It was like any other typical day at the Powell Center. Our office was a flurry of activity with staff and students working on grants and reports. Our administrative director was on a conference call when Mikow Hang, our community program specialist, received a shocking phone call. The caller made an offer we could not pass up. Someone, Mikow said, wants to give us a lot of money.

It all began with a class action law suit against Solvay Pharmaceuticals for promoting their hormone replacement therapy drug for a non-FDA approved indication. The case settled in favor of the Plaintiffs for the amount of $16.5 million. After all of the members of the class action law suit received their money.

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Additional exciting news is the appointment of Powell Center Director, Nancy C. Raymond, MD to the position of Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs for the University of Minnesota Medical School. She will remain the Director of the Powell Center. Jean F. Wyman, PhD, RN continues to serve as Powell Center Co-Director and will lead the effort to develop a strategic research plan for the endowment.Carolyn J. Torkelson, MD, MS, is joining the Powell Center’s leadership team as Associate Director and will oversee the research conference, lecture series, and other programming. Dr. Torkelson is an Associate Professor in the Medical School Department of Family Medicine and Community Health and Medical Director of Integrative Health at the Women’s Health Specialists.

The Powell Center awards interdisciplinary research seed grants to early stage investigators to provide pilot funding that will assist them in launching their research careers. We believe that the best way to impact women’s health is to address the problems from a multiplicity of perspectives. This requires partnering with professionals in other departments, centers, schools, and community organizations.
A FOCUS ON RESEARCH: BUILDING INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH CAREERS IN WOMEN’S HEALTH (BIRCWH)

This past year, Dr. Nancy Raymond, director of the Powell Center, submitted a successful renewal application for the Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women’s Health (BIRCWH) K12 training grant to the National Institute of Health (NIH). The renewal ensures that the Powell Center will continue to provide training and mentoring to emerging women’s health researchers. The BIRCWH program supports promising young women’s health researchers through mentoring, training, and protected time for research. Scholars must engage in basic, clinical, translational, behavioral, or health services research relevant to women’s health. The scholar’s interdisciplinary mentoring team is comprised of senior researchers with extensive training and research experience who will guide the scholar to becoming a successful independent researcher.

Collaboration was the theme for the BIRCWH program this past year. The BIRCWH partnered with the Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI) KL2 scholar programs and the Pediatric K12 scholar training program to form the Multidisciplinary K Scholars Seminar Series. Additionally, the UMN BIRCWH and Mayo Clinic BIRCWH created a joint leadership development workshop that occurs quarterly.

In the past year, three of our scholars have successfully competed for federal funding to support their research. Information about their research and their grants is presented below.

**Kristine Talley, PhD, GNP-BC, RN**

Assistant Professor, Adult and Gerontological Health Cooperative University of Minnesota School of Nursing

**BIRCWH Project:** Preventing Disability in Frail Older Women

Dr. Talley’s overall BIRCWH research goal is to develop the skills needed to design and conduct clinical trials of disability prevention for frail older women. Since tolerating disabilities are a leading trigger for nursing home placement, preventing or delaying their development will help older women maintain independence and quality of life. To aid her BIRCWH research project, Dr. Talley was successful in competing for a NIH R03 grant to conduct secondary data analysis using the 2004 National Nursing Home Survey and linked MDS data to identify the effect restorative care has on ADL disability in long-stay nursing home residents.

**Bharat Thyagarajan, PhD, MPH, MBBS**

Assistant Professor, Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology University of Minnesota Medical School

**BIRCWH Project:** The Role of Mitochondria in Determining Breast Cancer Susceptibility

Dr. Thyagarajan’s BIRCWH project is to evaluate the association between mitochondrial copy number and breast cancer risk and the association between mitochondrial damage and breast cancer risk. This past year, he expanded his BIRCWH to include colorectal cancer. Dr. Thyagarajan received federal funding for a NIH R03 grant from the National Cancer Institute to study the role of mitochondria in colorectal adenoma etiology. Colorectal cancer is the one of the major cancers that affects both men and women equally. However, risk factors predisposing an individual to colorectal cancer may be gender specific. The findings evaluate the role of mitochondria in colorectal cancer etiology in men and women separately.

**Katy Backes Kozhimannil, PhD, MPA**

Assistant Professor, Division of Health Policy and Management University of Minnesota School of Public Health

**BIRCWH Project:** Measuring Quality and Evaluating Strategies for the Care of Pregnant Women

Dr. Kozhimannil’s research applies the tools of health policy and health services research to the field of women’s health, with a focus on the perinatal period with the goal of improving health outcomes and improving quality of care for women and their infants. Dr. Kozhimannil received federal funding for her NIH R03 proposal titled "Work during pregnancy and childbirth-related health care choices, patterns, and quality" from the National Institute of Health (NIH) Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (NICHD) to supplement her BIRCWH research.

Health Disparities

For the past two years, the Powell Center has been involved in a dynamic community engaged project aimed at increasing breast and cervical cancer screening in the Somali and Latino immigrant communities in Minnesota. Our project is one part of a larger program, the Minnesota Center for Cancer Collaborations (MC3). This program was founded by Dr. Kola Okuyemi who is the Principle Investigator of this 5-year National Cancer Institute grant the aim of which is to reduce cancer disparities experienced by racial and ethnic minority populations in Minnesota. Dr. Okuyemi is also the director of the Medical School’s Program in Health Disparities Research that serves as the home for the MC3 Center. Nancy Raymond, MD, the Powell Center’s director, co-leads the Community Engagement core of the MC3 program with Warfa S. Osman, PhD, from New American Community Services and Gloria Contreras from Centro Campanario. Warfa S. Osman’s organization serves the Somali community in the Twin Cities, Willmar and St. Could. Gloria Contreras’ organization serves the Latino community in Owatonna, MN. Our Outreach Core’s program to increase breast and cervical cancer screening was initiated in response to the data that showed low screening rates in Minnesota’s Somali and Latino communities.

With our partners we designed interview and focus group questions that the partner organizations utilized to gather information on how to increase breast and cervical cancer screening in these communities. From the Somali key informant interviews and focus groups we learned about the importance of emphasizing a diagnosis of cancer is not a death sentence and the importance of catching the disease early through screening to decrease mortality. Also, unlike their experience in Somalia, people can live many years with a cancer diagnosis. The participants in the focus groups also indicated that we should capitalize on the oral nature of the Somali culture as a way to motivate women to schedule screening appointments. From the Latino key informant interviews and focus groups, we learned about the importance of emphasizing early detection of cancer. The women spoke a lot about their tendency to procrastinate making their screening appointments out of fear of the potential results, but how having a trusting and warm relationship with a provider would be a facilitator to screening.

These key insights provided us with important themes to culturally tailor a health intervention called Friend to Friend. We are pilot testing the program and women have overwhelmingly responded positively to the culturally adapted program. Our work over the next three years is to replicate the intervention and continue to improve the intervention in order to best reach women with the highest need with a meaningful program that resonates with them.

**CALL TO THE COMMUNITY**

Interested in partnering with the University of Minnesota’s Powell Center for Women’s Health on a women’s health issue important to your community? We welcome community collaborations. Our expertise includes program evaluation, women’s health research, program planning, community needs assessments, and grant writing. Please contact the Powell Center for more information: wmhealth@umn.edu or 612-626-1125.
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Since that unbelievable day, the money has been placed in an endowment in the Minnesota Medical Foundation, and we are beginning to strategize about how to best use these funds to advance the health and well-being of mature women.

Our goal is to take this generous donation, and build on it to create an endowed chair to support research, education, and other related activities to advance mature women’s health. We thank the law firms for acknowledging our work.

WOMEN’S HEALTH SPECIALISTS: “A NEW CLINICAL CARE MODEL FOR WOMEN”

While the Powell Center for Women’s Health does not provide clinical care, we are linked with the University of Minnesota Women’s Health Specialists through education endeavors and research collaborations. The recently remodeled and expanded clinic is an innovative, multidisciplinary approach to women’s health. The Women’s Health Specialists’ team of obstetricians, gynecologists, midwives, primary care physicians, and advanced practice nurses offer comprehensive, integrated care for women of all ages.

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Mikow Hang
Community Program Assistant

Nancy C. Raymond, MD
DIRECTOR
Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs, Medical School; Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Medical School

Jean F. Wyman, PhD, RN
CO–DIRECTOR
Professor and Cara McAvoy Sankey Endowed Chair in Nursing Research, School of Nursing

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY 2012—2013

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

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

Interdisciplinary Women’s Health Lecture Series:
These free monthly lectures present the latest and hottest topics in women’s health research. The lectures are co-sponsored by the School of Public Health Center for Leadership Education in Maternal & Child Public Health and the School of Nursing. Lectures are posted online on our website, www.wmhealth.umn.edu.

Annual Women’s Health Research Conference:
The Powell Center’s annual fall conference brings together hundreds of researchers, health care professionals and students to disseminate new and innovative women’s health research, provide education and awareness on women’s health research topics, and to catalyze research partnerships through networking. The 10th annual conference is scheduled for Monday, September 16, 2013. Visit our website for more information.

FROM OUR DIRECTORS

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In October of 2011, the Powell Center was successful in renewing the Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women’s Health (BIRCWH) grant. The BIRCWH program aids young faculty in becoming successful women’s health researchers. Turn to page 2 to read more about the BIRCWH scholars and their research projects.

Additional exciting news is the appointment of Powell Center Director, Nancy C. Raymond, MD to the position of Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs for the University of Minnesota Medical School. She will remain the Director of the Powell Center. Jean F. Wyman, PhD, RN continues to serve as Powell Center Co-Director and will lead the effort to develop a strategic research plan for the endowment. Carolyn J. Torkelson, MD, MS, is joining the Powell Center’s leadership team as Associate Director and will oversee the research conference, lecture series, and other programming. Dr. Torkelson is an Associate Professor in the Medical School Department of Family Medicine and Community Health and Medical Director of Integrative Health at the Women’s Health Specialists.

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