Summer/Autumn 2012

Update is a periodic look at SSS staff research activities, new awards, corporate recognition, and upcoming conferences. For additional information on SSS projects, visit our website.

Research Activities

Challenges of Epidemiology Field Work
SSS researchers Pam Schwingl and Janet Archer presented a session entitled “Doing Epidemiology Field Work in an International Setting” at the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology conference. The purpose of this presentation was to discuss implementing field studies in developing countries. The presentation reviewed the importance of strong partnerships in-country, and the value of working internationally to build capacity in-country to implement epidemiology protocols. The presentation reviewed the challenges of setting up field stations, collecting specimens remotely, and working with local staff in rural areas with limited resources. The value of engaging various stakeholders such as Community Advisory Boards, local and traditional leaders, and societal associations in study planning and implementation was discussed.

Health Effects of Non-stick Coatings
An article published in Reproductive Toxicology was coauthored by SSS researcher Yi Lu, and supported by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) National Toxicology Program. The estrogenic and antiestrogenic potential of perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) was assessed using an immature mouse uterotrophic assay. PFOA is a likely carcinogen used to make Teflon pan coatings. Among the coauthors are NIEHS researchers Darlene Dixon, Casey Reed, Alicia Moore, Elizabeth Wallace, Jason Stanko, Wendy Jefferson, and Suzanne Fenton.

Rural Hospital Nurse Executives
An article published in the American Journal of Medical Quality was coauthored by SSS researchers Claudia Schur, Lan Zhao, and Jennifer Lucado; and former SSS staff Kathryn Paez. The article describes a study that assessed the perceptions and actions of rural hospital nurse executives with regard to patient safety and quality improvement.

Recent Publications from SSS’ Epidemiology Center Director
The following are among recent publications coauthored by Pia MacDonald, director of SSS’ Epidemiology Center in the Public Health Research group:

- An article in Public Health Reports discusses the integration of syndromic surveillance data (medical data to detect or anticipate disease outbreaks) into daily surveillance practice at local health departments.

Community Engagement: Lessons Learned in South Africa and South Korea
SSS researchers Fikri Yucel, Mwenda Kudumu, and Christie Barker-Cummings are among the authors of an article in Autism Research. The article describes the process used to engage diverse communities in autism research in projects in South Korea and South Africa.
Pesticide Exposure and Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)
SSS researcher Mary Watson is coauthor of an article in *Neurotoxicology* which concludes that a meta-analysis of data from the Agricultural Health Study (AHS) suggests that ALS risk is associated with use of pesticides as a group, and organochlorine compounds in particular. The AHS is an SSS-supported, NIEHS-funded study. Among the coauthors are NIEHS researchers Freya Kamel, David Umbach, Jane Hoppin, and Dale Sandler.

Child and Adolescent Health Care Quality and Disparities
SSS researcher Xiuhua Chen conducted the data preparation and analysis and is the second author of a research paper entitled “Child and Adolescent Health Care Quality and Disparities—Are We Making Progress?” The paper was presented by the primary author Denise Dougherty (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality [AHRQ]) at the Pediatric Academic Societies 2012 Annual Meeting. Darryl Gray (AHRQ) and Alan Simon (National Center for Health Statistics [NCHS]) were also coauthors.

Disparities in Health Care Services
SSS researcher Atlang Mompe presented a poster entitled “Using Time to Reach Achievable Benchmark to Highlight Disparities in Healthcare Services: Cancer Case Study” at the 2012 National Center for Health Statistics Conference. William Freeman (AHRQ) and Barbara Barton (Data and Analytic Solutions, Inc.) coauthored the study.

Timely Analyses of Hospital Inpatient Costs Presented
Two papers that SSS researcher Zeynal Karaca coauthored with AHRQ’s Herbert Wong were presented at several recent conferences.

- “Did Massachusetts Health Reform Lower Hospital Inpatient Cost?” was featured in podium presentations at the International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR) Annual International Meeting, the American Society of Health Economists Biennial Conference (ASHEcon), and the AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting; and as a panel presentation at the State Health Research and Policy Interest Group at AcademyHealth.
- “Are hospital inpatient costs lower for Medicare Advantage enrollees than Medicare fee-for-service beneficiaries?” was featured as a podium presentation at ASHEcon; and as a poster at ISPOR and AcademyHealth.

The Environment for Comparative Effectiveness Research
SSS researchers Claudia Schur and Jennifer Lucado were coauthors of a poster at the AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting entitled “Comparative Effectiveness Research Environment Survey” about a study of comparative effectiveness research, its use, and key issues related to its impact on decisionmaking in the future.

Job Quality for Home Care Workers
SSS researchers Janet Pagán-Sutton and Annelise Adams, and Marie Squillace (AHRQ) were among the coauthors of a poster session entitled “Job Quality of Home Health and Hospice Aides” at the AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting. The poster described a study of compensation and benefits for the home health workforce and how state policies affect the use of public benefits of home care worker services.

Standards-Based Performance Assessment
Susan Griffey, vice president and director of the Evaluation Center in SSS’ Public Health Research Group, presented “Standards-Based Performance Assessment: Good for Clients, Good for Implementers” on a panel at the ISPOR Annual International Meeting Eastern Evaluation Research Society Conference. The presentation described a standards-based performance assessment
methodology that provides clients and implementers with a rapid snapshot of program performance for focused remediation and correction.

**Collecting Quality Biological Specimens**
SSS researchers Susan Baker, Mary Watson, and Pamela Schwingl, with coauthor N. Beth Ragan (NIEHS) presented a poster entitled “Practical Tools for Managing the Quality of Biological and Environmental Specimens Collected from a Distance” at the International Society for Biological and Environmental Repositories Annual Meeting. The poster discussed how successful specimen management plans for field studies require a strategic, consistent, and standardized approach to the study site and population, site-appropriate technology, tracking systems, and monitoring and support.

**Benefits of Web Services in Drug Development and Clinical Trials**
SSS principal scientist Kenneth White delivered a talk at the HITB 2012 Security Conference entitled “Amazon Web Services (AWS): A Deep Analysis of the Organization, Data Centers, Global Network and Technology.” Alongside speakers including Bruce Schneier and Andy Ellis, White discussed trust and security controls in the context of AWS global datacenters. The presentation focused on Amazon and other cloud-based technology from the perspective of satisfying highly regulated market sectors including clinical trial research and pharmaceutical development.

**Perfluorinated Compounds (PFCs) and Birth Weight**
An article in the American Journal of Epidemiology examines the association of PFCs and birth weight based on measures including birth weight z scores, preterm birth, small for gestational age, and large for gestational age. This work is supported by SSS’ NIEHS-funded Norwegian Mother and Child Study.

**Caffeine Intake, Smoking, and Parkinson’s Disease**
An article published in the American Journal of Epidemiology examines whether caffeine intake is associated with lower risk of Parkinson’s disease. This work is supported by SSS’ NIEHS-funded Parkinson’s, Genes & Environment Study.

**Cesarean Section and Early Childhood Respiratory Disorders**
An article published in the American Journal of Epidemiology describes a study of wheezing and asthma among children delivered by Cesarean section. This work is supported by SSS’ NIEHS-funded Norwegian Mother and Child Cohort Study.

**New Awards**

**Assess Breastfeeding Needs for the Gerber Company**
SSS will perform a comprehensive assessment of data in published peer-reviewed journals and other publicly available data sources to identify variables that can function as either facilitators or barriers to breastfeeding in the states of Florida and Georgia.

**Gene Therapy Resource Program (GTRP) Recompetition Win Continues Support for NHLBI Research**
SSS has been awarded the recompetition of the contract to support the GTRP Clinical Coordinating Center for the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI). SSS has successfully served in this role since the program’s inception in 2007. SSS is responsible for coordination and management of activities among core laboratories, committees and boards, gene therapy research investigators, and NHLBI program staff.
Assess Performance of South African PEPFAR Partners for CDC
SSS will assist with performance assessments of PEPFAR partners by training the assessors, fielding consultants to collect data and draft reports, and assisting in the production and quality control of performance assessment, summary, and annual reports. The work is being conducted under subcontract to Khulisa Management Services, Inc.

Analysis of Home Care Workforce for HHS Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE)
SSS will conduct analyses on the frontline workforce in home care using 2007 National Home Health Aide Survey data linked with other national, state, and county-level data to examine the association between state policies and home care workforce supply, recruitment, and retention.

Variations in Care of Medicare Beneficiaries for Harvard Medical School (HMS)
SSS provided programming support to HMS using data on Medicare claims linked with the Community Tracking Study Physician Survey to analyze financial incentives and variation in the care of Medicare beneficiaries.

Data Analyses for Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission
SSS will provide programming support for data analyses of access and utilization measures using data from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), and will develop the statistical software programs and supporting documentation in order to reproduce these analyses using future NHIS data.

Health Indicators Warehouse (HIW) Recompetition Win Continues Support to NCHS
SSS has been awarded the recompetition of the contract to manage the HIW, which provides public access to a broad range of population health indicators and data. SSS, building upon institutional knowledge from the previous contract, will provide maintenance and ongoing improvement to the HIW application, database, and server infrastructure.

Logistical Support to the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator
SSS will provide logistical and conference support for a meeting of the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief Scientific Advisory Board in Washington, DC.

Corporate News and Recognition

Research Conducted by SSS Recognized by Director of AHRQ
SSS researcher Zeynal Karaca was the principal investigator and first author of a study that has been selected as the recipient of the AHRQ Director’s Award for Outstanding Intramural Research Poster. Coauthored with award recipient Herbert Wong (AHRQ), the poster "Did Massachusetts Health Reform Lower Hospital Inpatient Cost?" analyzed data to explore the evidence behind competing hypotheses on the effects of that state’s health reform legislation passed in 2006. The poster will be honored at the AHRQ Annual Meeting.

SSS Executive VP Participates on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Panel
SSS Executive Vice President Kevin Beverly was a panelist at an event sponsored by U.S. Congresswoman Donna Edwards to encourage young people to enter and stay in the STEM fields. The event at the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, DC, focused on finding and forming STEM talent, building the STEM workforce, and building successful models and partnerships.
SSS Employee-Owner Selected for International Visitor Leadership Program

Nelson Musoba, the chief of party for SSS’ Uganda MEEPP (Monitoring and Evaluation of the Emergency Plan Progress) project, was selected by American Foreign Service Officers at the U.S. Embassy in Uganda to participate in the International Visitor Leadership Program, the U.S. Department of State’s premier professional exchange program. As part of U.S. foreign policy, the program seeks to build mutual understanding between the U.S. and other nations through carefully designed professional visits to the U.S. by current or emerging leaders in government, politics, the media, education, the arts, business, and other key fields. With 20 other participants from 18 nations, Nelson’s 3-week tour took him to Washington, Atlanta, Denver, and Cleveland.

Upcoming Conferences

Attend a presentation by SSS staff or visit the SSS booth at these upcoming conferences.

NOTE: Names of SSS staff are underlined.

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<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FDA Inspections Summit</strong></td>
<td>Bethesda, MD</td>
<td>September 19–21</td>
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<td>• Presentation: Part 11 Compliance in the Cloud: Challenges and complexities of validated systems (Kenneth White)</td>
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<td><strong>The Carl Morris Honorary Symposium on Large-Scale Data Inference: Intersection of Statistics and Data Visualization</strong></td>
<td>Silver Spring, MD</td>
<td>October 18</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting</strong></td>
<td>San Francisco, CA</td>
<td>October 27–31</td>
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<td>• Poster: Navigating International IRB Partnerships: What You Need To Know (Janet Archer, Mwenda Kudumu, Robert Yates)</td>
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<td>• Poster: Trends in Socioeconomic Disparities in Preventative Care across the Lifespan (William Freeman, Atlang Mompe, Barbara Barton)</td>
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<td>• Poster: Electronic Prescribing Adoption Rates: Finds from the National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Reports (Barbara Barton, Atlang Mompe, William Freeman)</td>
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