

AGING Notes



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN INSTITUTE ON AGING

WINTER 2004

New Aging and Cancer Initiative

A multidisciplinary team of investigators, led by Richard Weindruch, Professor of Medicine and Institute on Aging Affiliate, recently received a five-year grant from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the National Institute on Aging (NIA) to advance understanding of the interface between aging and cancer. There was one of eight new centers funded around the country. The primary objective is to support conferences, workshops, and pilot studies that will culminate in new research directions that advance understanding of the causes, consequences, and effective treatment of later life cancer.

“Cancer is a disease of aging and is increasing in magnitude as people live longer. Ending the suffering and death due to cancer by 2015 requires us to understand the behavior of cancer, responses to therapy, and the after-effects that are unique to the older patient.”

said NCI Director, Andrew C. von Eschenbach. These thoughts were echoed by NIA Director, Richard Hodes, “we must close the significant knowledge gap on cancer and aging. We need research that tells us why cancer is more frequent in older people, whether cancer behaves differently in the young and the old, and whether the treatment should be different for the different age groups.”

The UW-Madison grant is organized around five thematic areas. These are listed below, along with the campus leaders in each area:

- ◆ **Patterns of Care:** access, use, and quality of health care, based on large population-based studies - Maureen Smith, Gary Shapiro
- ◆ **Effects of Comorbidity:** how cancer interacts with other diseases and illnesses, including dementia, depression, and physical impairment - Sanjay Asthana, James Stewart

- ◆ **Psychosocial Issues:** quality of life, coping with treatments, cancer caregiving - Sue Heidrich, Carol Ryff
- ◆ **Palliative Care:** hospice care, pain relief and symptom control, service delivery models - James Cleary, Elizabeth Kramer
- ◆ **Biology of Aging and Cancer:** oxidative stress/mitochondrial biology, chronic environmental exposures, gene expression, mechanisms of suppression by caloric restriction - Richard Weindruch, David Jarrad

The grant, which will be administered through the UW Comprehensive Cancer Center, includes faculty and Institute on Aging affiliates from Human Oncology, Medicine, Nursing, Psychology, Social Work, and Surgery.

The kick-off conference to launch the new initiative is scheduled for May 26, 2004. For more information, please see web site <http://www.cancer.wisc.edu/clinician/agingkickoff.html>

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IOA Director Receives Research Award

Carol Ryff, Director of the Institute on Aging and Professor of Psychology, recently received the Henry A. Murray Award from the Society of Personality and Social Psychology. Established in 1978, the Murray Award is given annually for outstanding contributions to research integrating the multiple levels of analysis (biological, psychological, social) required to understand whole lives. The selection committee lauded Dr. Ryff for

the “enormous breadth of her research, spanning fields of development, aging, personality, interpersonal relations, and health.” Professor Ryff currently heads an integrative study of the health and well-being of nearly 7,000 Americans between the ages of 35 and 85. The goal of the project is to understand links between psychosocial factors and health as individuals age, including assessment of intervening neurobiological mechanisms.

MIDUS Pilot Projects Launched

MIDUS

Midlife in the United States

A National Study of Health & Well-Being

MIDUS (Midlife in the U.S.) is a multidisciplinary study of aging funded by the National Institute on Aging and centered at UW Institute on Aging. It involves 40 investigators at 16 universities. The project, now in its second year, is in full gear. A major new initiative, for which additional NIA funds were provided, is the launching of eight Pilot Projects. These are intended to bring new investigators into the study to support analyses with the first wave of MIDUS data collected on nearly 7,000 Americans aged 25 to 74 in 1995. Competition for these pilot grants was nationwide, and the pool of applicants was so stellar that 8 applicants (6 more than the 2 initially planned) received support to move their projects forward.

The rich diversity of topics covered by these researchers is noted below:

- ◆ Daily Stressors and Well-Being (S. Neupert, Brandeis University) - this study will investigate how daily exposure to stress varies by age, socioeconomic status, and sense of control. It will also examine how these factors influence physical and emotional reactivity to daily stress.
- ◆ Constructing Identities in Midlife (J. Pals, Northwestern University) - this study will use narrative data from the original study to investigate how adults give meaning to their life experiences and construct coherent identities.
- ◆ What Comprises Self-Reported Health? (S. Barger, Northern Arizona University) - this study will investigate how global self-reported health is influenced by negative affect, socioeconomic status, and gender.
- ◆ Early Family Influences on Midlife Health (A. Barrett, Florida State University) - using sibling data from the original MIDUS study, this project will investigate unique and shared components of early family experience among sibs and how such experiences are linked with midlife mental health.
- ◆ Marital Quality and Well-Being in Contexts of Disability (J. Bookwala, Lafayette College) - this project will examine how various dimensions of marital quality are linked with psychological well-being and further examine the extent to which marital quality moderates the relationship between physical disability and well-being.
- ◆ Perceived Discrimination and Pain Symptoms (R. Edwards, Johns Hopkins University Medical Center) - this study will examine links between perceived discrimination (both chronic and acute) and reported pain. It will also examine psychosocial mediators of the discrimination-pain relationship.
- ◆ Thriving in the Face of Serious Illness (P. Frazier, University of Minnesota) - this project will examine psychosocial profiles of those who are thriving despite serious medical conditions with the goal of identifying key resources.
- ◆ Social Support from Neighbors and Health (B. Shaw, State University of New York at Albany) - this study will examine whether availability of support from neighbors predicts mental and physical health as individuals age, and further whether these links are particularly strong among older adults lacking strong family support.

Additional competition for new pilot projects will be conducted each year of the MIDUS II grant, thus building on the diverse initiatives described above.

New IOA Affiliates



Craig S. Atwood, Ph.D.

**Department of Medicine (Geriatrics);
Research Director of the
Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute
and Director of the UW Memory
Research Program**

Dr. Atwood has diverse interests and expertise that encompass both reproductive endocrinology and neuroscience. His research program draws together these interests and is aimed at understanding the hormonal regulation of aging and Alzheimer's disease. These interests and skills complement the research interests of the Veteran's Administration Geriatric Research, Education & Clinical Center and Institute on Aging.

Dr. Atwood received his Ph.D. in Biochemistry from The University of Western Australia in Perth prior to taking up a Fogarty Fellowship at the National Institutes of Health in the Laboratory of Molecular and Cellular Endocrinology, Bethesda, MD. He was a postdoctoral fellow and an Instructor of Neuroscience in the Genetics and Aging Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School, where he examined basic molecular mechanisms involved in Alzheimer's disease. He was also an Assistant Professor of Pathology at Case Western Reserve where he began examining the relationship between the changes in reproductive hormones and aging and neurodegeneration.



Luigi Puglielli, Ph.D.

**Department of Medicine (Geriatrics);
Veteran's Administration
Geriatric Research, Education &
Clinical Center**

Dr. Puglielli is a neurobiologist interested in identifying the molecular events that lead to the progressive accumulation of senile (or amyloid) plaques and loss of synaptic plasticity in the aging brain. Identification of such events is also relevant to the understanding of the pathogenesis of Alzheimer's disease (AD), the most common form of dementia in the world. It is worth remembering (i) that AD is characterized by abnormal accumulation of senile plaques and massive loss of synaptic plasticity, and (ii) that aging is the single most important risk factor for AD.

Dr. Puglielli received his M.D. and Ph.D. at the Catholic University of Rome (Italy). He performed his Ph.D. thesis working on cholesterol metabolism/homeostasis. He completed his post-doctoral training at the Center for Advanced Biomedical Research of the Boston University Medical School, where he studied molecular events that regulate post-translational modifications of proteins and proteoglycans. He served on the faculty of Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School to study the role of lipid metabolism in the regulation of AD generation and synaptogenesis during aging.



Tracy Schroeffer, Ph.D.

School of Social Work

Dr. Schroeffer is teaching and continuing the research she began at the University of Michigan. This past fall she taught an advanced practice course in aging, health, and disability and received approval to develop and teach a new course in her area of expertise entitled "Death and Dying: Practice Skills and Challenges." This course will take a life span approach and focus on social work practice with terminally ill children, adolescents, adults, and elders, as well as their families. Capitalizing on her dissertation research "Terminally Ill Elders Speak Out About Their Consideration to Hasten Death," she has applied for a grant to fund the next step in her research. Dr. Schroeffer plans to investigate the psychosocial needs of terminally ill elders through the development of a multidimensional instrument to assess the quality of their dying process.

Dr. Schroeffer obtained a Master of Science in Gerontology at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, where she worked as a part-time lecturer in the Gerontology Department and with colleagues on numerous research projects. She also obtained a Master of Science and Ph.D. in Social Work at the University of Michigan.

Grants Awarded in Aging

Cynthia Carlsson, Assistant Professor of Medicine (Geriatrics) has been awarded \$677,700 from the National Institutes of Health for a five-year project titled "Effect of Statins on Pathobiology of Alzheimer's Disease." This is a prospective, placebo-controlled, randomized clinical trial to evaluate the effects of 9 months of a cholesterol-lowering medication called simvastatin on plasma and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) biomarkers of Alzheimer's disease (AD), namely beta-amyloid and tau levels, inflammatory markers, and markers of brain cholesterol turnover. This study will be conducted in middle-aged adult children of persons with AD (ages 40-65) participating in the Wisconsin Registry for Alzheimer's Prevention (WRAP).

Luigi Puglielli, Assistant Professor of Medicine (Geriatrics) has been awarded \$1,125,000 from the National Institute of Neurological Disease for a five-year project titled "Ceramide in Alzheimer's Disease." Dr. Puglielli's group has recently shown that the ceramide-dependent signaling cascade activates the rate of amyloid b-peptide (Ab) generation during aging. The focus of this grant is to identify the up-stream and down-stream molecules that control this signaling event and to analyze how they are regulated by normal aging of the brain.

Linda Roberts, Associate Professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, and IOA affiliate,

has received \$196,197 from the Fetzer Institute for a two-year project that begins in June 2004. Dr. Roberts, along with Dr. Karin Kirchoff, Professor of Nursing, and Karen Kehl, a doctoral student in nursing will study how coping with terminal cancer affects couples' relationships. The research will focus on 60 patients, who see themselves as likely to die in the near future, and their partners. The researchers will examine the couples' functioning, coping and communication processes. Couples will complete questionnaires, participate in interviews, and engage in two videotaped couple interactions. One of the videotaped conversations is designed to encourage openness and caregiving, and the other is designed to bring out expressions of love and attachment. The researchers will examine and "code" the behavioral and emotional processes evident in the conversations to identify different patterns of interaction. Couples (or the partner if the patient dies) will be re-contacted four times for follow-up assessments to evaluate psychosocial, relational, spiritual, and bereavement adaptations. This will allow the researchers to identify the behavioral and emotional communication processes that are associated with positive adaptations for patients and their partners. The findings will have the potential to improve end-of-life care efforts for patients and their spouses.

Honors and Awards

Emily Greenfield, a graduate student in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, received the Gerontological Society of America's (GSA) prestigious Behavioral and Social Sciences Research Pre-Dissertation Award. Her paper was entitled "Volunteering Protects Older Adults at Risk for Loss of Purpose in Life." The award was presented at the 2003

GSA Annual Scientific Meeting in San Diego.

Molly Carnes, M.D., Professor of Medicine and Director of the Center for Women's Health Research, received the 2003 Doris Slesinger Award for Excellence in Mentoring. The award was presented by the Women Faculty Mentoring Program at UW-Madison.

The IOA Welcomes New Staff Members

The IOA is happy to announce the hiring of three new staff members: Sherran Pak, Carol Crocker, and Kristin Falk.

Sherran Pak replaces Belle Peyton as the Institute's financial specialist. She has past experience in the financial field and has worked on the Madison campus since 2000. Sherran has a degree in Anthropology from Colorado State University. She spends most of her free time with her 7-year-old son.

Carol Crocker joined our staff to provide office support services and reception duties. She has had considerable experience in administrative assistance, human resources management, payroll and benefits, and accounting. Carol

has two grown children and lives in Madison with her husband and two dogs.

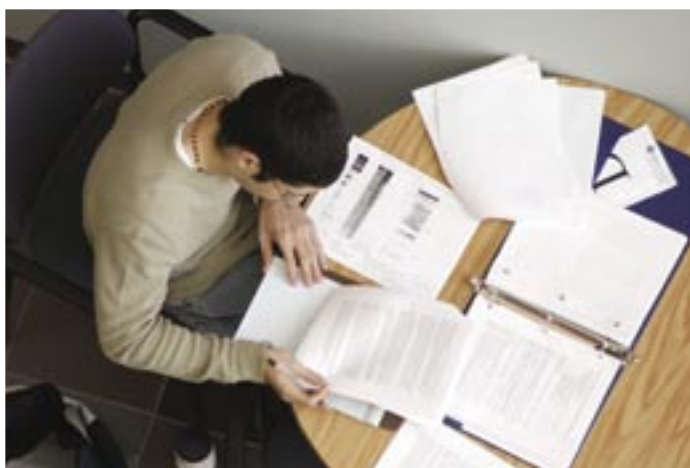
Kristin Falk came to us with a great deal of experience in UW departmental administration, budget management, and personnel and payroll administration. She primarily provides financial, personnel, and administrative services to the MIDUS project. She has an MS in English from UW-LaCrosse. One of her favorite past times is relaxing with a good mystery.

We welcome them to the Institute on Aging and are confident that they will continue our tradition of providing excellent office support services.

Education Plays an Important Role in Living Longer and Healthier Lives



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According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there will be 40 million people over the age of 65 and 10 million people over the age of 85 by the year 2010. The IOA is playing a major role in preparing future generations of researchers and caregivers to meet the challenges of an aging population by offering two certificate programs in the field of aging.

The Specialist in Gerontology program is designed to provide undergraduate or graduate students with a broad, multidisciplinary overview of the field of aging. It is intended to supplement majors in various departments across campus. These include: nursing, occupational therapy, social work, psychology, sociology, public policy, economics, human development and family studies, urban planning, environment, textiles and design, dietetics, and physical therapy. The knowledge gained through completing this program prepares individuals for their careers and personal lives as they and their family members age.

The Ph.D. distributed minor with a focus on aging is for students currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program at the UW-Madison. Students can tailor a program of study to meet their academic needs by completing coursework in the psychosocial and/or biomedical aspects of aging. Completion of this certificate program prepares students to focus on aging issues in their academic or other careers.

New Investigator Awards

Each year the IOA presents two New Investigator Awards for outstanding work in the field of aging. UW-Madison faculty members, staff, and graduate students working in the biomedical, social, behavioral, psychological, or other areas related to aging or life course studies are eligible

to apply for these awards. The recipients are asked to display a poster about their work at the Annual Colloquium on Aging, which allows them to share research findings with colleagues and the community

Information About Aging From The Web

The following web sites contain information about a wide variety of aging topics.

www.NIHSeniorHealth.gov

Get aging-related health information from a reliable, easy to access web site offered by The National Institute on Aging and National Library of Medicine.

www.research.aarp.org

Increase your knowledge about a variety of aging-related topics, such as Medicare, Social Security, legislation that affects the aging population, and much more at the American Association of Retired Persons web site.

www.hormone.org

Find information about the prevention and diagnosis of human disease such as diabetes, osteoporosis, and prostate cancer in which hormones play a role for men and women. The Hormone Foundation is the public education affiliate of the Endocrine Society.

www.nutrition.gov

Learn more about nutrition at an intergovernmental web site that contains a section on seniors, with numerous links to other nutrition web sites.



Aging and the Wisconsin Idea at Work

The Institute on Aging recently participated for the fifth time in a UW-Madison On-the-Road event. The event, which was held in Milwaukee and titled “Promoting Health and Well-being in Later Years,” is an example of how the Institute and its affiliates share with the public cutting-edge research about aging.

Following the Institute’s tradition of offering lectures from multiple disciplines, faculty representing the biomedical and psychosocial aspects of aging research made presentations. Dr. Neil Binkley talked about the connection between low levels of vitamin D and

bone loss, and Dr. Srividya Kidambi spoke about osteoporosis in men and African Americans. Dr. Karen Cruickshanks addressed hearing loss prevention and management, and Dr. Carol Ryff discussed how our bodies and minds interact with each other to affect how we age.

The UW-Madison Institute on Aging, UW-Milwaukee School of Continuing Education, and the Wisconsin Alumni Association worked together to bring the information presented at this event to people in the Milwaukee area.

Current Concepts in Nutrition and Aging

The 10th Annual Conference of Current Concepts in Nutrition and Aging will be held on Thursday, September 23, 2004 at the Pyle Center in Madison.

This year's keynote speakers are Steven Blair, P.E.D., Director of Epidemiology and Clinical Applications and Director of Research at the Cooper Institute, Dallas, Texas and Patrick McBride, M.D., UW-Madison Departments of Medicine and Family Medicine. Steven Blair will address issues surrounding obesity, exercise, and fitness for seniors and Dr. McBride will give a talk on nutrition, obesity and heart disease.

In addition to the keynotes, seminars will be offered on positive aging, diabetes, holistic wellness, sleep disorders, feeding at end of life, lifestyle and breast cancer, dietary fats and obesity, exercise and fitness for seniors. The conference is geared to dietitians, nutrition program directors and educators, social workers, physicians, nurses, and other professionals in clinical and community settings.

For more information, please call 1-888-391-4255.



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16th Annual Colloquium

Mark your calendar now for the 16th Annual Colloquium on Aging to be held on October 13, 2004 at Monona Terrace. This event will include invited speakers, a health fair, and an emeritus lecture.

2004 Calendar of Events

April 22-23

Emotion Symposium
UW Psychiatric Institute on Aging
(608) 263-6161

May 26

Kickoff Meeting for the New UWCCC Aging
and Cancer Program
[http://www.cancer.wisc.edu/clinician/
agingkickoff.html](http://www.cancer.wisc.edu/clinician/agingkickoff.html)

September 23

Nutrition & Aging Conference
UW Extension Family Living Education
(608) 265-9101 or 1-800-391-4255

October 13

16th Annual Colloquium
UW Institute on Aging
(608) 261-1493

Institute on Aging

Director

Carol Ryff, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology

Associate Director

Neil Binkley, M.D.
Department of Medicine (Geriatrics)

Newsletter Editorial Team

Marty Quimby
Kay Smith

Technical Assistance

Jim Porter

If you wish to submit an article or other
information for this newsletter, please contact
Marty Quimby at (608) 261-1493 or via e-mail:
aging@ssc.wisc.edu

For more information on IOA
www.aging.wisc.edu

Graphic Design: Medical Illustration,
University of Wisconsin Medical School

8. AGING NOTES – WINTER 2004

Institute on Aging
University of Wisconsin – Madison
Room 2245, 1300 University Avenue
Madison, Wisconsin 53706-1532