

Research Review



WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER

COLLABORATION involves working jointly with others, especially in an intellectual endeavor...

'Great discoveries and improvements invariably involve the cooperation of many minds. I may be given credit for having blazed the trail, but when I look at the subsequent developments I feel the credit is due to others rather than myself.' (*Alexander Graham Bell*)

Judy Luborsky, PhD; Associate Dean for Research, College of Health Sciences

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Drs. Murphy and Fitchett's article, "Belief in a concerned God predicts response to treatment for adults with clinical depression" *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 65 (2009): 1000-1008, was cited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) Research Network as the September 2009 **Article of the month**

(www.acperesearch.net/sep09.html).

This is "one of a few studies with participants diagnosed with clinical depression with a longitudinal outcome indicating the impact of religion... Murphy and Fitchett are as careful in their writing as they are in their research ... their work makes another persuasive case for clinicians' attention to patients' religious/spiritual beliefs." The ACPE Research Network, fosters connections among members interested in research and raises awareness about published research related to spirituality,

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

The NIH Centers for AIDS Research (CFAR) grants support multi-disciplinary environments that promote basic, clinical, epidemiological, behavioral, and translational research in the prevention, detection, and treatment of HIV infection and AIDS. Rush (PI, Dr. Alan Landay) recently was awarded a Developmental CFAR (D-CFAR) to develop a collaborative AIDS research network. The D-CFAR will help find collaborators, assist with study design and HIV related assays, and help access patient samples. The Chicago D-CFAR **pilot grant program** awards are provided to (i) foster the careers of early stage HIV/AIDS investigators; (ii) established investigators in other fields who wish to expand into HIV/AIDS research; (iii) investigators proposing to forge new interdisciplinary collaborations to promote research in HIV/AIDS (www.chicagocfar.org/). This cycle, the Chicago D-CFAR anticipates funding 3 grants, each up to \$25,000 direct costs. The **deadline is November 15, 2009**. The next application deadline will be May 15, 2010. Submit applications to belinda_beach@rush.edu

DID YOU KNOW?

The NIH will implement a **new scoring system** for all applications for research grants and cooperative agreements submitted for FY2010 ([//grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-09-024.html](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-09-024.html)). Before the study section meeting (SRG), each reviewer assigned to an application gives a separate score for each of 5 core review criteria (Significance, Investigator(s), Innovation, Approach, & Environment). The overall impact score is used to determine an application's rank (percentile ranking) relative to other applications reviewed by the same SRG. The new scoring system uses a 9-point rating scale as follows:

1. **Exceptional:** Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
2. **Outstanding:** Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
3. **Excellent:** Very strong with only some minor weaknesses
4. **Very Good:** Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
5. **Good:** Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
6. **Satisfactory:** Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
7. **Fair:** Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
8. **Marginal:** A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
9. **Poor:** Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses

SAVE THE DATE

The CHS Faculty Research Development Committee presents a **monthly Research Lunch and Learn** on Thursdays, 11:30 am-1pm. This year's theme is **Collaborations**.

- **October 15** "The Fulbright Experience: Scholarship in a Different Culture" presented by Tricia Johnson, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Director, Department of Health Systems Management and Center for Health Management and Policy Research (ROOM AAC 710)
- Next Dates are **Nov 19** (ROOM AAC 971) and **Dec 10** (ROOM AAC 971).

AT A GLANCE

The Department of Religion, Health and Human Values

While research had been a part of the department for many years, our formal research program began in 1990. A **central aim of our research** is to expand our understanding of the relationship between religion/spirituality and health and to assist chaplains and other health care professionals to apply this information for more effective spiritual care. With this in mind our aim is to transform chaplaincy into a research-informed profession.

Collaboration is a hallmark of our research program. Research partners have included colleagues in the Rush departments of Behavioral Medicine, Psychiatry, Preventive Medicine, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and the Rush Institute for Healthy Aging. Current research partners include the American Cancer Society and the Hastings Center. External support for our research has come from such agencies as the National Institute on Aging, the Fetzer Institute, and the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation. Our research program is seen as a model for other chaplaincy programs and it has been recognized with awards from several national chaplaincy organizations.



George Fitchett, PhD

One area of current research focuses on **religious struggle**. Many patients turn to religious or spiritual beliefs and practices for consolation and coping in response to illness. Some individuals are able to find the solace and support they seek in their faith, but others are not, and a time of religious struggle may follow. In many cases this period of religious struggle is brief; however, there are some patients for whom the struggle continues. A 1999 study by George Fitchett and colleagues documented the harmful effects of religious struggle among medical rehabilitation patients. A 2004 paper described the prevalence of religious struggle in patients with diabetes, congestive heart failure, and cancer. A 2009 report, with Chaplain Jay Risk, describes the use of a new protocol to screen for religious struggle among medical rehabilitation patients. Drs. Fitchett and Murphy are currently collaborating with Dr. Andrea Canada, Behavioral Sciences, on a proposal to investigate the trajectory of religious struggle in patients with a new diagnosis of cancer.



Patricia Murphy, PhD

The role of **religion in coping with mental illness** is another focus of the department's research. Earlier this summer Pat Murphy published evidence that, among patients diagnosed with depression, belief in a concerned God was predictive of response to treatment. This study is one of the few longitudinal investigations of the effects of religion in patients with mental illness.

Our research also examines **the work of health care chaplains**. Last year George Fitchett and Clayton Thomason collaborated with colleagues from the Hastings Center and others on a study of chaplains' understanding of and experience with quality improvement. One of our current projects, also in collaboration with the Hastings Center, is a description of best practices in spiritual care in pediatric palliative care.

For further information please see the recently updated description of our research program on the department's website www.rushu.rush.edu/rhhv/.

Next Issue Features: Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences

RESEARCH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The **CHS Cross-disciplinary Research Forum**, chaired by Dr. Judy Luborsky, Associate Dean for Research, meets monthly to discuss individual grants and project goals. The next meeting is **Oct 16** (2 PM, Cohn 4 conference room). Contact Dr. Luborsky (jluborsk@rush.edu) to receive email notifications.