From Our Directors:

One of the strengths of the Powell Center is its focus on interdisciplinary research and education in the pursuit of quality investigations into sex and gender differences in health. That has translated into groundbreaking women’s health research through our BIRCWH training grant and into innovative collaborations with a number of community-based organizations. Researchers from different disciplines bring their perspectives and what results is a richness of thought, or as one of our researchers, Dr. Chris Xing says, “One plus one doesn’t just equal two; it equals more than two!”

Women are facing pressing health issues. We believe that the best way to impact women’s health is to address the problems from a multiplicity of perspectives.

What’s Inside

- Efforts to eliminate Health Disparities
- Creating Healthier Communities
- Focus on Research

Our Mission:

Is to catalyze research partnerships that impact the health of women and their communities.
Barriers to Mental Health Care for the Somali Community in Minnesota

Many Somalis have faced hardships before, during, and after their immigration to Minnesota. With their population tripling in Minnesota from 9,000 to approximately 30,000 since 1990, it is important that accessibility and culturally competent and sensitive mental health care services are available to respond to the needs of this growing population. There are significant barriers in the community to procuring mental health services, such as stigma associated with mental health problems, accessibility, and lack of culturally competent healthcare professionals.

New Americans Community Services (NACS), in collaboration with the Deborah E. Powell Center for Women’s Health, received a pilot grant from the U of M Medical School Program in Health Disparities Research (PHDR) to conduct a mental health assessment in the Somali community in the Twin Cities. Nancy Raymond, MD, Powell Center Director and Professor in the Departments of Psychiatry and Family Medicine and Community Health, will serve as the university PI, while Sirad Osman, PhD, Executive Director of the NACS is the community PI.

Partners will implement a mental health needs assessment using community-based participatory research (CBPR) strategies to ensure a design that is culturally sensitive, relevant and acceptable to Somali immigrants and refugees in Minnesota. Data will be gathered through listening cycles, surveys, and interviews. An advisory committee will guide the tools developed to ensure they are culturally sensitive and accurate. Findings will be compiled into a report and disseminated at community centers and in community newspapers. Through this project we hope to take a step closer to quality mental health care for the Somali community.

Community Networks Program: Working to Reduce Health Disparities

Cervical cancer disproportionately affects certain groups of women in America, in particular Somalis and Latinas, who have the highest rates of cervical cancer among women in the U.S. and in Minnesota. With regular screening (pap smears) and education, it is possible to greatly reduce the incidence and mortality associated with cervical cancer.

The Powell Center recently started an exciting 5-year outreach and education project, as a partner with the Program in Health Disparities Research. The Community Networks Program, funded by the National Cancer Institute, aims to reduce the impact of breast and cervical cancer in the Latino and Somali communities. Kola Okuyemi MD is the Principal Investigator of grant and Nancy Raymond MD is a Program Director of the Outreach and Education component. To carry out the project, we will be working closely with two community-based organizations. Centro Campesino, led by Gloria Contreras, is an advocacy organization for Latino immigrants and migrant workers, located in Owatonna, MN and New Americans Community Services (NACS), led by Sirad Osman PhD, is an organization focused on serving Somali immigrants. We will be working with Somali immigrants living in Minneapolis and the Willmar, MN area. All activities of the grant will be carried out with an eye to creating and implementing culturally appropriate outreach and education around breast and cervical cancer.
Focus on Research

The Powell Center for Women’s Health received a Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women’s Health (BIRCWH) K12 grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in 2007 to support promising women’s health researchers. BIRCWH scholars must engage in basic, clinical, translational, behavioral, or health services research relevant to women’s health. A highlight of the program is that scholars receive mentoring from senior researchers on how to bridge advanced training with independent research in areas that integrate scientific disciplines.

This fall, the Powell Center added three new scholars to the program. The 2010 BIRCWH scholars are Daheia J. Barr-Anderson, PhD, MSPH, Bharat Thyagarajan, MBBS, MD, and Kristine M. Talley, PhD, RN, GNP-BC.

Dr. Barr-Anderson is an assistant professor in the School of Kinesiology in the College of Education and Human Development. Her research interests are in behavioral and environmental obesity prevention interventions for adolescent females, particularly African Americans. Dr. Barr-Anderson’s BIRCWH research project is to test the efficacy of a family-centered, obesity prevention intervention for African American adolescent girls.

Dr. Thyagarajan is an assistant professor in the Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology at the University of Minnesota Medical School. His research focus is in advancing public health by developing strategies to improve primary prevention of cancer, in particular, breast cancer and women’s health. For his BIRCWH project, he will evaluate the role of mitochondrial copy number, mitochondrial polymorphisms and heteroplasmy in postmenopausal breast cancer etiology, and to evaluate genetic and environmental factors that may influence mitochondrial copy number.

Dr. Talley is an assistant professor in the Adult and Gerontological Health Cooperative at the University of Minnesota School of Nursing. Dr. Talley’s research focus is on preventing toileting disabilities as they are a leading trigger for nursing home placement. Older women are particularly susceptible because of their high risk for urinary incontinence and mobility impairments. As a BIRCWH scholar, Dr. Talley will be collecting preliminary data to test the efficacy of an interdisciplinary intervention designed to prevent toileting disabilities in frail older women living in assisted living facilities.

Funding for the BIRCWH program comes from the National Institute of Health (NIH) Office of Research on Women’s Health (ORWH). The scholars’ respective schools and the Powell Center will provide additional financial support for their research.

Former BIRCWH & Powell Center Scholars

Pictured left to right:
Marnie Peterson, PhD, PharmD, BCPS
Rahel Ghebre, MD
Jerica Berge, PhD
Carolyn Garcia PhD, MPH
Daheia Barr-Anderson, PhD, MSPH
Susanta Hui, PhD

Pictured in-front:
Nancy Raymond, MD - Principal Investigator
Jean Wyman, PhD, RN, GNP-BC, FAAN, FGSA - Program Director
Creating Healthier Communities Grant

Perinatal depression is the #1 complication of childbirth. Despite its widespread prevalence, perinatal depression frequently goes undetected and untreated and disproportionately impacts disadvantaged women and their children. The Powell Center was recently successful in competing for a one-year, $100,000 contract from the Office of Women’s Health (OWH), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to carry out planning for an assessment and to design an intervention for perinatal depression in pregnant and postpartum women. Nancy Raymond MD, Director of the Powell Center, is the Principal Investigator of the grant. The goal of our project is to improve the health of women and reduce negative maternal and child outcomes.

The Powell Center is partnering with the:
- Hennepin Women’s Mental Health Program (HWMHP),
- the Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support (MPHFS),
- NorthPoint Health & Wellness Clinic,
- the Women’s Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE), and
- Aqui Para Ti Clinic.

These organizations make up the Minnesota Perinatal Mental Health Coalition, formed to bring about systems-level changes to improve the health outcomes of Minnesota women and infants. HWMHP, NorthPoint Health & Wellness Clinic, and Aqui Para Ti will serve as clinical sites for the project.

During the first year of the project we will conduct a community needs assessment to elicit perspectives from women and their partners on appropriate interventions for women who may be at risk for depression, and develop a strategic plan for implementing an evidence-based intervention to address perinatal depression that is endorsed by the communities we serve. During 2011, our coalition will be applying to the OWH for a five-year implementation grant to carry out the program developed during the first year.

Translating Research into Practice

Leaders of the Powell Center are committed to bringing the best of women’s health research into clinical practice so all women have access to the best health care available.

Interdisciplinary Women’s Health Lecture Series:
These free monthly lectures present the newest women’s health research. Co-coordinated with The Center for Leadership Education in Maternal & Child Public Health and the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Women’s Health. Many lectures are available for free viewing on our website at:
www.womenshealth.umn.edu

Annual Women’s Health Research Conference:
Each fall, the Powell Center brings together hundreds of researchers, clinicians and students to share research results and ideas.