The Amsterdam Minority Health Task Force is Back!

The Amsterdam Minority Health Task Force includes stakeholders and members of the community to define, measure and address key health concerns and needs that affect the Amsterdam community. Through partnerships with faculty at the University at Albany, we aim to implement projects to address community needs.

The Amsterdam Minority Health Task Force meets almost monthly. Thus far, discussion among task force members has resulted in the identification of the following community concerns:

- **Behavioral Health/Primary Care Providers' Services**: There is a need to train providers in cultural competency, substance abuse, and stress management in Amsterdam. Services addressing mental and physical health need to be better integrated in order to meet patients’ needs.

- **Migrant/Immigrant Populations**: There is a need to focus on culturally competent healthcare provision for these populations and raise awareness as to the distinction between the migrant and immigrant population in Amsterdam.

- **Child Development**: There is a need to promote breastfeeding, particularly among Latina mothers. Families would benefit from increased education on childhood development.

All faculty and community members who may be interested in partnering with members of the Amsterdam community are invited to attend the next Task Force meeting. For more information or if you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dr. L. Schell at CEMHD@albany.edu.
"Research for the Community"

Exposure to PCB's and DDE (polychlorinated biphenyls and dichlorodiphenylchloroethylene) both toxic chlorinated chemicals commonly found in the environment, have caused some concerns in the community. Although products containing PCBs are no longer produced in the US, and the use of DDE, a pesticide, is banned in this country, they can still be found in the environment putting individuals at risk for developing diabetes, cancer, and other chronic diseases.

A study was done to examine the effects of PCBs and DDE levels on the hormone testosterone in adolescent males exposed to these chemicals pre- and post-natally. Testosterone is a hormone that plays an important role in growth and development. The study revealed that these environmental toxicants disrupted the endocrine system and resulted in changes in testosterone levels. Exposure to PCBs reduced, while exposure to DDE increased, testosterone levels among adolescent males indicating that though these chemicals are alike in structure, they do not act similarly.

Effects of PCBs and DDE vary depending on race and ethnicity, gender, and level of exposure but nonetheless, have a significant effect on the development of those exposed.


Lauren Dasen is currently a fourth-year student in the University at Albany's Counseling Psychology Ph.D. program. As a first-generation Panamanian/Cuban-American, Lauren’s interest in CEMHD is both personal and professional. Lauren received her bachelor’s of science degree in psychology from the University of Florida. Throughout her undergraduate and graduate career, she has conducted research in various laboratories pertaining to neurophysiology, social psychology, and counseling psychology. Her academic research interests include investigating sociocultural determinants of mental and physical health among Latinos.

At the 2015 American Psychological Association convention, Lauren presented a scientific poster focused on marianismo (traditional Latina gender role beliefs) and its association with various health outcomes among recent Latina immigrants. As part of her current graduate training, Lauren also teaches undergraduate courses, assists with a graduate course on cognitive assessment, and conducts psychotherapy and psychological testing in a hospital setting. She incorporates social justice principles into her teaching, research, and clinical work (which she conducts in both Spanish and English). Lauren would like to continue her involvement in these areas after graduation and promote health at both individual and community levels.