

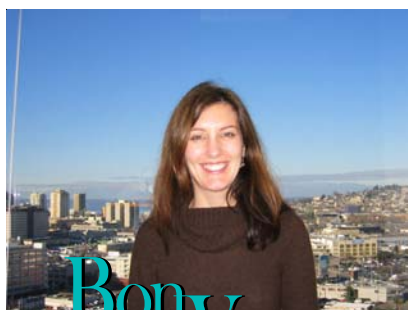
CRN Connection

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The Cancer Research Network (CRN) is a collaboration of 11 non-profit HMOs committed to the conduct of high-quality, public domain research in cancer control. The CRN is a project of NCI and AHRQ.

News from NCI -

The deadline for the submission of abstracts to the “Critical Issues in eHealth Research” conference is just a few short weeks away (March 1, 2005). Abstracts are being sought for the 1st annual Scientific Conference entitled “Critical Issues in eHealth Research,” sponsored by the National Institutes of Health and the Health e-Technologies Initiative (a national program office of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation). The conference will convene scientists from government, academia, survey research and the private sector, practitioners from the private and public sectors, and students to discuss the state-of-the-science of eHealth research. Topics include but are not limited to design, methodology, ethics and evaluation of eHealth research from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. All submissions will be peer-reviewed and may be accepted for either an oral presentation or a poster presentation. New researchers and junior faculty are encouraged to submit abstracts. Abstracts are also welcome in the area of eHealth and minority health experiences.

All abstracts must be submitted electronically no later than midnight on March 1, 2005. Submit abstracts online at: <http://www.scgcorp.com/ehealthconf2005/abstracts.asp>.

—Martin Brown, NCI

Ed's Corner of the World

News from the CRN PI

The CRN Steering Committee met on January 12th to review the 14 Pilot Fund Project Proposals submitted for Round II CRN Pilot Funds. Each proposal had been reviewed by at least two reviewers from within and outside the CRN. The Steering Committee was impressed by the overall quality of the proposals. The Committee based its final recommendations on the following criteria:

- 1) Potential for an R01
- 2) Involvement of a Junior Investigator
- 3) Leverages the unique features of the CRN
- 4) Scientific value for the dollar
- 5) Expands the scope of CRN research



We are pleased to announce that two projects have been funded. They are: “Use of an interactive voice response system with physician feedback to reduce cancer symptoms: A Pilot Study” PI: Kari Bohlke, Group Health; and “Informing an R01 application: Interviewing Colorectal Cancer Survivors” PI: Ann Geiger, KPSC. We want to thank all the authors who submitted a proposal. The PI’s office is in the process of providing feedback and follow-up assistance to the projects that did not get funded. This issue of the CRN Connection features an update on the four projects funded last year in Round I of the Pilot Fund request for proposals.

The HMO Research Network Conference is being held April 4-6, in Santa Fe, NM. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Ed

From **CITADEL** to
ECOTOPIA back
to **CITADEL**



We are very sad to report that Chelsea Jenter, Project Director of the CRN, left Seattle on Wednesday, February 2nd to move back to Boston! Chelsea was a tremendous asset to the CRN.

Chelsea will be working on an AHRQ-funded grant evaluating a multi-community implementation of electronic medical records. The evaluation will include both patient and provider experiences.

Chelsea and her fiance Ed Kim plan to marry on June 25th. Best wishes to her in her new position at Brigham and Womens Hospital, and in her upcoming marriage. The CRN family will greatly miss her!

-Maurleen Davidson, GHC

CRN Connection

The *CRN Connection* is a publication of the CRN developed to inform and occasionally entertain CRN collaborators. It is produced with oversight from the CRN Communications Committee.

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Please send comments or suggestions on this newsletter to Maurleen Davidson, CRN Connection Editor, at davidson.ms@ghc.org or fill out feedback form on the web site. All submissions are welcome!

Special thanks to all for your contribution in the publishing of this newsletter.

RE-PORT-LAND: CRN Site Visits its Neighbor to the South

Although Kaiser Permanente Northwest is the closest site geographically to the PI's office, the stars didn't align for a site visit until November 2004. Ed, Gene, Chelsea and Sarah had an enjoyable and productive trip to the KP Center for Health Research. The main agenda items were to review the progress of projects, learn more about the unique work of the medical informatics researchers at KPNW, and to discuss synergies between the CRN and the newest HMO Research Network consortium, the Coordinated Clinical Studies Network (CCSN).

Ed used this site visit as an opportunity to unveil a new CRN overview presentation that is focused on the CRN's interconnected data resources. The Virtual Data Warehouse (VDW) has grown exponentially during the CRN's second funding cycle, and it is important for all CRN investigators to understand the content and applicability of the VDW, and give consideration to how the VDW could be used in grant applications and projects.

We had terrific turnout for this site visit, with over 20 CHR investigators and staff members in attendance throughout the day. The visit gave us a clearer understanding of the nuances of CHR as a research center, and provided new insights about the unique role that medical informatics (specifically, natural language processing and electronic

medical records) can play in our efforts to improve healthcare through research applications.

With the Fall 2004 award of the CCSN contract to the HMO Research Network (HMORN), many recent discussions have focused on how the various HMORN consortia interact. A tangible example is the use of the web as a utility for internal communications. Thus, the site visit included discussions about whether and how we could achieve as much commonality—and as little duplication of effort—as possible across these networks, since CHR is developing and hosting the CRN intranet, as well as the CCSN intranet. A common web portal, used to access a common HMORN Virtual Data Warehouse, as well as each consortium's pages, is one strategy under consideration. Clearly, the need to preserve a high level of security while striving for interoperability, is a paramount consideration. In future CRN communications we will keep every-one apprised of new developments on this front.

The web team at CHR also furnished some interesting web statistics during our site visit. From January to November 2004, the CRN website was "hit" over 12,600 times by 222 users. The contact search is among the most popular pages visited.

We're grateful to the Portland group for an informative and well-attended day of meetings.

-Sarah Greene, GHC

ROUND ONE OF CRN PILOT FUND PROJECTS - PROGRESS REPORT

In Round 1 of the CRN Pilot Fund call for proposals, four projects were awarded funding. The following is an update by the Principal Investigator on the progress of these projects .

“Accuracy of Automated Data on Colorectal Cancer Screening Exams,” PI - Reina Haque (KPSC)

This project was approved by the IRB and commenced March 1, 2003. We developed two computerized algorithms designed to distinguish between screening and diagnostic endoscopy (sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy) tests using automated databases and determined the ability of the algorithms to correctly classify tests using patient charts as the gold standard. Data collection and data editing are complete. We have submitted a manuscript for consideration in the JNCI Monograph.

“Investigation of Age-Specific Differences and Cancer of the Cecal Colon,” PI - Steven Dudas (HFHS)

In addition to CRN pilot funds, this project has been awarded an R03 from the National Institute on Aging. The focus of the R03 is on determining age related differences in tumors of the sigmoid region of the colon versus the cecal region. And in addition, the object of the R03 is to examine markers of microsatellite instability (MSI) in these tumors as well as markers for oxidative stress and apoptosis. We are proceeding with the immunohistochemical staining, conducting staining for each single marker across all samples at a time. Initial staining is evaluating MSI markers, MLH1 and PMS2.

We anticipate that all work will be done for a June submission date for the R01.

“Do Acute and Chronic Illnesses Trump Preventative Care,” PI - Michael VonKorff/Josh Fenton (GHC)

The project remains in the data collection phase. There are some exciting pilot results from an analogous analysis among a large group of patients with diabetes at Group Health Cooperative. We found that patients with diabetes who had a pattern of predominantly lower-priority outpatient service use were at disproportionate risk of not receiving timely diabetes-related preventive services, such as hemoglobin A1C testing, retinal screening, and microalbuminuria screening. We hypothesize that we will see similar relationships among a general population that is eligible for cancer screening.

“Race/Ethnic Disparities in Lung Cancer: The Role of Comorbidity and Genetic Factors,” PI - C. Martin Tammemagi (HFHS)

We are in the process of developing a HFHS Comorbidity/Symptoms Inventory (C/S Inventory) for investigating the associations between comorbidities/symptoms (ABSMS) and cancer outcomes, including diagnostic intensity, receipt of optimal treatment and survival and evaluating how much race/ethnic disparity in cancer outcomes is explained by comorbidities and symptoms. The findings of our Lung Cancer Comorbidity Study (LCCS) indicate that important associations exist and that adverse comorbidities and symptoms both explain important amounts of race/ethnic disparity

Goals of the pilot study are to determine which ABSMs explain/predict robustly across cancers and outcomes; do and do not interact with gender and race/ethnicity; and explain

most race/ethnic disparity. These determinations should enable the employment in analyses of ABSMs that are more efficient, valid and comparable across cancers and outcomes

We are anticipating a number of publications to result from these efforts and manuscript preparations and submissions are expected to be completed by April 2005. We submitted an R01 on October 1, 2004.

CRN NEWS & MILESTONES

- Sarah Greene’s article on the impact of multiple IRB reviews on a mailed survey has been accepted by *Annals of Epidemiology*.
- Ed Wagner will present the CRN’s progress as part of the opening plenary in Santa Fe.
- A new Scientific Interest Group on Qualitative Research Methods is forming. Contact Nancy Vuckovic at KPNW if you’d like to learn more. (nancy.vuckovic@kpchr.org)
- The Annual CRN Evaluation Survey was launched in February. If you received an invitation and have not completed the survey, please do so today. Your feedback is important. Results of the survey will be discussed at the CRN meetings in Santa Fe.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

ASPO
March 13-15, 2005
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

AACR
April 16-20, 2005
ANAHEIM, CA

