research project, from completing the IRB application to data entry and analysis, to presenting a poster at Research Day. Participating in research was a very nice introduction to the practice of academic medicine.

Since the beginning of my residency, I have participated in scholarly activities including interesting clinical case reports. Also, I have begun to collaborate with faculty members in my department, and we will soon be implementing some research projects. I have no doubt my training and experience in medical school will help me design and complete these projects.

Outside of formal scholarly activities, my experience with research has helped me with my daily responsibilities as a resident. I often find myself searching for journal articles and case reports to reference in my own reports and notes that I write for my patients. My research experience in medical school has helped me become an efficient practitioner of evidence-base medicine.

The faculty and staff at the UICOMR are helpful and supportive of student research. I encourage students who are interested to take advantage of any research opportunities while in medical school; the experiences will definitely payoff while in residency.

Dr. Schultz participated in this year’s University of Illinois Rockford’s Research Day.
Sherry Falsetti, PhD  
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Sherry A. Falsetti, PhD, is the director of the division of health policy and social science research, professor and the associate head of the department of family and community medicine (DFCM). She is also a licensed clinical psychologist and recently completed a certification in health coaching with an emphasis on holistic nutrition.

Dr. Falsetti’s research and clinical practice focus on the physical and mental health effects of trauma on women and the treatment of post traumatic stress disorder and panic attacks. She developed Multiple Channel Exposure Therapy (MCET) for post traumatic stress disorder and panic attacks, and is known for the Modified PTSD Symptom Scale, which has been translated to 17 different languages and has been used in at least 35 countries around the world. Dr. Falsetti is currently working with NCI Pearson to test a web-based tool to identify mental health disorders in a primary care setting, revising her treatment to include mindfulness components and address holistic health, and serving as a consultant on a study testing her treatment with veterans at the Houston VA. She hopes to begin a study of the effectiveness of health coaching for women who have comorbid PTSD and chronic disease in a primary care setting.

Dr. Falsetti earned her doctoral degree from University of Missouri-St. Louis and a post-doctoral fellowship at the National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center, Medical University of South Carolina, where she was also a faculty member for 10 years. She has been with the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford for the past 11 years and during her career has won numerous awards, including the Faculty Scientist-Practitioner Award, Golden Apple Teaching Award, a Professional Contribution Recognition Award for professional contribution in the aftermath of September 11th from the Association for Advancement of Behavior Therapy, and the YWCA Women of Achievement Professions Award. Dr. Falsetti has had research funding from the National Institutes of Health, Center for Disease Control, Department of Defense, and the Illinois Department of Public Health among others.

Areas of Interest

- Treatment of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental and physical health problems associated with trauma exposure
- Influence of culture on doctor-patient communication
- Identification of trauma and PTSD in primary care
- Health coaching
Kimberly Hart, PhD
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Kimberly Hart, PhD, is the director of behavioral sciences for the family medicine residency program at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford. She also serves as an assistant professor in the department of family and community medicine and is a licensed clinical psychologist with emphasis in perinatal depression, anxiety disorders and adjustment issues.

Dr. Hart’s research focuses on mood and anxiety disorders during pregnancy and the postpartum period. She is interested in the effects of depression on mothers and babies, risk factors for maternal depression and anxiety, and effectiveness of treatment for perinatal depression. She is available to conduct community presentations on perinatal depression and the importance of early recognition and intervention.

Dr. Hart earned her doctoral degree in clinical psychology from the University of Iowa and completed a post-doctoral fellowship in the department of psychiatry at the University of Michigan Medical School. Prior to joining the College of Medicine, Dr. Hart was an assistant professor and clinic director in the department of psychology at Idaho State University, where she was named Clinical Faculty Member of the Year. She is a member of several national organizations including the North American Society for Psychosocial Obstetrics and Gynecology, the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine, and the American Psychological Association.

Areas of Interest
• Mood and anxiety disorders during pregnancy and the postpartum period
• Effects of depression on mothers and babies
• Risk factors for maternal depression and anxiety
• Effectiveness of treatment for perinatal depression
• Identification and management of perinatal depression in primary care

Alesia O. Jones, PhD
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Alesia Jones, PhD, is a clinical psychologist and assistant professor in the department of family and community medicine at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford. She serves as the director of research in the department. Dr. Jones also serves as chair of the campus research committee. Dr. Jones’ research area focuses on the study of interpersonal violence and the psychological, emotional, and behavioral consequences of victimization. Her research also includes examination of healthcare delivery to violence exposed individuals and improving the identification and response to victims of violence within the context of primary care.

Dr. Jones has been the recipient of numerous awards in recognition of her research, clinical work, and teaching including the Robert Magwood, Jr Award for Outstanding Service to Crime Victims and 2011 Rockford YWCA Women of Achievement, Professions Award. She has been awarded grants and scholarships from the National Institute of Health, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, University of Illinois, and the Medical University of South Carolina. She has published peer-reviewed articles and book chapters related to trauma and presented on violence exposure and mental health at national and local conferences.

Prior to joining the College of Medicine, she completed a two-year postdoctoral fellowship at the National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center, department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, at the Medical University of South Carolina.

Areas of Interest
• Identification of family and interpersonal violence in primary care
• Mental health disparities among ethnic/racial minorities and impoverished communities
• Community violence and homicide survivorship
• Violence prevention research
• Workshops and presentations on adolescent and adult violence exposure
Manorama M. Khare, PhD
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Manorama M. Khare, PhD, is a research assistant professor at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford with extensive experience in research related to underserved populations, women's health, and diversity in higher education. Her technical expertise includes program evaluation, planning and implementation of community-based programs, quantitative and qualitative research methods, quasi experimental research designs, survey development, and multivariate data analysis.

The focus of her research has been reducing cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk in women using behavioral lifestyle change interventions. She is currently the lead evaluator for the Illinois WISE-WOMAN program and CVD risk reduction program for underinsured and uninsured women across the state. For the past six years, she has served as co-investigator on a collaborative effort of the UIC National Center for Excellence in Women’s Health and the Illinois Department of Health to improve the cardiovascular risk profiles for adult women living in rural southern Illinois.

Dr. Khare earned her doctoral degree in public health from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Prior to this position, she was a senior research specialist at the Center for Research on Women and Gender and the National Center for Excellence in Women’s Health at UIC.

Areas of Interest
• Women’s health
• Rural health
• Behavioral lifestyle change interventions
• Use of mHealth to promote behavior change
• Program evaluation
• Planning and implementation of community programs
• Diversity in higher education

Michelle Bunyer
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Michelle Bunyer has been a research data analyst for Health Systems Research since 1998. She graduated from the University of Missouri with a MA in clinical psychology with a focus on children. Prior to joining Health Systems Research, she worked as a study coordinator at the Rush Institute on Aging in Chicago. Bunyer coordinated a study of caregivers of Alzheimer’s disease patients and a study of nutrition in an older adult community population and has been an evaluator for the Rockford Public Schools’ 21st CCLC After School Program Grants for the last 10 years.

Areas of Interest
• After school program evaluation
• Healthy community surveys
• Community needs assessments
• Survey research
• Program evaluation
Deborah Lischwe
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Deborah Lischwe is the associate director of Health Systems Research a division of HPSSR. She has extensive background in community health and health system planning. In recent years, she has assisted more than a dozen county health departments with “healthy community” studies.

Ms. Lischwe earned a master of science degree from the University of Cincinnati in Community Health with a dual emphasis in health planning and epidemiology. Her graduate study was the outgrowth of Peace Corps work and breast cancer epidemiology research. Prior to her present position, Ms. Lischwe worked as a planner in the hospital/health system setting for 18 years. Most of her professional publications address ways to help organizations understand and improve community health. In addition to her membership in several professional organizations, she assists numerous school and community groups in a volunteer capacity.

Areas of Interest
• Community health indicators and needs
• Health disparities
• Health system analysis
• Survey research
• County and small area prevalence estimates, incidence rates and other health indicators
• Consultation on health-related activities

James A. Powers, Jr., LCSW
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James A. Powers, Jr., LCSW, has been part of Health Systems Research since 2008. He previously served in professional and administrative capacities for a wide variety of not-for-profit organizations that provided counseling and family services, employee assistance, hospital outpatient psychiatry, services for child abuse and neglect, and child development and disability services. He either serves or has served on a number of not-for-profit and foundation boards. At Health Systems Research, his primary work focuses on healthy community studies and mental health program evaluation and needs assessment. His projects include assessments for a variety of Mental Health 708 Boards, such as DeKalb County, Oak Park, and Hanover Township, and evaluations for such projects as for the children’s mental health system of care project operating in Carroll, Lee, Ogle, and Whiteside Counties and funded by the Illinois Children’s Healthcare Foundation.
ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Vicki Cummings and Sharon Myers
Vicki Cummings and Sharon Myers provide administrative support to Health Systems Research (HSR). Their primary responsibilities include word processing, data entry, and preparation of reports for research studies conducted by HSR. They each hold an associate degree in office technology from Rock Valley College.

LaVerne Larson
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LaVerne Larson is an administrative assistant at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford and splits her time between two departments within the University.

She provides administrative support to the director of the division of health policy and social sciences research (HPSSR) and the chair of the James Scholar Research Program. For the division of HPSSR she facilitates meeting arrangements, prepares meeting agendas, and records meeting minutes. For the James Scholar Program, LaVerne maintains a program calendar, manages the web-based university Blackboard system with the program information for student and faculty to access, creates M2, M3, and M4 student timelines identifying student assignment submission and meeting dates, tracks students' compliance with program requirements, and coordinates meetings between students and James Scholar committee members.

LaVerne also works for the office of the regional dean where she is responsible for providing administrative support for new faculty appointments, for faculty promotional packets, managing the faculty files for departments of pathology, psychiatry, medicine, Ob/Gyn and pediatrics; with other responsibilities of annual RNUA’s, HIPAA, and ethics training for the faculty of these departments. LaVerne has been employed at the university for 25 years.
Recent Publications and Presentations from HPSSR Researchers

PUBLICATIONS


PRESENTATIONS

- Jones, A.O. (2015, February), Exposing medical students to research experiences. Round table talk at the STFM Medical Student Education Conference. Atlanta, GA.
- Khare M.M., Locklin C. (April 2016) Feasibility and acceptability of a texting program to increase physical activity in rural women. Poster presentation at the National Rural Health Association Conference. Philadelphia, PA.
- Khare M.M. (January – February 2015) School Based Health Clinic Survey Results. Presented to staff of elementary, middle and high schools. South Beloit, IL.