



NATIONAL CENTERS OF  
EXCELLENCE  
IN WOMEN'S HEALTH

# Faith-Based Initiatives

September 2001

OFFICE ON WOMEN'S HEALTH  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND HUMAN SERVICES

The National Centers of Excellence in Women's Health (CoEs) were established by the Office on Women's Health, within the Department of Health and Human Services in 1996. Their mandate is to establish and evaluate a new model health care system that unites women's health research, medical training, clinical care, public health education, community outreach, and the promotion of women in academic medicine around a common mission—to improve the health status of diverse women across the life span.

The multi-component approach to women's health is unique to the CoE model. One of the critical goals of the CoE is the expansion of community outreach and linkages to better serve women in the community, particularly those who are underserved. Community outreach, from local to the national level, is a key component of the CoE model because it allows each center to forge long-lasting relationships with community leaders, organizations, and members. These relationships are the foundation upon which to build future health care service, research, training, and education initiatives.

The CoEs are expanding opportunities for faith-based and other community organizations and thereby strengthening their capacity to better meet social needs in America's communities. The CoEs have been involved in a number of faith-based activities. This pamphlet highlights the wide range of community outreach activities and projects of the CoE program that are faith-based.

## ***Clinical Care***

### ◆ Indiana University CoE

The CoE has worked with the Indiana State Department of Health to provide heel ultrasound screening for osteoporosis at numerous churches and other houses of worship in and around Indianapolis, including many inner-city sites. The CoE also has arranged for mammography screening using the Wishard mobile mammogram van at many of these locations.

### ◆ Wake Forest University CoE

One of the Wake Forest University CoE's community clinics is the Living Water Prenatal Clinic. Living Water is housed in the basement of a church and serves an ethnically diverse population. One-third of the patients are Hispanic, one-third are African-American, and one-third are Euro-American. Translator services are available. In addition the clinic collaborates with the Clothes Closet at Green Street United Methodist Church. Currently the clinic sees over 150 women a month. The Clinic is also part of a coalition of churches providing a pharmacy fund to help Living Water patients purchase medications.

### ◆ University of Wisconsin, Madison CoE

The University of Wisconsin, Madison CoE has collaborated with the School of Pharmacy, Novartis Corporation and Lunar Corporation to offer osteoporosis screening to over 100 nuns, traditionally an underserved group, at the St. Mary's annual fall health conference for Catholic Nuns of Wisconsin. In addition, the UW National CoE worked with one of the Parish Nurses in Madison in writing a proposal to the Komen Foundation for a Witnessing Project for breast cancer awareness for African American women primarily working out of churches. This project

has now been funded for two years. The CoE plans to expand this project to include cardiovascular health for African American women.

◆ MCP Hahnemann University CoE

MCP Hahnemann has been working closely with the Chinese Gospel Church and the Chinese Christian Church and Center within Chinatown on the development of referral resources for the largely immigrant population of that community. The School of Medicine conducts a voluntary medical clinic at the Holy Redeemer Church in Chinatown every other week, with faculty and members of the Asian Medical Student Association.

***Research***

◆ Tulane/Xavier Universities CoE

The Tulane/Xavier Universities CoE has a research subcontract on a 4-year CDC funded REACH 2010 grant. This faith-based community intervention research program is working with African American churchwomen in New Orleans in their fight to reduce cardiovascular risk factors. Several program activities, including a health empowerment program, walking for wellness, women's resource nurse and a self-help program will be initiated. The programs will be evaluated in terms of capacity building, community and system changes, changes among change agents, and the impact on known risk factors and initiation of protective behavior changes. The CoE also collaborates with the Irish Channel Christian Fellowship.

The CoE Clinical Trials Awareness Program works to enhance participation of women, and particularly minority women, in clinical trials. Several venues are utilized to identify and address

barriers to participation in clinical research, including conducting focus groups, recruiting subjects through community organizations such as churches and using mass communication methods including the Internet.

Healthy Lifestyle Choices, funded by the Baptist Community Ministries, utilizes Tulane (and more particularly core directors of the CoE) to evaluate the effects of the program on school environments and adolescent risk behaviors.

◆ University of Wisconsin, Madison CoE

The Nuns Osteoporosis Screening Project (see Clinical Care above) was established as a research project with full IRB approval. The results of this work have been presented and submitted for publication to a research journal.

### ***Community Outreach***

◆ Boston University CoE

The Haitian Health Institute has a specialized Outreach Program to enroll Haitian women, age 40 and older, who are uninsured or under-insured into free Breast and Cervical Cancer screening. The outreach workers distribute flyers at businesses, beauty salons, churches and supermarkets in the Haitian community. In addition, monthly workshops in churches, E.S.L. program, and other activities are organized in order to increase awareness of breast and cervical cancer.

The CoE has worked collaboratively with a number of agencies in Boston including Churches Organized to Save Tomorrow (COST) on the Reach 2010 Program. The Boston submission for this CDC program addresses disparities in breast and cervical cancer outcomes in women of African descent in Boston.

◆ University of Illinois at Chicago CoE

The CoE distributed the National Women's Health Information Center Year 2000 and 2001 Day Books to a variety of groups including at a local church health fair for women.

The CoE works with the Lutheran Family Mission, a faith-based social service agency, to expand use of its Regional (Women's Health) Resources Inventory.

◆ Harvard University CoE

The CoE distributed its Women's Health Resources Directory in Boston through local churches and synagogues in an effort to expand its distribution efforts.

The CoE partners with schools, advocacy organizations and churches that have worked with them to develop women's health initiatives to assist in support of the National Pick Your Path to Health campaign (a public education campaign initiated by the Office on Women's Health (OWH) which is designed to help women take simple and time-sensitive steps to improve their health, and to provide tools for local communities to promote practical, culturally-relevant action steps to wellness).

◆ Wake Forest University CoE

The CoE regularly holds health fairs at local congregations (for example, St. Peter's World Outreach and the local Baptist Missionary convention). In addition, the CoE regularly gives women's health presentations to church groups.

As part of the OWH Pick Your Path to Health Campaign, ministers are incorporating a "care for yourself" message into their sermons. English/Spanish bulletin boards are also being posted at several Hispanic churches.

Clergy from the Divinity School are always included in the CoE's Domestic Violence initiatives, since clergy are regarded as key to educate about domestic violence, appropriate referral, and follow up.

The CoE is implementing a program, *Taking Care of our Sisters* (a multifaceted program created to encourage, educate and promote good health for women of all ages), one aspect of which is church outreach. The activity is designed to provide health information about upcoming services or speakers through colorful church bulletins and information areas throughout the church campus. The CoE education coordinator presented a talk at a local church on spirituality and health.

The CoE's Living Water Clinic housed in the basement of a church was selected as one of the sites to receive funding from The Infant Mortality Coalition to train lay health educators. The Coalition trains the outreach workers to go into the community surrounding Living Water to educate residents.

◆ MCP Hahnemann University CoE

The Centers for Women's Health faculty have provided screening and health education programs through area churches and mosques targeted to all socioeconomic levels of Arab American women.

◆ Indiana University CoE

As part of the Pick Your Path to Health campaign, the Indiana University CoE has made women's health presentations to inner city African American churches in the Indianapolis area, including the Northside New Era Missionary Baptist Church, Eastern Star Church and Martindale Avenue Church of Christ.

The CoE's new bilingual health outreach coordinator is planning to expand this work with two Hispanic Churches, St. Patrick's and St. Mary's Catholic Churches, focusing primarily on breast health and annual pap smears.

Members of the CoE have spoken to religious groups in Indianapolis and surrounding counties and have participated in church-based health fairs. Osteoporosis screening, cholesterol testing, blood pressure measurement are provided, and when requested, mammography using Wishard's mobile van.

◆ University of Puerto Rico CoE

As member of the Puerto Rican Alliance to Promote Mammography, the CoE collaborated, for the second consecutive year, in the "Campanas de amor para el recuerdo" (Love Bells for Remembrance) campaign. This campaign is held in October. As a very active member of the Alliance, the CoE participated in organizational meetings for the activity. The campaign consists of making female church members of all denominations aware of the need to have a mammogram on a selected Sunday in October, or on any other convenient day. The clergy makes an exhortation to women to promote their health, copies of the activity promotion and brochures on breast cancer promotion are provided, and bells are tolled for the occasion. Churches have also coordinated educational activities and have asked the Alliance to provide speakers. This year the CoE made efforts to incorporate the Caguas Catholic Diocese in the campaign; reproduced 2,000 copies of the promotion to be distributed among the Churches; and participated in the press conference to launch the campaign. As reported by participating churches, the campaign is estimated to have reached 32,000 women since its inception.

The CoE collaborated with the Seventh Day Adventist Church Women's Ministry last year in two activities that were offered in the municipalities of Trujillo Alto and Dorado. The speaker for the conferences on "Menopause and Osteoporosis" was Yazmin Aponte, church member and Medical Technologist, who works at the University Children's Hospital. The CoE served as a resource for her talk providing technical information, presentation materials, and educational brochures.

On October 20, 2000, Mammography Day, the CoE collaborated with the Department of Health and other member agencies of the Breast and Cervical Cancer Coalition and the Alliance to Promote Mammographies at a health fair targeting migrant women from the Dominican Republic at the María Auxiliadora Church. The church is located in the Canteras section, a very underserved medically indigent community, reluctant to participate in health promotion activities, since many are illegal aliens. The CoE's Women's Health Booth distributed brochures and materials from the alliance. A total of 29 persons visited their booth.

#### ◆ Magee-Womens Hospital CoE

The Magee-Womens Hospital CoE is working with the "Women of Zion," a faith-based African American group whose mission is to support women in labor. The CoE and the Pittsburgh March of Dimes Prematurity Prevention Project have trained this group to be doula/mentors. The project has been approved by the IRB as a feasibility study.

The CoE has integrated its African-American Womancare Program with the OWH Pick Your Path to Health campaign to organize the Pittsburgh campaign in conjunction with national efforts. Magee is teaming with several local organizations, including churches, in this effort.

### ◆ University of Pennsylvania CoE

The CoE established a Congregational Nursing Program, a menopause support program, in several congregations in West Philadelphia. The goal of the program is to assist and empower the faith communities to become more active partners in the management of their personal health. The program is designed to educate key persons to run support groups within various congregations located in West Philadelphia. CoE initiatives, including the Health Tip Card and oral health information pamphlet (see below) are being used by the Congregational Nurse's program. The Health Tip Card project is an innovative and creative vehicle to provide health information to African-American women in a way that is both informative and emphasizes the role of the woman in taking the right measures to ensure the healthiest of lifestyles. The bottom of the Health Tip Card is perforated with a Heart Healthy recipe on one side and available community resources on the other side. If a woman takes the card for the recipe, she is also obtaining a list of resources which she may otherwise not know exist.

The CoE developed an oral health informational pamphlet to be placed in women's health centers as well as distributed in churches and schools. The pamphlet is geared towards African American women and focuses on all aspects of daily hygiene habits.

### ◆ Tulane/Xavier Universities CoE

The CoE outreach coordinator is reaching out to churches, schools, businesses, individuals and other organizations in an effort to carry out the Women's Health Education and Awareness Initiative. The initiative seeks to empower women by increasing their awareness in addressing their health needs.

The CoE presents health education to schools, churches, worksites, and community centers. Professional health counseling is available to individual women who request to speak with someone on a confidential basis via telephone or in a private counseling room.

◆ University of Wisconsin, Madison CoE

The CoE established networks including a link between the University of Wisconsin Comprehensive Cancer Center breast cancer specialist and the Witness Project (African American-specific breast and cervical cancer outreach). Additional links formed include:

- A partnership with the Mt. Zion Baptist Church—the CoE included a gospel soloist in a cancer survivors' event;
- The CoE outreach effected an introduction of the Witness Project leader to the Race for the Cure chair, and the Race for the Cure subsequently invited the Witness Project to exhibit at the start of the race. The Witness Project also was featured in newspaper coverage of the Race for the Cure.

The CoE sponsored participation of a Madison-based, African American parish nurse at the Wisconsin Women of Color Health Conference in October 1999.

The CoE coordinated the addition of osteoporosis education, screening and counseling into a health care day for elderly nuns, all of whom are poor and many of whom are uninsured.

A partnership has been formed between the CoE and the Jewish Women's Coalition, which sponsors programs of interest to the Jewish community. The CoE has been invited to help set the agendas and provide speakers for some of these programs. Past

topics have included genetically inherited diseases, health and aging, and domestic violence.

### ***Professional Education***

#### ◆ Indiana University CoE

The Indiana University Center on Philanthropy in Indianapolis is sponsoring a fall conference in 2001 on the topic of “The Spirit of Philanthropy.” Members of the CoE will participate in the conference.

#### ◆ MCP Hahnemann University CoE

The MCP Hahnemann University CoE has a long history of working with the Black clergy of Philadelphia. The most recent endeavors include a collaborative effort with the School of Nursing to train lay health advisors from a neighboring African American community on breast health issues.

The CoE is collaborating with the Black Clergy of Philadelphia, the Tenant Council Advisory Board of public housing units, and the Schools of Nursing and Public Health to implement its Breast Cancer “Partners” Lay Advisor Training Project.

### ***Leadership***

#### ◆ MCP Hahnemann

The CoE trains lay health advisors from a neighboring African American community to conduct outreach to youth and their families within congregations of the Black Clergy on information related to choosing a career in the health professions.

***National Centers of Excellence in Women's Health  
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