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## ACORN Awarded Prescription for Health (Round 2) Funding From Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



In July 2005, ACORN was awarded a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation under Round 2 of the Prescription for Health Initiative. Nine other networks across the nation also received funding. Each network has been funded to conduct a study that employs innovative and practical interventions to improve patients' diet, exercise, smoking, and alcohol habits. The Principal Investigator is Stephen H. Woolf, MD, MPH. Project Director is Alex Krist, MD, [ahkrist@mail1.vcu.edu](mailto:ahkrist@mail1.vcu.edu)

This Prescription for Health study builds on the MyHealthyLiving website as one facet of a multi-armed intervention. ACORN's unique study uses an electronic health record (EHR) to help clinicians rapidly identify patients with unhealthy behaviors and quickly refer them to one of the options for intensive counseling outside the office. For a period of 5 weeks, enrolled patients were eligible for up to nine-months of 1) group classes 2) telephone counseling, or 3) computer-based electronic counseling plus or minus the MyHealthyLiving website, and 4) usual care from the primary care provider. These resources were provided at no cost to patients. Unhealthy behaviors identified were being overweight, smoking and risky drinking.

Thanks to Dr. Charles Frazier and the IT team at Riverside Physician Associates (RPA). Their work with the Centricity® electronic medical record system made it possible to complete this intervention.

The entire intervention was designed to take about 30 seconds to 2 minutes of the provider's time.

We hope to demonstrate that this innovative intervention not only promotes healthy behaviors but is feasible and sustainable in primary care. Accomplishing these goals requires a delicate balancing act--deploying evidence-based strategies that are effective in life-style change but limit demands for new staff, training, or time. We strike this balance by harnessing effective technologies and tools and by leveraging resources out-side the practice. If our intervention helps patients change unhealthy behaviors and is appealing to ordinary practices, we envision the potential for widespread adoption and substantial population health benefits.

Surveys are being fielded to test the effect of the intervention. Practice and patient interviews are being completed (by Dr.'s Devers and Mazmanian) to

get further insight into how the intervention worked in day-to-day practice and how it may be improved.

RPA practices that participated in the study:

- **Bruton Avenue Family Practice, Newport News**
- **Commonwealth Family Practice, Newport News**
- **Eagle Harbor Primary Care, Carrollton**
- **Elizabeth Lakes Family Practice, Hampton**
- **Hilton Family Practice, Newport News**
- **Mathews Medical Center, Mathews**
- **Mercury West Medical Center, Hampton**
- **Riverside Family Medicine, Newport News**
- **Williamsburg Medical Arts: Family Practice, Williamsburg**

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Steven H. Woolf, MD, MPH, Professor in the Department of Family Medicine, is the Principal Investigator in a two year project, Patient-Reported Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening

“Colorectal cancer (CRC) is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths

in the United States. An estimated 148,610 new cases of CRC and 55,170 deaths will occur in 2006<sup>1</sup>.” Screening for all Americans 50 and older is uniformly recommended by at least one of four screening options: (fecal occult blood testing [FOBT], flexible sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy, or

## National Cancer Institute Funds Colorectal Cancer Screening Barriers Study

double-contrast barium enema [DCBE]. A major factor limiting screening effectiveness is the low proportion of the eligible population that undergoes screening. Understanding the relative importance of screening determinants is essential to

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## Colorectal Cancer Screening Barriers Study

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prioritize potential public health, clinical, and policy strategies to enhance CRC screening. The primary aim of this study is to describe the factors that patients identify as their reason(s) for not undergoing screening for CRC and the relative importance they assign to each factor.

Resa M. Jones, MPH, PhD (see new ACORN collaborators) has accepted the position of Project Director for this study. She has completed a systematic review to up-date previous summaries of this literature. Further, unstructured input has been solicited from approximately 1000 patients in an open-ended question on a survey. Patients surveyed are from:

- **Family Medicine at Nelson Clinic, Richmond**
- **Fairfax Family Medicine Center, Fair Oaks, Fairfax**

The investigators, Drs. Devers and Kuzel, have conducted focus groups and cognitive interviews to gather further open-ended input and feedback on a draft fixed-response



postal survey. Patients from the following Virginia practices volunteered to participate in focus groups:

- **Fairfax Family Practice Center, Fair Oaks**
- **Family Medicine at Nelson Clinic, Richmond**
- **Front Royal Family Practice, Front Royal**
- **Hayes E. Willis South Richmond Health Center, Richmond**
- **King & Queen Family Practice, St. Stephen**

Finally, investigators will field the finalized postal CRC screening barrier survey with individual patients recruited from twelve practices across Virginia. This survey, of approximately 6,100 adults will ask participants to rank the relative importance

**Colorectal cancer (CRC) is the second leading cause of cancer-related death in the United States. An estimated 148,610 new cases of CRC and 55,170 deaths will occur in 2006<sup>1</sup>**

of potential barriers to CRC screening. The ranking will undergo statistical analysis to generate a profile of the distribution of barriers among primary care patients and to contrast differences in barrier profiles among patients within specific subgroups.

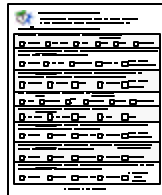
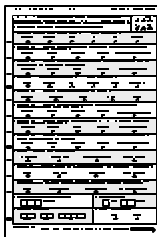
Institutional Review Boards have approved the protocols, and practice recruitment is ongoing.

The primary outcome of this study is a profile of CRC screening barriers that patients identify in their responses to the postal survey.

<sup>1</sup>American Cancer Society. Cancer facts and figures, 2006. Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society, 2006

## Pilot Testing of Postal Version of ACORN's Health Assessment Survey

The HAS instrument has been transformed from a legal sized, double-sided dense survey to a survey booklet of 4 pages in larger print. It has been used to collect that portion of the longitudinal database that is patient-provided. Originally, the survey was distributed and collected in doctors' offices by staff members, which proved unwieldy as practices wrestled with many competing demands.



With funding from the Massey Cancer, Drs. Stephen Rothemich MD, MS & Diane Wilson EdD MS RD implemented a pilot study testing the feasibility of mailing surveys to patients. Using a sequential mailing method, surveys accompanied by cover letters of invitation, consent information and a postage-paid preaddressed return envelopes were mailed to over 2500 patients in two practices. While not all of the analysis is complete, preliminary work reveals a return rate of 56%, which is higher than optimistic predictions of 50%.

## School of Medicine Honors Outstanding Research Faculty



On June 22, 2006, two ACORN researchers were recognized at a general faculty meeting for their research accomplishments. Dr. Jan F. Chlebowski, Associate Dean of Graduate Education and Professor of Biochemistry presented Robert E. Johnson, PhD of Biostatistics & Family Medicine for Longevity of Continuous Research Support. Stephen F. Rothemich, MD, MS was cited for his first extramural funding.

**KUDOS!**



In 2002, ACORN received a Prescription for Health grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, through which a website individually tailored to a patient's health behavior needs was designed and tested, [www.MyHealthyLiving.net](http://www.MyHealthyLiving.net). Dr. Alexander H. Krist served as the project director for that study, which received significant national attention for ACORN and the Northern Virginia practices involved in that study:

**Broadlands Family Practice, Ashburn**

**Fairfax Family Practice Center, Fair Oaks**

**Herndon Family Medicine**

**Prince William Family Medicine**

**Town Center Family Medicine**

**Vienna Family Medicine**

**Thank you**

Drawing on that experience, and engaging the same primary care practices, Dr. Krist applied for further funding, and went on to develop a preventive care website described in the next article.



### Preventive Care Website to Promote Primary and Secondary Prevention of Cancers

Dr. Alexander H. Krist, who practices at Fairfax Family Practice Center, Fair Oaks, in Fairfax, Virginia, and serves as an investigator with ACORN has completed a study funded by the Massey Cancer Center at Virginia Commonwealth University. He proposed development of a website for patients with scheduled health maintenance visits. Those patients were directed to access the "MyPreventiveCare" website, complete a questionnaire, and print out a report of indicated cancer screening to discuss with the doctor on the visit.

Results of this study have been published and are available at Ann of Fam Med Mar-Apr; 4(2): 148-52 or online at <http://www.annfammed.org/>



**CONGRATULATIONS!**

Dr. Alexander H. Krist earned his Master of Public Health (MPH) degree from Johns Hopkins University in May 2006. His thesis was entitled "A Preventive Care Website to Promote Primary and Secondary Prevention of Common Cancers". Dr. Krist was inducted into the Delta Omega Honor Society during his program.

## Carole Hale Nominated for Prestigious Dorris Douglas Budd Award

Research Specialist, Carole B. Hale was nominated by the Department of Family Medicine for the Dorris Douglas Budd Award, which recognizes outstanding administrative and office support staff who enhance the image and mission of VCU and the VCU Health System.

In support of her nomination Dr. Anton "Tony" Kuzel, Professor and Department Chairman wrote, "She comes to work every day with a smile and a positive attitude that lifts everyone's spirits". In his letter of support, Research Director

Dr. Steven H. Woolf said "I have never encountered a more capable individual to manage the logistics of department operations."

Network Director, Dr. Stephen Rothemich wrote that Carole "has consistently embodied the attributes of exceptional work habits, reliability and judgment, initiative and resourcefulness, service-oriented interactions with others, commitment to our institution, and professional growth that are the hallmarks of prior recipients of this award." Carole was on

vacation when the award was announced: she was an honored finalist. Family Medicine researchers and colleagues all agree she is our "goodwill ambassador".



## 33<sup>rd</sup> NAPCRG Annual Meeting

ACORN had seven members attend the 2005 NAPCRG conference in Québec City October 15 – 18. Department Chairman Anton "Tony" Kuzel, MD, MHPE, Research Director Steven Woolf, MD, MPH, ACORN Director Stephen "Steve" Rothemich, MD, MS, ACORN Biostatistician, Robert "Bob" Johnson, PhD, Investigator Alexander "Alex" Krist, MD, Riverside Research Director Jacob "Jay" E. Jones, MD, Shenandoah Research Director J. William "Bill" Kerns, MD and

ACORN Research Coordinator Sharon K. Flores, MS were among the attendees. Five papers were presented as follows:

Krist AH, Woolf SH, Johnson RE, Krist AH, Woolf SH, Johnson RE, Kerns JW: [A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Web-Based Decision Aid to Promote Shared Decision-Making for Prostate Cancer Screening.](#)

Jones, Jacob: [Comparison of Glomerular Filtration Rate Equations for the Measurement of Longitudinal Renal Disease Outcomes.](#)

Kerns JW, Krist AH, Johnson RE, Woolf SH: [Are Residents as Competent as Faculty Physicians in Sharing Prostate Cancer Screening Decisions?](#)

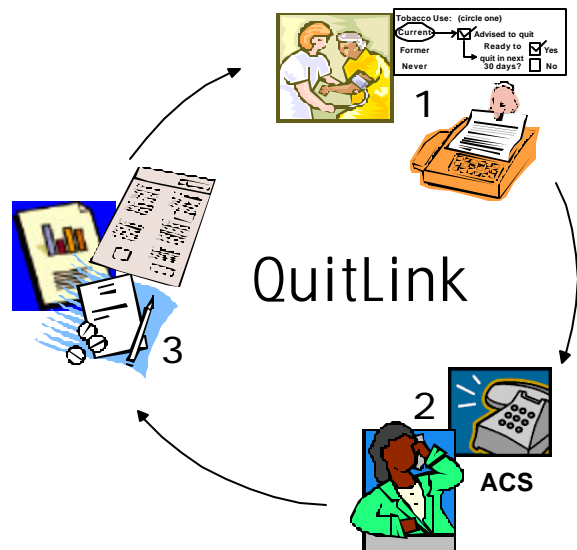
Rothemich SF, Woolf SH, Johnson RE, Burgett AE, Flores SF, Marsland DW, Ahluwalia J: [Checking Smoking Status as a Vital Sign: A Cluster Randomized Trial of its Effect on Counseling.](#)

Woolf, SH, Krist AH, Johnson RE, Wilson DB, Rothemich SF, Norman G: [A Practice-Sponsored Website to Help Patients Pursue Healthy Behaviors: An ACORN Study](#)

## QuitLink Study

Stephen F. Rothemich, MD, MS Principal Investigator of this AHRQ funded study, has finished the data collection phase of the study and is in analysis. Reports are due to participating practices in fall 2006. Appreciation to participating practices:

- Ashland Medical Center
- Aylett Medical Center
- Bowles, Bowles & Short Family Physicians, Sandy Hook
- Cold Harbor Family Medicine, Mechanicsville
- Green Medical Center, Richmond
- Huguenot Primary Care, Midlothian
- Laburnum Medical Center, Mechanicsville
- Memorial Medical Center, Mechanicsville
- Midlothian Family Practice, Inc. - Watercove
- Midlothian Family Practice, Inc. - Powhatan
- Midlothian Primary Care, Ltd.
- Powhatan Family Physician
- Richmond Family Practice
- Tidewater Physician Multispecialty Group: West Point Family Practice
- Titus, Hendrix, Turner, Pahle & Christenen, Richmond
- Village Green Family Medicine, PC, Midlothian



## New ACORN Collaborators



**Resa Jones,  
M.P.H., Ph.D.**

[rmjones2@vcu.edu](mailto:rmjones2@vcu.edu)

Resa Jones is an Assistant Professor; with joint appointments in the Department of Epidemiology and Community Health and the Massey Cancer Center. Dr. Jones's research interests focus on cancer prevention and control, especially community-based interventions to increase cancer screening rates, and observational studies to assess screening behaviors in general and in underserved populations. Dr. Jones received her master's in public health and doctorate degrees from the University of Minnesota. Before joining VCU, she was an evaluation fellow with the American Cancer Society and a pre-doctoral trainee with a fellowship in cancer epidemiology supported by a National Research Service Award from the National Cancer Institute. Additionally, she was the project director of a population-based community intervention to increase colorectal cancer screening rates in Minnesota. In addition to her current research on-

methodological approaches to assessing colorectal cancer screening, Dr. Jones is the project director on ACORN's NCI-funded grant assessing patient-reported barriers to colorectal cancer screening. She also collaborates with faculty in other departments at VCU including Human Genetics, Internal Medicine, and Psychology.



**Paul E.  
Mazmanian,  
Ph.D.**

[pemazmzn@vcu.edu](mailto:pemazmzn@vcu.edu)

Paul Mazmanian is a professor with a joint appointment in the Department of Family Medicine and Epidemiology and Community Health. He serves as Associate Dean for Continuing Professional Development and Evaluation Studies School of Medicine. For eight years he was chairman of the Master of Public Health Curriculum Committee, leading the program to its first successful academic accreditation. Dr. Mazmanian's research interests include learning and change in physician performance. From 1993 to 1997, he was a member of the

Study Section on Health Services Research Dissemination, Agency for Health Care Policy and Research. In 2000, he served as a consultant to the National Research Council, Institute of Medicine, in its efforts to assess prevention and treatment programs associated with violence in families. From August 2004 through February 2005, he consulted with the National Cancer Institute (NCI), helping with NCI's efforts to expedite the translation of new knowledge into clinical solutions. As Editor of the *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions*, Dr. Mazmanian worked with the Cochrane Collaboration to produce a 2006 issue exploring theory and practice in knowledge translation. Dr. Mazmanian provides insight on the organization and evaluation of continuing medical education and implications of ACORN work on educating community practitioners. He assists with qualitative data collection and analysis. He is instrumental in developing dissemination products that can provide continuing education opportunities to primary care health professionals, including e-curricula and distance education (videoconferencing) options.

# Welcome!