

Making an Investment in Prevention

Center for HIV/AIDS Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Public Health Laboratory Research Receives \$3 Million NIH Grant through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to Advance Ongoing HIV Prevention Studies

The George Washington University's Center for HIV/AIDS Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Public Health Laboratory Research recently received an NIH grant through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) for \$3 million, providing additional funding for two ongoing HIV Prevention Trials Network (HPTN) studies exploring HIV/AIDS epidemiology and prevention research. When the 111th Congress enacted ARRA, many Americans thought of it as an economic stimulus packaged designed to pay for a few "shovel-ready" infrastructure projects. But as the scope of the act extended well



beyond bridges and roads and into areas such as health care and education, the Center has become a beneficiary of its expanded emphasis.

The grant provides additional funds for the D.C. sites of two existing HIV prevention trials — HPTN 061, a study exploring the feasibility of intervention studies among black men who have sex with men, led by Manya Magnus, Ph.D., M.P.H., associate professor of Epidemiology and Biostatistics; and HPTN 064, examining the overall HIV-1 incidence rate for women at risk for HIV acquisition in the U.S.,

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led by Irene Kuo, Ph.D., M.P.H., assistant research professor of Epidemiology and Biostatistics. Both studies are part of the nationwide Community Programs for Clinical Research on AIDS (CPCRA), an NIH-funded clinical trials unit led by Principal Investigator Fred Gordin, M.D., chief, Infectious Diseases, Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Washington, D.C., and professor of Medicine, GW School Medicine and Health Sciences.

The initial funding for the project came in part to set up the HPTN site at GW. "We competed successfully to establish a clinical research site (CRS) at GW, to be able to conduct HPTN studies here in the District of Columbia under Dr. Gordin's clinical trials unit," explains Alan Greenberg, M.D., M.P.H., professor and chair of the Department of Epide-

miology and Biostatistics at the School of Public Health and Health Services (SPHHS), and director of the Center for HIV/AIDS Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Public Health Laboratory Research. Nationally, the HPTN is exploring high-risk populations in cities that are heavily affected by the epidemic; D.C. has one of the highest infection rates in the country.

Both studies at GW began enrolling participants this past summer and will interview subjects two more times (at six months and one year). The ARRA funds were used to hire additional staff to support these research goals and will ensure the Center has sufficient means to complete the studies.

"These HPTN studies are trying to demonstrate that community-based samples of persons at high risk for HIV can be successfully recruited and retained," says Dr. Greenberg. For the

purposes of the women's study, he explains, high risk means people from D.C. neighborhoods with high rates of HIV and poverty.

Dr. Greenberg adds "if we are successful, we hope this will allow us to participate in future HPTN studies that will bring cutting-edge interventions, behavioral or biomedical, into these high-risk populations in the District."

"The selection of the Center for HIV/AIDS Epidemiology Research to participate in one of NIH's premier prevention trials networks is an important passage. This positions the Center at the forefront of HIV prevention research in D.C.," says Josef Reum, Ph.D., interim dean, SPHHS. "With this grant, ARRA acknowledges and renews our strengths here at GW to battle what continues to be a core challenge for the health of the citizens of the nation's capital."