Spotlight on Community-Based Research

CEMHD works in partnership with community groups, healthcare providers, county and State health departments, and higher education institutions to assess community needs, goals and resources. Together with our partners, we implement and test specific solutions in the affected communities.

The Center’s Research Core contains three major projects, two of which involve Community Based Participatory Research. The third is a statistical analysis of national health disparities data.

The Women’s Health Project Hudson, N. Y.

Drs. Annis Golden and Anita Pomerantz of the Communication Department are the lead researchers for “Overcoming Barriers to African American Women’s Reproductive Healthcare Seeking,” also known as The Women’s Health Project (WHP). It works to encourage women in Hudson, NY, particularly those who face cultural, financial, or geographic barriers, to use reproductive health services.

The WHP, in coordination with its community partners, provides three basic services: monthly community events on health and wellness for women, including resource fairs; taxi vouchers for women to get to appointments at Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood (UHPP) and Columbia Memorial Hospital; and reproductive and sexual health services. Continued on p. 2

Environmental Contaminants and the Reproductive Health of Akwesasne Mohawk Women

The Akwesasne Mohawk territory sits on the St. Lawrence River, adjacent to one Federal and two State Superfund sites. This has caused considerable concern in the community about difficulties in conceiving and bearing healthy children. Continued on page 2

Sources: National Institutes for Health, the National Women’s Health Information Center
The Women’s Health Project cont’d from p. 1. Every Tuesday, UHPP arrives at the WHP office to provide information, safe sex supplies, and clinic appointment sign-ups. Once a month, the AIDS Council provides free, confidential HIV testing, and STD/hepatitis C screenings.

In December of 2011, four Hudson residents completed a ten-week training as adult peer outreach assistants. Tiffany Garriga, Maria Hansberry, Sylvia Jones and Arylee Ojumu have since been very successful in getting low income women of color in Hudson to take positive steps toward caring for their reproductive health. These women not only help the WHP connect with more women in the community, they have also increased its longer-term capacity for health promotion.

Environmental Contaminants and the Reproductive Health of Akwesasne Women cont’d from p. 1

The project, a collaborative effort between the St. Regis Mohawk Health Services, headed by Debra Martin, and the University at Albany, seeks to determine whether the reproductive health of women of Akwesasne has been adversely affected by exposure to chemical pollutants, primarily polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

The study design has innovative elements. It measures some of the hormones in saliva, which is collected daily throughout the menstrual cycle, and supplements this by blood measurements of these hormones. It also examines the effects of several pollutants simultaneously, whereas most studies have looked at one pollutant at a time.

Results from an earlier study of Akwesasne youth showed that age at menarche, a marker of sexual maturation, was delayed in relation to lead levels but advanced in relation to PCB levels.

Dr. Schell presenting the research

These results support the community’s concern about the effects of pollutants on reproduction.

In January, Drs. Schell and Gallo presented the results of their past and present research to a community meeting. Later on in the spring, they will return to present newer, more preliminary results from the Women’s Reproductive Health Research Project.