



Happy Trails Newsletter

Fall Issue
October 15, 2014

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Welcome to Fall Semester 2014



Welcome to the fall semester 2014 program of the School of Public and Community Health Sciences at the University of

Montana. The summer was a busy time for the School of Public and Community Health Sciences program. One of the changes for the program was the formation of the Public Health Student Association, see article on page 2.

Working in conjunction with the UM graduate program, SPCHS implemented an online application process beginning the fall 2014 semester using ColleagueNet.

Work continues in bringing the SPCHS into compliance with the university's stated EIT Accessibility goals.

Work on the website to meet EITA goals

commenced over the summer. At this time the program is around 85% compliant.

The departmental plan for the Fall 2014 semester is to work with faculty on their syllabi, instructional materials, and Moodle shells for Spring 2015. Welcome back and have a great year!

Dr. Golbeck an invited keynote speaker

Dr. Amanda L. Golbeck was an invited keynote speaker at Biostat 2014, the 21st International Scientific Symposium on Biometrics, Dubrovnik, Croatia, 11-14 June 2014. She spoke on Statistician Elizabeth L. Scott's Advocacy Leadership for Social Change. [photo attached: Amanda L Golbeck is second from left, along with conference organizers Anamarija Jazbec, Marija Pecina and Diana Šimić, and also with Stanford University emeritus professor and statistician Ingram Olkin).



Special points of interest:

- Student Association formed for Public Health
- Harris receives Recognition Award
- Two student travel to Ethiopia
- Course Changes

Public Health Student Association

"Joining the newly formed PHSA is as easy as sending an email to the program coordinator stating your intention to join!"

During the summer several alumni and current students joined together and began the process of creating a student association for the Public Health program.

The mission of the Public Health Student Association is to serve as a forum for interaction between alumni and students in the MPH/CPH program, to provide opportunities for students

to share ideas on current and developing issues and agendas affecting public health, and promote professional growth and development.

All their hard work has resulted in the application for formal recognition from the Associated Students of the University of Montana (ASUM) submitted the first week of September, and the creation of a PHSA website.

All alumni and current students of the public health program who are in good standing are invited to join.

Check out the website for more information. <http://publichealth.health.umt.edu/student-association-phsa/default.php>

Faculty Recognition Awardee: Dr. Kari Harris



Dr. Kari Harris was nominated for the Paul Lauren Undergraduate Research Faculty Mentor Award by current MPH student Erika Strehl and undergraduate student Larisa Carter (Honors College, EVST), who conducted research with her last year regarding information changes in the UM Tobacco Free Campus policy.

The Award recognizes UM faculty members who excel in guiding undergraduate students in their research projects in the Davidson Honors College.

This \$2,000 award pays tribute to Regents Professor Emeritus Paul Lauren, who has served as an exemplary faculty mentor to many students pursuing advanced research.

The recipients of the Award were recognized and congratulated by Provost Perry Brown and Professor Paul Lauren on September 4, 2014.

Congratulations Dr. Harris!

PUBH 510 Introduction to Epidemiology



Dr. Curtis Noonan offers this core course during the spring semester.

This course introduces principles and methods of epidemiologic investigation and an overview of relevant biostatistical applications.

During the course you are provided with the basis for conducting and interpreting epidemiologic

studies, techniques of descriptive and analytic epidemiology and measures of disease frequency and quantitative measures to determine risk association.

In addition, you will cover several types of study design, including randomized trials, case-control and cohort

studies, outbreak investigations, and approaches for assessing causality and validity.

The course is concluded with the discussion centering on approaches for using biomarkers in epidemiological studies.

Dr. Curtis Noonan's Current Research NIH grants for environmental health research

The University of Montana was recently awarded two new R01 research awards from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). The two five-year projects totaling over \$5.25 million are led by a team of researchers from the School of Public and Community Health Sciences, including Drs. Curtis Noonan, Tony Ward, and Annie Belcourt. For several years Dr. Noonan's research has focused on harmful

exposures associated with residential wood combustion for home heating and testing strategies for reducing such exposures and improving health. The new projects are community-based randomized trials targeting vulnerable populations in rural and Native American communities in Montana, Idaho, Alaska and New Mexico. The goal of the first study is to reduce risk of lower respiratory

tract infection among infants and children in these communities. Lower respiratory tract infections are an important cause of morbidity in the United States and a leading cause of mortality among children in developing countries. The goal of the second study is to improve pulmonary function measures and reduce respiratory symptoms and conditions among elderly residents of homes that use wood for heating. For



Photo: CEHS

more information on these studies refer to the following sites:
<https://cehsweb.health.umt.edu/five-year-project-focuses-improving-childrens-health>
<https://cehsweb.health.umt.edu/project-focuses-improving-health-elderly>

Director of Pilot Grants for program in Clinical and Translational Research

Called the Clinical Translational Research Infrastructure Network (CTR-IN), the organization will expand the capacity of partner institutions across seven states to put clinical research into practice to address regional health concerns, including access to care, cancer, obesity, diabetes, and

cardiovascular and infectious diseases. The University of Montana is a member institution of this network of 13 academic institutions across 7 mountain west states. Dr. Curtis Noonan directs the CTR-IN Pilot Grants Program. "CTR-IN provides pilot funding, as well as mentorship and other research support,

for investigators at UM," Noonan said. "The Pilot Grants Program is one of the key component activities of the new research network." Now entering the second year of funding from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), the Pilot Grants Program has awarded \$2.5 million for 35 pilot

research projects, including 3 projects at the University of Montana. Dr. Craig Molgaard is also part of the CTR-IN leadership team. For more on pilot projects and other opportunities available through the CTR-IN see:
<http://ctrin.unlv.edu/>

Published: Understanding exposures in a complex environmental health disaster

For years Libby, Montana has been the site of extensive environmental health research. This community, located in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States, was the home to workers previously employed at a nearby vermiculite mining facility and also served as the processing and distribution center for this industrial product. The extracted vermiculite was naturally contaminated with what is now termed

Libby Amphibole asbestos (LA). Several pathways of environmental asbestos exposure to the general population have been described, but strategies for estimating individual exposures via the various environmental and occupational pathways have been limited. As part of a multi-study project funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Dr. Noonan led an effort to develop a

comprehensive exposure assessment approach that integrates information on individuals' contact frequency with multiple exposure pathways. These exposure assessment strategies will be applied to forthcoming health studies from the project's multi-disciplinary team of investigators from the University of Montana, Idaho State University, the Center for Asbestos Related Disease in Libby, and the Mount

Sinai School of Medicine in New York. Dr. Noonan's exposure assessment strategy was recently presented at the 26th Annual International Society for Environmental Epidemiology Conference in Seattle, Washington, and the paper has recently been published in the Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology:
<http://www.nature.com/jes/journal/vaop/ncurrent/full/jes201425a.html>

Meet Julie Fife, MPH and Adjunct Faculty

After completing her undergraduate degree in Health Science at Boise State University, Julie Fife earned her Master of Public Health from University of Montana. Ms. Fife also earned a graduate certificate in Maternal and Child Health Epidemiology from the University of Arizona.

Prior to graduate studies Ms. Fife served in AmeriCorps for school-based family resources centers (FRCs) through Women's Opportunity and Resource Development (WORD), a local non-profit organization. The purpose of FRCs was to increase family and community involvement in primary education.

Ms. Fife later developed and implemented a Welcome Baby project for WORD which was designed to improve health outcomes by creating networks of support for families with infants in a rural Montana community.

During her graduate studies Ms. Fife worked as the graduate assistant for the School of Public and

Community Health Sciences. She assisted with various research projects, including an Automatic Crash Notification Project for the Montana Transportation. For this work, Ms. Fife was awarded the student research award for outstanding research activities in the study of public health in 2011. She was also the teaching assistant for Biostatistics, Health Policy, and History and Theory of Epidemiology. Finally, Ms. Fife assisted with the self-study for the MPH program accreditation by the Council on Education for Public Health.

Ms. Fife is just starting as the Primary Care Office Health Program Representative under the Family and Community Health Bureau for the State of Montana.

She also currently teaches Issues in Maternal and Child Health, and co-teaches History and Theory of Epidemiology and Public Health Administration and Management.

In the spring, Ms. Fife will be co-teaching Rural Health Issues in a Global Context with Dr. Molgaard. This will be the second time the course will be offered online. For this course students will have the great opportunity to explore key research and innovative collaboration that led to public health success in rural communities across the globe. Students will become familiar with trends in global health, global health policies, players, priorities, human rights, health equity, and mobile and vulnerable populations. Students will be introduced to health research methods and design, which will be used to analyze rural and global health issues. The class will emphasize the science and art of epidemiology across diverse populations. Students will explore when and how to apply epidemiological strategies to answer specific health questions.



Ms. Fife with her daughter

BFCC President and SPCHS Faculty Affiliate Dr. Kipp

Blackfeet Community College (BCC) received an NIH award to create a Metabolic Research Center. This four year award will provide more research opportunities for faculty and students at the college working on metabolic health. INBRE's Dr. Allen Harmsen is partnering with BCC to develop the program.

Congratulations to Dr. Billie Jo Kipp and her team at Blackfeet Community College!

Read more at: [Cutbank Pioneer Press](#)



Dr. Billie Jo Kipp
BCC President

Faculty, Alumni and Student News

Two public health students conducted their practicums in Ethiopia at the Mekelle University international public health practicum site during a 2-week trip the summer of 2014. Linnea has this to say regarding the experience.

“Last Spring Dr. Kari Harris created a global public health practicum opportunity through a Memorandum of Agreement between UM and Mekelle University in Ethiopia. Erika Strehl and I were the first MPH students to travel to Mekelle University to take advantage of this incredible experience.

My learning objectives were to quantify the prevalence of maternal and stillborn deaths in the Tigray region due to obstetric fistula, a childbirth injury causing incontinence of urine and feces. I also wanted to document the social consequences resulting from a fistula; and identify the various

organizations offering postsurgical reintegration services and the nature of their services.

Before I left Montana I conducted a literature review to understand the epidemiology of the disease in the country, prevention strategies, and service programs. In country, I collaborated with various stakeholders such as local NGOs, foreign NGOs, and government organizations in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. The public health faculty at Mekelle University were extremely helpful as well as Healing Hands of Joy, Healthy Mom-Happy Child, and Hamlin Fistula. It was definitely a life-changing experience and solidified my interest in maternal and child health issues.

I hope to return next summer (if I can obtain funding) to conduct formal research on the reintegration status of fistula patients after they have received postsurgical social reintegration services. This research has not been conducted

and would be valuable to gauge the success of the existing programs.

I highly recommend the Mekelle University practicum experience for those interested in global public health. The people and culture made this trip very easy, safe, and enjoyable.”

Linnea also provided these wonderful photos of her time in Ethiopia.



Interview with Health Center Director



Weekend with colleagues



Hamlin Fistula Hospital



Buna (coffee) with Mekelle Faculty



Top of the world!



Wonderful Tigrinya Children

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The Capstone guidelines are currently under review by the Instruction committee for further revisions. Keep updated on the latest version by frequently checking the website.

Public Health Course News

Students report that of the program requirements, having three required courses offered only during Summer semester caused them the most difficulty. Therefore, beginning 2015, there has been change in the semester course line-up.

PUBH 580 Rural Health Issues in a Global Context: In addition to being offered on-line, it will now be offered during the spring semester.

PUBH 595 Maternal and Child Health: This elective is being moved to the summer semester.

PUBH 525 Multicultural and Native American Public Health: This course can now be taken as either a core course (in lieu for PUBH 550 Eval. & Research) or as an elective course.



Of Interest . . .

Students in the process of getting ready for their defenses on the practicum and portfolio during the fall 2014 or spring 2015 semester should be sure to contact the program coordinator for the example provided for "how to". The example provides a visual resource in the setting up of your written work.

The new Portfolio guidelines were finished in September 2014 and are now available on the website.

Check out the SPCHS's new website completed during the 2014 summer semester.

Check out the University of Montana's Fall '14 Foreign Student and Scholar Services newsletter highlighting this semester's programs and activities, including statistical information on currently enrolled international students.

<http://www.umt.edu/fsss/files-uploaded/fsssnewsF14.pdf>

About the Program...

For those of you like myself who are constantly asked "What is Public Health anyway" I ran across a nice site the other day explaining exactly "What is Public Health" <http://www.whatispublichealth.org/what/index.html>

On or around October 13, 2014 all current and alumni of the MPH program should receive a research report.

It is important that everyone return these reports. If you have not received your report or are unsure if you should return the report, please contact the Program Coordinator.

The School of Public and Community Health Sciences is currently working to complete their second Annual Report for CEPH. Information requests may be sent to you that allow us to better address CEPH criteria, and we ask that your return these requests within the time frame given for a response.

The various school committees continue looking for ways to improve the program. We would like to thank the faculty, affiliated faculty, alumni and students for serving on these committees.