News and Recent Events

SUHI Strongly Represented at 2015 American Public Health Association (APHA) Conference in Chicago

This year’s annual meeting of the American Public Health Association (APHA), one of the largest gatherings of public health researchers, advocates, educators, and students, was filled with oral presentations and posters from SUHI staff members, on topics ranging from the usage of asthma community health workers (CHWs) to address hospitalization and emergency department rates to the complexities of understanding HIV disparities in major U.S. cities. In total, over 15 SUHI staff members contributed to an accepted presentation or abstract, exceeding our prior record for conference submissions! The conference, held at the McCormick Place convention center (North America’s largest), just south of downtown Chicago, featured discussions from Julie Kuhn, who delivered an oral presentation on SUHI’s innovative asthma initiative with Advocate Physican Partners, and Madeline Woodberry, who presented a poster on her experiences as a dynamic, on-the-ground asthma CHW in Lawndale. In addition to these presentations, SUHI had its own exhibitor booth, where various SUHI staff were able to take time out from the conference’s many educational sessions and activities to speak with attendees, answer questions, and provide materials about SUHI programming.

Caption: SUHI staff at the Institute’s exhibitor booth
Annual meeting of the APHA, Chicago, IL, November 2015
Members of SUHI’s Helping Her Live Program Attend Knocking Out Breast Cancer Fundraising Event at Macy’s

On Saturday, October 24, members of SUHI joined fashion designer and breast health advocate Barbara Bates at the Knocking Out Breast Cancer (One Round at A Time) fundraising event at Macy’s in downtown Chicago. The event, attended by SUHI Community Health Educators Cynthia Holloway, Veronica Robles, and Melinda Banks, was spearheaded by the Barbara Bates Foundation, a nonprofit organization and funder of SUHI’s Helping Her Live breast health initiative. The themed event highlighted new designs from Ms. Bates’ popular, Chicago-based fashion line, each donned by models who were either breast cancer survivors or are currently living with the disease.

Knocking Out Breast Cancer drew in nearly 500 individuals from Chicago and beyond in support of the Barbara Bates Foundation’s continuous efforts to spotlight and research breast health disparities and improve outcomes, particularly among women of color. In attendance was Sinai Health System’s President and CEO, Karen Teitelbaum, who spoke to the assembled audience on Sinai’s deep commitment to improving access to breast health resources in our communities. At the end of the night, the Barbara Bates Foundation’s quest to raise $500,000 was met!

Caption: Helping Her Live staff and friends at the Knocking Out Breast Cancer event
Chicago, IL | October 2015

CHICAGO Plan Works with the IIT Institute of Design to Develop Effective Tools for the Delivery of Health Education

SUHI is currently serving as the CHW Coordinating Center for the Coordinated Healthcare Interventions for Childhood Asthma Gaps in Outcomes Plan, or CHICAGO Plan, a three-arm, multi-center pediatric asthma collaborative, funded by Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), comparing the effectiveness of a CHW home-visit asthma intervention with an emergency department-level intervention. Earlier this year, SUHI CHICAGO Plan staff, newly hired CHWs, and some of SUHI’s senior CHWs participated in an interactive co-design session held at the Institute of Design (IOD). The purpose of the
session was to obtain direct feedback from those involved in developing and implementing CHW interventions on what an effective educational tool for home visits would look like. Four stations were set up for the session, each with a specific focus: 1) physical tool design, 2) order of educational topics, 3) synchronization of images and content, and 4) level of detail included in the tool. CHWs and other program staff were able to provide their input in a tangible, structured way at each station, drawing on their training and past experience, allowing the IOD team to obtain detailed data on how to best design an effective and practical teaching tool for home visits. The result is a double-sided binder, which contains a guide for the CHW to use during education sessions with participants on one side of each page, and simple text and visuals that engage the caregiver on the other side, matching the content provided by the CHW.

Following the co-design session, an immersion session aimed at engaging the CHICAGO Plan Steering Committee in the CHW experience was held. SUHI CHICAGO Plan staff guided steering committee members through a presentation on CHW intervention protocols around CHW hiring, training, supervision and quality assurance. The presentation utilized floor-to-ceiling sized boards with diagrams, charts and pictures created by the Institute of Design team. To end the session, CHWs conducted a live role play of select asthma education topics using the home visit binder tool. The role plays were conducted with a backdrop featuring floor-to-ceiling photographs of scenes from the home visits, in order to simulate a true home visit experience for the steering committee. The co-design and immersion sessions have offered unique opportunities to enhance the delivery of patient-centered health education and to communicate the intricacies of the CHW experience to an audience that may not have the opportunity to experience it firsthand.

Recent SUHI Medical Student Interns from Chicago Medical School Present at Research Fair
Interns from SUHI’s recent summer internship program—medical students from Chicago Medical School (CMS) at Rosalind Franklin University—recently participated in the school’s annual research fair. Among those taking home an award was former SUHI intern Samuel Choi, whose epidemiologic study on racial disparities in stroke mortality in the 50 biggest US cities thoroughly impressed judges, receiving 2nd place
among all CMS student presenters! Samuel’s SUHI mentors for the project, Bijou Hunt and Maureen Benjamins, worked with him this past summer, guiding him in the literature review and writing process. Other former interns who presented at the CMS research fair included Alicia Seggelink, who presented on data dissemination tools for Sinai’s Community Health Survey project, with guidance from Melissa Gutierrez Kapheim; Simeon Koh, who presented on disparities in childhood and maternal vaccinations under the mentorship of Michelle Hughes; Crystal Foreman, who presented on a summary of available sociodemographic measures used for research and was mentored by Jana Hirschtick; and Stephanie Miles, who presented on predictors of HIV mortality disparities in various US cities with guidance from Kristi Allgood.

Recent Publications


Recently Awarded Grants

Blue Cross Blue Shield Funds “CHAMP,” A Diabetes Intervention For The Digital Age
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois awarded SUHI’s pioneering diabetes education and management initiative a $250,000 grant to continue carrying out community-based diabetes programming to help those affected better understand, manage, and control the disease. This new grant will implement an innovative randomized controlled trial design to assess the differential effects of “usual care” against two interventions to improve diabetes knowledge and management: one which involves the usage of CHWs trained in diabetes education and another which involves the delivery of diabetes information via text message. The grant, which will assume the moniker of the “CHAMP” study (Controlling Hyperglycemia Among Minority Populations), will be led by Project Director, Dr. Dalia Majumdar, and her team, including Melissa Sandoval, and CHWs Melinda Banks, Denise Camp, and Ana-Rosa Garcia.

Creating Healthy Homes and Measuring Long-Term Effectiveness of Community Health Educator-led Asthma Interventions
The asthma team at SUHI received a huge endorsement from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), in the form of renewed funding to explore the long-term effectiveness of their current asthma intervention, Helping Chicago’s Westside Adults Breathe and Thrive (HCWABT), which was recently honored with a special award from the Illinois Hospital Association (more on this in the Awards section below). This novel project, dubbed HCWABT II, will be a randomized controlled trial that utilizes the broad array of skillsets of CHWs to engage participants through a year-long maintenance phase after the active intervention. The $678,000 grant, funded through HUD’s signature Healthy Homes Program, covers three years of programming and research and will allow SUHI’s asthma team to contribute to the understudied area of long-term effectiveness in CHW-led asthma education interventions. Helen Margellos-Anast is the Principal Investigator of this grant.

Opening Up Wide on Oral Health Disparities In-and-Around Chicago
SUHI recently received a $245,000 grant from the Illinois Children’s Healthcare Foundation to map and assess oral health resources and disparities in and around Chicagoland. Melissa Gutierrez Kapheim and Kristin Monnard of SUHI, along with collaborator and demography expert, Rob Paral, will conduct a full-scale needs assessment to help better understand some of the complex drivers of oral health diseases and patterns in morbidity and preventive screenings (or lack thereof) among children. According to the NIH, tooth decay is present in over 40% of children aged 2 to 11, and much like other chronic diseases, these rates are especially elevated among Black and Hispanic children, as well as children coming from families with lower household incomes. With this grant funding, the assessment team will employ a variety of unique mapping and qualitative research tools to identify community-level resources that may be available to help combat and reduce the growing burden of oral health disease in underserved areas.

SUHI to Participate in U34 Grant from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
In collaboration with partners from Respiratory Health Association and the University of Illinois at Chicago, SUHI received a “U34” grant from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, totaling over $320,000, to supplement research and general programming activities under the currently active Coordinated Healthcare Interventions for Childhood Asthma Gaps in Outcomes (CHICAGO) Plan. This vital initiative, part of SUHI’s continuous efforts to drive down disparities in childhood asthma exacerbation, employs evidence-based approaches to understanding and addressing barriers to asthma knowledge, management, care, and treatment among those affected.

Illinois Hospital Association Honors SUHI With its Coveted Quality Excellence Achievement Award
This fall, the Illinois Health Association (IHA) honored SUHI’s “Helping Adults Breathe and Thrive” program with its highly coveted Quality Excellence Achievement Award. On hand to receive the award as part of
IHA’s 2015 Leadership Summit was SUHI’s Interim Director, Maureen Benjamins, and project leaders Helen Margellos-Anast and Tala Schwindt. Selected as one of only 5 awardees out of nearly 100 submissions, the HUD-funded program showcased staggering 66% and 57% reductions, respectively, in asthma-related emergency department visits and hospitalizations.