



# The WREN Review

Wisconsin Research and Education Network

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## From the Director, Paul Smith, MD

Welcome to our first issue of the WREN Review. We have talked about restarting the tradition of a newsletter about WREN activities for a long time and it's great to finally see it in print. Thanks to Peggy O'Halloran for a great job of putting our first issue together.

In this issue you find updates about WREN projects, a report about our recent statewide research forum, a summary of our second WREN Steering Committee meeting, and an introduction to our new WREN staff.

We are in the process of dramatic changes in the level of funding available for WREN staff to support research and quality improvement projects by WREN clinicians and WREN practices. Some of the funding is from projects described in this newsletter and a large portion is from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. The leadership at the UW medical school has decided to invest in the infrastructure of WREN to expand our capacity to conduct research in Wisconsin communities. We will continue to add additional staff over the next few months and will be recruiting additional practices to participate in projects.

A special thanks to all the WREN clinicians that have participated in WREN projects over the years and a special welcome to all of our new WREN members. Without you, WREN would not exist.

We expect some growing pains as we go through this rapid expansion. Please contact us if we could do something better. These are exciting times for WREN and the future looks brighter than it ever has before. We have said in the past "If we just had the funding, we could do all these great things." Now we have the funding and it's time to deliver. Stay tuned.

-Paul

## WREN Staff Profiles

### Lisa Kietzer, PEEA

Lisa Kietzer, hired as a Practice Enhancement and Education Assistant with WREN in May, brings with her an educational and professional background in conducting research. She is a UW-Madison graduate with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and a Concentration in Analysis and Research. Professionally, she has spent time working as a project assistant at a market research firm, a research specialist on a UW-Madison Department of Psychiatry postpartum depression treatment study, and a study coordinator for the UW-Madison Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Through these experiences, Lisa has gained expertise in many aspects of study coordination including working with patients, clinic staff, IRB and regulatory staff, and administration. Describing her experiences working on these projects, Lisa says, "I appreciate what project implementation requires at all levels and I believe communication and a positive attitude are keys to success."

Lisa is originally from Lomira, WI, but has lived in Madison for the past ten years. In her free time she enjoys biking, walking, team sports, music, and travel.

### Peggy O'Halloran, PEEA

Like Lisa, Peggy O'Halloran began working as a Practice Enhancement and Education Assistant for WREN in early May.

Peggy obtained her undergraduate degree in biology from the UW-Madison, and completed her graduate education in Epidemiology at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health.

Peggy spent several years working as a research coordinator at the Division of Epidemiology at the U of M where she assisted School of Public Health faculty with writing grants and developing data collection

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## SAVE THE DATES!

Wisconsin Primary Care Research Forum  
November 1-2, 2007  
Wilderness Resort  
Wisconsin Dells

WREN Convocation  
May 1-2, 2008  
Madison

## WREN staff profiles, continued

tools for research projects. She has experience working as an evaluator of public health programs including the Minnesota Youth Tobacco Prevention Initiative and the STD and HIV prevention program at the Minnesota Department of Health.

Over the years, Peggy has enjoyed providing technical assistance in research, evaluation, and data collection for a range of organizations including county and state public health departments, American Indian tribal health organizations, community clinics and other community based organizations, and alternative schools. She is excited to begin providing similar support to WREN member clinicians and clinics as they implement research and QI projects.

### Mike Grasmick, WREN Coordinator

Mike Grasmick grew up in western Nebraska and attended undergraduate school at Colorado State University. He received his MS and PhD degrees at the University of Wisconsin, majoring in Plant Pathology with a minor in Plant Genetics. He completed two post-doctoral positions in biotechnology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.



From 1986 through 2001, Grasmick was Senior Scientist at Frito-Lay and was responsible for program management and collaborations including a partnership with Monsanto, directed toward the development of proprietary potato varieties with competitive, value-added traits. Grasmick established BioGenuity, LLC in 2003 with a mission to provide scientific oversight, market research, business development and project management to companies ranging from start up biotechnology companies to Fortune 50 Corporations.

Grasmick has been in the Department of Family Medicine of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health since 2003. As a research specialist, he managed federal, state and medical association research grants to study human subjects (both physicians and patients) for the purpose of translating results into established medical practice. Projects were diverse and included capturing patient data through computer interfaces, and evaluating computer tools to identify low health literacy in patients.

In June, 2007 Grasmick was promoted to WREN Coordinator and Manager. Grasmick will continue to build on the work he has accomplished to date with WREN, and looks forward to the new opportunities that this position presents.

## Changes at WREN

WREN continues to grow to better serve our membership. In early spring, four clinics were designated WREN full support clinics. WREN will continue to encourage individual clinicians to become WREN members, however, by supporting some clinics as full support clinics, WREN will have a pool of sites that are prepared to conduct ongoing research and quality improvement (QI) studies.

At full support clinics, one clinic staff person will dedicate ten percent of their time as a facilitator for QI and research activities. Also, full support clinics will have assistance from a WREN Practice Enhancement and Education Assistant (PEEA). The PEEA will meet regularly on-site with practice staff and clinicians to facilitate the research and QI process, identify problems, share best practices, and improve communication between member clinics and the central WREN office.

In May, WREN hired Lisa Kietzer and Peggy O'Halloran as PEEAs. Peggy is located at the UW Health Eau Claire Family Medicine Clinic and will support that clinic as well as several in the Tomah area with WREN projects. Lisa is located in Madison and serves clinics in south central Wisconsin. Later this summer, WREN will hire a third PEEA located in Milwaukee to work with clinics in southeastern Wisconsin.

Mike Grasmick, who has acted in the role of a research scientist at WREN since 2004, has assumed the duties of WREN Coordinator. In this position, Mike will continue to work with WREN investigators to manage the implementation of research studies. In addition, Mike will manage WREN growth, work to increase WREN's visibility, and provide direct supervision to the PEEA staff.

With increased staff support, the balance of 2007 promises to be a busy year at WREN as new projects are added and the infrastructure of the organization continues to expand.

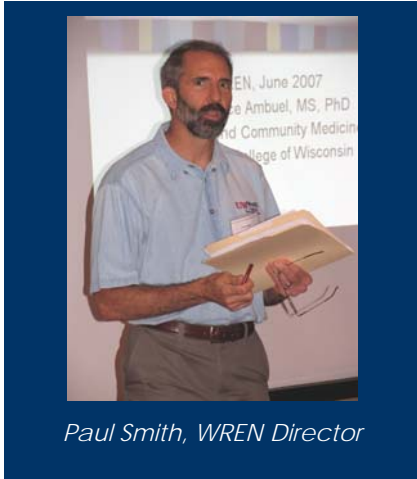


*Lisa Kietzer and Peggy O'Halloran at 2007 Research Forum*

## Second annual research forum a success

On June 15, more than 30 WREN members attended the 2007 Annual Wisconsin Primary Care Research Forum sponsored by WREN, the UW Department of Family Medicine, the Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians, and the Medical College of Wisconsin Department of Family and Community Medicine.

For the second year in a row, the event proved to



*Paul Smith, WREN Director*

be a successful forum for the presentation of Wisconsin-based primary care research and interaction of Wisconsin primary care researchers at all levels.

After an introduction from WREN Director Paul Smith, the forum began with

a morning plenary session by Bruce Ambuel, MD, who presented a series of questions central to developing an effective health care response to intimate partner violence. Following the morning session, breakout sessions addressed a wide range of topics including the quality of work life in healthcare organizations for family physicians, improving warfarin dosing using genetic testing, human factors and ergonomic considerations for patient safety in primary care, and more.

Later in the day, participants learned about the background and protocol of the Wisconsin Initiative to Promote Healthy Lifestyles (WIPHL) from project director Richard Brown, MD. This \$12.6 million, five-year grant aims to enhance delivery of alcohol and drug screening, brief intervention, referral, and

treatment (SBIRT) services in general healthcare settings. Following this plenary session, Dr. Brown provided an in-depth workshop on motivational interviewing, a main component of the WIPHL approach to promoting patient behavior change. Concurrently, in a workshop led by Dr. Christine Sinsky, participants heard an overview and discussed a successful model of structuring family practice office visits using a systems approach drawing on twelve strategies.

The research forum ended with sessions on the common cold, a practice based clinical trial testing the effect of azithromycin on asthma outcomes, and a new study of the proactive risk assessment of primary care of the elderly.

WREN plans to build on the success of the 2007 meeting by continuing to increase participation of medical students, residents, fellow, and academic and community physicians throughout the state as both presenters and attendees.

SAVE THE DATE!! The next research forum will be November 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> to coincide with the Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians Annual Meeting and CME event at the Wilderness Resort in Wisconsin Dells. WREN will issue a call for abstracts in August for individuals interested in presenting a paper or poster on completed research or works in progress on any topic relating to primary care research at the fall forum.



*Dr. Christine Sinsky*



*2007 Research Forum Participants*

## WREN Project updates

### Quality of Life and Depression as Determinants of Treatment Adherence in Hypertensive Patients

This project is funded by the American Heart Association with Leonelo Bautista, PhD in the UW Department of Population Health serving as principle investigator.

This study will evaluate patients newly diagnosed with hypertension and the relationship between medication compliance, depression and quality of life.

We will recruit 280 patients with newly-diagnosed hypertension who are starting antihypertensive medications. Patients will complete a series of self-administered questionnaires about quality of life and depression over a one-year period. At least four WREN practices will participate in this project.

### Complexity in Family Practice: a WREN Study

The relationship between time factors and medical error in primary care settings is not well understood. It is hypothesized that the competing demands of multiple patient problems and limited time have a significant effect on clinician mental workload, which in turn, may affect quality of care and propensity for medical error.

This pilot study will help to better define the relationships between encounter problem density (number of problems per unit time), clinician mental workload (using the NASA Task Load Index), perceived medical error, and quality indicators.

Thirty family practice clinicians, including WREN members, will be recruited to participate in this study. Each clinician will be asked to collect data on 20 routine adult patient visits over a four-week period, resulting in a target sample of 600 visits.

This study will serve as a basis for additional studies of the relationship between complexity and error in family practice and primary care, and may result in more efficient delivery of care with reduction in error and improvement in quality in the future.

Physician recruitment and training for this study is underway, with data collection beginning at initial sites this month.

### What are Important Health Issues for Low Literate Adults? A Focus Group Evaluation of Health Literacy Issues

Low literacy is a common problem in the United States with up to 50 percent of adults having inadequate or marginal literacy. Focus group interviews have been completed through community-based literacy councils in Madison, Racine and Oshkosh to better understand literacy-related barriers to health care. All focus group sessions have been audio-taped and are in process of transcription. Analysis will be completed in July in order to identify major and minor themes.

After the analysis, WREN will present its findings to each literacy council and interested subjects with an aim to help the literacy councils better assist their clients in overcoming the health care literacy barriers.

### AZMATICS

AZMATICS (AZithroMycin Asthma Trial In Community Settings) is a clinical effectiveness trial of the azalide acrolide azithromycin as adjunctive therapy for asthma conducted in primary care practices nationwide. This trial is based on an emerging body of evidence for chronic Chlamydia pneumoniae infection in asthma, and builds upon positive results of a pilot trial that was successfully conducted by WREN.

Eligible adults with asthma are randomized to weekly doses of study medication for 3 months, and they continue to report asthma symptoms, medication use, quality of life and related clinical measures via email and Internet until one year after randomization. Currently 40 study physicians throughout the US have been trained and are IRB-approved for enrolling patients. About 35 subjects have been randomized, with target enrollment at between 100-200 subjects.

Potentially eligible patients who are interested in learning more about AZMATICS may contact Dr. David Hahn, the PI, at dlhahn@wisc.edu or david.hahn@deancare.com.



### The awareness and use of nasal irrigation among family medicine physicians in Wisconsin

Chronic sino-nasal complaints are common, expensive, associated with significant impact on quality of life, and are often refractory to standard care. Nasal saline irrigation is a promising complementary therapy for a variety of sino-nasal conditions. Published reports identify nasal irrigation as effective, under-utilized, and call for increased use of nasal irrigation for chronic sinus conditions.

This study will assess awareness, prescribing patterns, and satisfaction with nasal irrigation among family medicine physicians in Wisconsin using an electronically distributed survey to approximately 1800 physicians who are members of WAFP and WREN. The survey will query subjects on their awareness, prescribing pattern and satisfaction with nasal irrigation. *Continued on page 5*

## WREN project updates continued

Study results could inform both practice guidelines and planning for further clinical trials. Reports of significant use and satisfaction by clinicians would suggest the need for larger and more robust clinical trials than currently exist, and would suggest that nasal irrigation be added to treatment algorithms for chronic sinus symptoms.

WREN staff will work with investigator David Rabago, MD to launch the online survey and will provide expertise in survey development. Data collection for this study will run through July, and results will be available for dissemination by early fall.

### Educating Physicians in the Value and Use of BMI to Reduce Overweight and Obesity

This trial was launched in April 2007 and is designed to test the significance of a body mass index (BMI) toolkit in application toward patient's weight control and obesity reduction. A variety of tools have been developed to assist physicians in the diagnosis and treatment of obesity, yet little is known about the effectiveness of these toolkits in practice.

This study will examine if family physicians review or use a toolkit called "Americans in Motion" (AIM), developed by the American Academy of Family Physicians. The study will assess the effect of the toolkit on physician attitudes and practices about using Body Mass Index to diagnosis or treat obesity. In addition, we will test survey response rate based on a chance to win an iPod or Palm.

The study population includes 1717 randomized members of the Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians and 140 randomized members of WREN. The trial will conclude in January 2008.

Determining how many physicians use the kit and which tools they find most useful will guide future efforts to disseminate obesity and patient activity level research findings and tools. Also, increased emphasis on diagnosis and effective treatment of obesity has the potential for substantial benefit to society.

### Wisconsin Initiative to Promote Health Lifestyles (WIPHL)

WIPHL is a federally funded screening and assistance program designed to address substance abuse across the state of Wisconsin. Numerous studies have shown that this program is simple and effective in early detection of at-risk or harmful substance abuse.

Dr. Rich Brown serves as the director of the project, and supervises a central WIPHL staff and a team of health educators to implement the program. At each clinic, health educators are supported by an implementation team made up of clinic staff, including someone who assists the clinic in conducting rapid QI cycles for the project. This process helps to quickly identify program

barriers and trouble shoot methods for improving program implementation. WREN Practice Enhancement and Education Assistants (PEEAs) serve as QI Coordinators for eight WIPHL sites.

In just a few short months, the program has succeeded in hiring and training all central and health educator staff and has begun to provide services at 20 clinics across the state. In May alone, 14 clinics screened more than 1600 patients. Thirty-four percent of those patients scored positive for at-risk alcohol or drug use. Over the next five years, the clinics are expected to provide screening to 100,000 patients ages 18 or older.



*Dr. Rich Brown presenting at 2007 WREN Research Forum*

## WREN membership drive

In July, WREN staff will contact all current WREN members by email to verify and update 2007 membership files. Members will be asked to provide some demographic information and indicate their level of WREN membership, either general or affiliate.

General WREN members pay dues of \$50 annually and have full voting rights. Affiliate members do not pay dues and do not have voting rights. All WREN members, both general and affiliate receive regular WREN communications in the form of the quarterly newsletter and updates about new projects, are invited to participate in the annual research forum, and are expected to complete periodic WREN surveys.

For individuals who are not on the membership list and are interested in joining WREN, please contact Mike Grasmick at [michael.grasmick@fammed.wisc.edu](mailto:michael.grasmick@fammed.wisc.edu) for more information.

## WREN Steering Committee Meeting Summary: June 15, 2007

WREN is alive and kicking with new funding, new staff and several new projects.

WREN has received Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) funding for the development of WREN infrastructure. New staff appointments are: Mike Grasmick, WREN Coordinator, Lisa Kietzer, WREN Practice Enhancement and Education Assistant (PEEA) and Peggy O'Halloran, WREN PEEA. Both Peggy and Lisa started May 1 and will be supporting the Wisconsin Initiative for Healthy Lifestyles (WIPHL), the Complexity of Family Practice and the Newly-Diagnosed Hypertension Relationship to Medication Compliance and Depression projects. Maureen Smith has arranged to make additional CTSA money available to WREN and has said, "Investing in WREN (now) makes a lot of sense".

The status of on-going and new projects was reviewed. Highlights include the completion of the Pharmaceutical Representative study and completion of the focus group study phase of the Healthcare Literacy project. New projects include: Phase II diabetes QI, Hypertension/Depression, contracting with other PBRNs to do influenza surveillance and a nasal irrigation survey. In addition, five federal grant applications have been submitted this year by WREN or WREN collaborators.

WREN and the Wisconsin Network for Health Research

(WINHR) are linked through CTSA funding with WREN being the clinical arm of the University of Wisconsin. WINHR is a new collaboration between UW, Marshfield Clinic, Aurora Health Care and Gunderson Clinic to conduct translational and dissemination research. There may be additional funding for WREN to conduct projects with WINHR.

Ideas were presented for a WREN Advisory Committee. We want to have the Advisory Committee composed of people that can see the "big picture" in healthcare, are prominent and respected in their community and represent a cross-section of Wisconsin. WREN will develop a list of potential committee members and submit to the DFM Departmental Chair. Possible pools for the Advisory Committee are: clergy, legislators, community foundations, insurance people, county boards, county health departments and non profit groups.

We will become more organized with new proposed projects in making it a formal process to determine project feasibility and sufficient funding. Our strong suite is to provide a linkage between ideas and researchers. A suggestion was that we find a facilitator and spend a half day at the next WREN meeting discussing our strategic plan for research direction.

The next Steering Committee meeting will be by teleconference at 7AM on Sept 18<sup>th</sup> with Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> as a back up.

### *WREN Steering Committee*

*Dennis Baumgartner*  
*General Member Representative, Steering Committee Chairperson*

*Jim Davis*  
*UW Department of Family Medicine, Chair*

*Rod Erickson*  
*General Member Representative*

*Kari Lathrop-Capaul*  
*General Member Rep. and Steering Committee Chairperson Elect*

*Mary Beth Plane*  
*UW Department of Family Medicine Research Coordinator*

*Ken Schellhase*  
*MCW Department of Family and Community Medicine Representative*

*Eric Schoville*  
*UW Department of Family Medicine Information Services Representative*

*Paul Smith*  
*WREN Director*

*Jon Temte*  
*UW Department of Family Medicine Representative and Steering Committee Secretary*

*Paul Treder*  
*General Member Representative*

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