

# EPIDEMIOLOGY NEWS

Volume 4

Department of Epidemiology, School of Public Health, UNC

Spring 1995

## SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS HOSTED

### *International Society for Environmental Epidemiology and the International Society for Exposure Analysis Joint Meeting*

On September 18-21, 1994, the Epidemiology Department at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, School of Public Health hosted a joint meeting of the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology (ISEE) and the International Society for Exposure Analysis (ISEA). The meeting took place at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel in the Research Triangle Park, and was attended by over 600 persons from 39 countries, including toxicologists, epidemiologists, environmental scientists, and public health practitioners. Dr. Hertz-Picciotto of the Epidemiology Department hosted the meeting, with support from a local organizing committee that included Dr. Lester Lee, adjunct faculty in the department, namely Dr. Dale Sandler, and Dr. Gwen Collman of the U.S. National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, and other local scientists from the Environmental Protection Agency.

The overall purpose of the meeting was the integration of advanced techniques for exposure assessment with sound epidemiologic study methods to advance our understanding of environmental causes of death, disease and disability. Although epidemiology has been successful in identifying agents which are strongly associated with disease, e.g., asbestos, lead, or mainstream cigarette smoke, the field has been more limited in its ability to establish moderate or small causal associa-



tions. Improvements in exposure assessment will enhance the capability of present epidemiological methodology.

Symposia presented cutting edge research on the following topics: Methods in Studying Health Effects of Pesticides; Genetic Susceptibility to Environmental Hazards; Human Activity Patterns; Particulate Matter and Effects on Mortality, Hazardous Waste and its Health Effects; Motor Vehicle Pollution; and Ecologic, Individual-level and Hybrid Designs for Epidemiologic Studies of the Chronic Effects of Air Pollution. Contributed papers addressed a broad range of issues in addition to the symposia topics: environmental tobacco smoke, molecular epidemiology and biomarkers, health effects of metals (lead, mercury, arsenic, etc.), health effects of air pollution in children, as well as in adults, pharmacokinetic models for exposure assessment, reproductive health, total human exposure models, occupational hazards, effects of electromagnetic fields, etc. Copies of the program and abstract booklet can be purchased for \$20.00.

Because environmental problems are often either transnational in nature, or local but occur repeatedly in many countries, international collaborations among scientists are

crucial. Additionally, as the drive for economic growth in many developing countries has shifted the burden of environmental pollution to countries with fewer resources, there is a growing need to bring up-to-date appropriate scientific expertise in environmental epidemiology and exposure assessment to scientists from developing countries. With our successful fund raising, we were able to bring thirty scientists from the following countries: Phillipines, Egypt, Latvia, Croatia, Algeria, Chile, Colombia, India, Russia, China, the Czech Republic, Nigeria, Lithuania, Uruguay, Romania, Indonesia, Mexico, and Vietnam.

Financial support and/or sponsorship came from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, the Health Effects Institute, National Cancer Institute, Electric Power Research Institute, and the World Health Organization. An advisory board chaired by Dr. Carl Shy assisted the organizing committee and many other faculty helped by reviewing abstracts, planning symposia, and chairing contributed paper sessions. We also received help from many staff and students who assisted with preparations for the meeting and with registration. Thanks to all of you!

Previous meetings have been held in Berkeley, U.S.; Cuernavaca, Mexico; Jerusalem, Israel; and Stockholm, Sweden. The next two meetings are scheduled for the Netherlands (1995) and Canada (1996).

Irva Hertz-Picciotto

## Staff News (cont.)

### *Staff Changes*

**Miriam Haebig** resigned from her secretarial position to accept a position in the English Department on campus in February. **Helen Sun** recently resigned from her position as Research Technician for Dr. Christine Moe.

### *Staff Appreciation Reception*

The faculty of the department will be honoring the staff with a reception on Thursday, April 27 at 3:00 pm in the second floor student lounge in Rosenau Hall.

## Student News

### *Awards Granted*

**Janice I. French**, doctoral student, received the first Jacobs Institute of Women's Health-Ortho Pharmaceutical Scholar. This is a \$30,000 grant to determine the risk of preterm birth associated with specific reproductive tract infections among a cohort of African-American women.

**Deborah Cousins** received the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Pre-Doctoral Fellowship.

### *Faculty-Student Brown Bag Lunches*

Starting this spring, the Student Affairs Committee of ESO has revived a series of Faculty-Student Brown Bag Lunches. Every second Monday, two or three invited faculty (full time or adjunct) in a common area of research participate with epidemiology students in informal discussions. The lunches are a valuable way for students to share research ideas with faculty on a casual basis, especially with many of our less-often-seen adjunct faculty. Conversations are free-flowing, and have thus far included everything from tornado epidemiology to birth-control strategies for cats.

We have received such an enthusiastic response from faculty wishing to participate that we haven't come close to fitting in everyone for a lunch this semester. Thus, we hope to continue the lunches into next year. So if you returned a postcard but haven't heard from us, fear not—we haven't forgotten you!

Please contact Lisa Pastore with any questions about the Brown Bag series.

### *1995 Doctoral Defenses*

The following students have defended their dissertations:

**Peter S. Millard** "The Social Geography of Tuberculosis: California, 1980-1992"

**Joanne Klevens** "For good measure: tracking the epidemiology of violence in Colombia"

**Skai Schwartz** "Sleep complaints as a risk factor for CHD events in older adults: evidence from the Piedmont Study"

**Julie Chandler** "Does strength influence physical performance and disability in frail, community-dwelling elders?"

**Valerie Robison** "An investigation of dental treatment in North Carolina's child medicaid program using epidemiologic and administrative data"

## Alumni News

### *Going Abroad*

**Terry Chorba**, MPH graduate, is currently working at CDC and will be going to the Soviet Union to help develop a Public Health Infrastructure.

### *Faculty Position*

**Holly Hill**, PhD graduate, has accepted a faculty position at Emory University.

## Computer Tidbits

### *Internet: Minority Health Discussion Group*

To subscribe, send a message with no text to:

[minhlth-request@family.hampshire.edu](mailto:minhlth-request@family.hampshire.edu)

The SUBJECT LINE must have the single word:  
subscribe

You should promptly receive a reply from minhlth-request that reads:

"You have added to the subscriber list of:

[minhlth@family.hampshire.edu](mailto:minhlth@family.hampshire.edu)

"the following mail address:  
[your address will be here]

"By default, copies of your own submissions will be returned.

"WELCOME TO MINHLTH"

The message will continue with instructions for sending messages to the list. There are also instructions for searching the archive of previous messages, for obtaining assistance, etc.

### *Methodological Issues*

These are methodological issues that are relevant to population studies which address health problems and questions. The discussions are therefore not restricted to approaches and procedures relevant to studying determinants of health/illness and outcome of interventions, but include approaches relevant to the organization of the health care delivery system.

The term "methodology" is used in its generic sense. As such, it includes the armamentarium of approaches and related procedures that are employed to develop knowledge in a logical, systematic, and coherent manner. In its generic

sense, methodology addresses validity of the scientific work. First, it is concerned with validity of the material (data) collected (questions of classification and bias). Of second concern is the validity of the study design and data analysis (questions of design specifications, statistical and mathematical approaches). A third concern is the validity of the inferences made (questions of modeling, interpretations and causality). All of these are welcomed issues for discussing. Notwithstanding, this mailing list will not rule out problems related to substantive epidemiology to the extent that they also address methodology issues. Further, conceptual and epistemological issues as well as discussions bearing on paradigms which underline current epidemiologic research are also included in the framework of the methodologies.

message to  
LISTSERV@JHUV.M (BITNET users) or  
LISTSERV@JHUV.M.HCF.JHU.EDU (Internet users).

You can subscribe to this group by sending the following message:

SUBSCRIBE EPIDEMIO-L <yourfirst and last name>

to:  
LISTPROC@CC.UMONTREAL.CA

For a list of other available commands (e.g, receiving a copy of your own message, etc.), simply add a second line to your message (or send a separate message), mentioning:

HELP

To send a message to all members of the list, mail your message to:

EPIDEMIO-L@CC.UMONTREAL.CA

To sign off this list, send the following message:

UNSUBSCRIBE EPIDEMIO-L  
to:  
LISTPROC@CC.UMONTREAL.CA

### *NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts*

NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts is published by NIH, appears approximately weekly and is available electronically. To receive the electronic full-text version of the NIH Guide, send an e-mail

The text of the message should be modelled after:

SUBSCRIBE NIHGDE-L Victor Schoenbach

The e-mail address from which the mail was sent will be registered. To unsubscribe, send the following message (to the same address):  
UNSUBSCRIBE NIHGDE-L  
If the full-text version is too voluminous for your taste (or disk space), you can subscribe to the table of contents only by sending the message:

SUBSCRIBE NIHTOC-L Victor Schoenbach [your name, of course] to  
LISTSERV@NIH.LIST (Bitnet users) or  
LISTSERV@LIST.NIH.GOV (Internet users).

### *NIH Grant Line*

NIH also has a Grant Line with information about NIH extramural programs as well as the NIH Guide itself. Modem users dial 1-301-402-2221, with your terminal emulation software configured for 1200 or 2400 baud, even parity, 7 data bits, 1 stop bit, half duplex. To log on, type:  
,GEN1 [Press enter] - Note that the comma is mandatory.  
Internet users Telnet to WYLBUR.CU.NIH.GOV and after connection type VT100.

Both modem and Telnet users then respond to two prompts:

INITIALS? [Enter BB5 then press Enter].

ACCOUNT? [Enter CCS2 then press Enter].

For an overview, type D (for Directory); to access a file, type F (for File). Back issues of the NIH Guide are available going back several years.

The NIH Gopher contains information about the NIH and the Guide itself, with text searching capability. Your local gopher can tunnel to the NIH Gopher at  
GOPHER.NIH.GOV.

Victor Schoenbach

#### *EPIDEMIOLOGY NEWS*

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## Scientific Meetings Hosted (Cont.)

### *Atherosclerosis Risk in African Americans*

The Conference on Atherosclerosis Risk in African-Americans, sponsored by the NHLBI and co-sponsored by the Departments of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, was held on September 22-23, 1994. It was co-chaired by Drs. H. A. Tyroler and C. Ed Davis.

The Conference was designed to systematically assemble the knowledge base on atherosclerosis in African-Americans derived from the ARIC study; integrated this information from the molecular to the community level; and to place this information within the perspective of existing knowledge derived from studies other than ARIC. Selected investigators presented ARIC findings, and key investigators not involved in ARIC placed this material in a broader context of work in this field.

The Conference on Atherosclerosis Risk in African-Americans was held over a two-day period at the Kenan Center on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Although the meeting was not extensively advertised (due to the limited seating capacity of the auditorium), it was open to the public. Special invitations were extended to faculty, staff and students in the UNC School of Public Health, and minority students. Additional invitees included members of the Division of Cardiology from the UNC School of Medicine, ARIC researchers and staff not presenting at the Conference, and faculty and students in the Health Studies program at N.C. Central University. Attendance at the Conference was very good, numbering on average 100 throughout each days presentations.

A panel discussion of the synthesis and recommendations of the Conference took place at the end of the final day of presentations. The

central theme which emerged was that African-Americans constitute an ethnic, socially defined population, rather than a genetically defined, racially distinct population. The historic experiences of African-Americans, their exposures to social and physical environmental experiences, and resultant psychological, cultural, lifestyle, behavioral and medical care experiences were to be understood as the major determinants of atherosclerosis risk and its sequelae within and between groups of African-Americans and others. A summary of the synthesis and recommendations panel's discussion and of each of the empirical findings is being prepared, and the resultant paper will be submitted for publication.

Appreciation is extended to all staff and students who assisted in the preparations for the meeting.

H. A. Tyroler

## Faculty News

### *Grant Renewal*

The SPORE grant received a five year renewal. Dr. Edison Liu is the principal investigator of this project. These funds are used in studies such as a case-control study of invasive breast cancer (Beth Newman), a case-control study of in-situ breast cancer (Bob Millikan), and a follow-up study of benign breast disease (Barbara Hulka).

### *Outside Teaching Endeavors*

Irva Hertz-Picciotto will be participating in teaching "Advanced Methods in Occupational Cancer Epidemiology" sponsored by IARC (International Agency for Research on Cancer) in Lyon, France, April 3-7. This summer she will also be co-teaching Environmental Epidemiology and Risk Assessment at the 30th Annual Graduate Summer Epidemiology Program at the University of Michigan School of Public Health.

Drs. Gerardo Heiss, Dana Loomis, and Robert Millikan will be participating in the summer course at the Ulm University in Germany.

## Staff News

### *Employee Forum*

Staff members of the department recently formed an Employee Forum. This group meets once a month with two appointed representatives from each work group; however, all staff members are urged to attend. The forum elected two co-chairs, Lesa McPherson and Suzanne Wolf. The group rotates meeting between the McGavran-Greenberg Building and NationsBank Plaza.

The Employee Forum sent a letter to Dean Ibrahim requesting consideration be given to staff representation on the Department of Epidemiology Chair Search Committee and a meeting with each candidate. Dean Ibrahim's response to both requests were positive. He indicated there would be staff representation on the search committee and a one hour meeting with each candidate would be scheduled. In his letter he reminded us that the staff is invited to each candidate's seminar and reception.

### Employee Forum Meetings 3:00 pm

May 16 McG-G  
June 20 NBB  
July 18 McG-G  
August 15 NBB  
September 19 McG-G  
October 17 NBB  
November 21 McG-G  
December 19 NBB

Lesla McPherson