



American College of Epidemiology

President's Letter

January 2005



As I begin the fifth month of my term, I would like to summarize changes in Committee leadership during the last few months and to identify priorities to pursue on behalf of the College membership. During my term a key priority is to address the downshift in government and private industry spending on epidemiological research. The College should underscore the value of epidemiology in improving health and quality of life through scientific discovery and application, study design and methods, development of large

consortia to address hypotheses more conclusively, and leadership in key aspects of genetic and molecular epidemiological studies. Many members of ACE have expressed unease about the changing composition of important scientific review committees, and vetting of expert committee appointments to exclude some of the most highly qualified researchers because of personal or political views. The College should partner with other epidemiological and scientific research societies to define and promote expert and objective scientific review.

In addition, the College should work closely with other epidemiological, scientific and clinical research entities to provide advice and guidance to Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) in the U.S. and abroad, registries of health data, and academic, private, and governmental agencies to insure privacy, confidentiality, and protection from harm for human subjects while at the same time seeking approaches for expediting IRB, registry, academic institution, private or government agency approvals for access to records for epidemiological research. The College is the only organization of epidemiologists that has joined with the American Association of Medical Colleges to provide feedback and constructive advice to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on minimizing adverse impacts from HIPAA on medical, clinical, and epidemiological research.

ACE should also be in the forefront to promote rapid reporting of new epidemiological findings and clear communication of results and their interpretation to both the scientific community and the general public. Our Annual Scientific Meetings underscore the importance of this through special workshops (in risk communication, for example), pertinent breakfast round-tables, and in targeted sessions (such as the well-attended session with editors of epidemiology journals in 2004, which will be expanded in 2005).

Calendar of Events

January

Annual Dues are due!

June 27- 30

[SER-CSEB Joint Meeting](#)

September 17 - 20

[ACE Annual Meeting](#)

Finally, the College should play a defining role in shaping the lifetime education needs of epidemiologists. Past graduate education models for epidemiology must expand and evolve to meet current requirements for a broader range of epidemiological skills. Increasingly recognized are a broader range of options for initial education and training. It has also become clear that education and training does not end after completion of a post-doctoral fellowship, but must continue throughout one's career in epidemiology. An important requirement during all phases of graduate education, post-doctoral training, and the initial years in one's initial job(s) is mentoring to provide scientific and career guidance and direction. ACE should be proactively involved in defining requirements and developing new graduate education approaches, initiatives that were spearheaded for several years by former president Jon Samet.

These and many other College initiatives would not be possible without the impressive and generous commitment of time and energy by the hardworking Board of Directors, Committee Chairs, and committee members. New members of the Board of Directors, who have all taken on numerous responsibilities, include: Adolfo Correa and Irene Hall (both of the Centers for Disease Control), Robert McKeown (University of South Carolina), Roberta Ness (University of Pittsburgh), and Ed Trapido (National Cancer Institute). The College is indebted to the Committee Chairs who have recently stepped down and welcomes their replacements including: former Education Committee Co-Chairs Patricia Hartge and Rosanne McTyre, replaced by current Co-Chairs Faith Davis and Ed Trapido; former Policy Committee Chair Brian Strom, replaced by current Chair Roberta Ness; former Communications Committee Chair Carlos Camargo, Jr., replaced by current Chair Dan Lackland; former Finance Committee Chair Jim Collins, replaced by current Chair Denise Oleske; former Minority Affairs Committee Chair Vickie Mays, replaced by current Chair Elena Yu, and Publications Committee Chair from which I stepped down and have been replaced by current Chair Melissa Bondy and Vice-Chair Jim Gurney. To prepare for smooth transitions when Chairs step down and to promote increased liaison between committees, Vice Chairs are being appointed for larger committees, such as the Membership Committee, whose Chair Lorann Stallones, is being assisted by the new Vice-Chair, Jonine Bernstein. The College also owes a huge thanks to the long-term committee members who have recently stepped down, and looks forward to the contributions of the large number of newly appointed committee members. The strength and vibrancy of the College directly reflects the efforts of all of these individuals. In this and subsequent newsletters, a few of the many important Committee contributions will be highlighted.

Top Stories

ACE ByLaws Changes Approved

The membership of ACE approved the recent proposed ByLaws changes by an overwhelming margin. Some of these changes include new membership eligibility for master's trained epidemiologists, simplification of membership status (no longer distinguishing members from the Americas and overseas members), addition of an associate member to the Board and reduction in the length of committee membership terms to 3 years. For a detailed version of the changes to the ByLaws, visit the <http://www.acepidemiology2.org/PastBylawsAmendments.htm>.

The major changes are summarized.

New eligibility of masters'-trained epidemiologists for membership in ACE.

Newly eligible for College membership are experienced and productive masters'-trained epidemiologists. Prior to adopting the ByLaws changes, masters'-trained epidemiologists had been excluded based solely on academic achievements. Because the Mission statement of ACE stated that the College was established "to develop criteria for professional recognition of epidemiologists and to address their

professional concerns” and specific goals of the College include development and maintenance of “an active membership base...representing all aspects of epidemiology,” the College was limiting membership to some epidemiologists who might otherwise have qualified for membership based on “demonstrated sustained experience and productivity in the practice of epidemiology.” The Admissions Committee is now prepared to review applications of masters'-trained epidemiologists, having received substantial guidance and several vignettes. Examples of the types of experience that qualify applicants are: 10 or more publications in peer-reviewed journals, authoring widely circulated data reports, such as statewide summaries of incidence or mortality, leading or serving in an important role on several epidemiological studies, management of other epidemiologists, service on scientific advisory panels, development of epidemiology programs in such areas as disease surveillance or occupational epidemiology, grant writing, teaching in a university's department of epidemiology or public health, and many other front-line contributions. The College recognizes that important contributions to epidemiology should not be limited by academic qualifications, and encourages qualified masters'-trained applicants to apply for membership.

Other changes to ACE membership status.

Membership categories have been simplified to delete distinctions between overseas members and fellows from those who reside in the Americas. Overseas members and fellows are now entitled to all privileges of membership including service as officers, directors, or chairpersons of committees. Members or Fellows can apply for Emeritus status on their 60th rather than their 65th birthday. To encourage lapsed Members or Fellows to rejoin as active members, the lapsed Member/Fellow are no longer required to pay lapsed dues, but can reactivate by paying dues for the year he/she is reactivating his/her membership.

Associate member to be added to ACE Board of Directors.

To promote additional involvement of Associate Members (those who are pursuing academic and professional training in epidemiology) in the College and to encourage interactions between Fellows, Members, and Associate Members, an Associate Member can now be elected to a non-voting position on the Board of Directors. This change is consistent with recent inclusion of Associate Members on several College committees (e.g., Communications and Membership Committees). Creation of a position on the Board to be held by an Associate Member should increase active involvement of Associate Members in the College. It is hoped that the Associate Member will represent his or her peers, facilitate timely communication of important issues to Associate Members, and provide a spokesperson for concerns of Associate Members to the Board. Candidates for the position on the Board must be Associate Members in good standing for at least one year before election, must remain eligible to be an Associate Member during the full year of the term, and must apply to run for Board position. Applications, which should be submitted to Olson Management by May 1, 2005, must include: sponsorship by a Fellow of the College, a resume, and a written statement of the candidate's goals in seeking the position. The Executive Committee will identify and present the top three candidates to the Board at the Annual Meeting in 2005, and the position filled by the candidate receiving a majority vote of the Board of Directors. The term of office (2005-2006) will start at the close of the Annual Meeting in 2005, and will conclude at the close of the subsequent Annual Meeting. Since the 2006 Annual Meeting will be superceded by the 2006 Congress, the term will end at the close of the Congress. Candidates applying for the Associate Board Member position for the 2006-2007 term must submit applications to Olson Management by February 1, 2006, and will be selected from the top candidates during the Board Meeting at the 2006 Congress; the term will commence at the close of the 2006 Congress and will conclude at the close of the Annual Meeting in 2007.

Committee membership term reduced.

To encourage service on College Committees, membership has now been reduced to three years (from five years originally). Committee members who wish to serve more than one 3-year term may request

renewal by the Chair. Membership on the Awards Committee has been modified to include five Members or Fellows.

Reduced time from proposal of by-laws amendments to vote and E-mail voting now possible.

To expedite voting on Bylaw amendments, the elapsed time from proposal of amendment changes to voting has been reduced from six months to two months. Voting is permitted by E-mail as well as regular mail ballots.

Changes to ByLaws.

College Members/Fellows are encouraged to submit ByLaws amendments when felt to be necessary and important. Following submission of ByLaw amendments, the steps include review by the Board of Directors, modifications for clarity, a vote by the Board on the ByLaws changes, notification of ByLaws amendments to the membership, a two-month period for consideration by the membership, official balloting of the College membership on the proposed ByLaws amendments, and submission of ballots by the membership by E-mail or regular mail. It should be noted that there is substantial discussion and consideration by the Board of any ByLaws amendments, and the process requires considerable effort. The current process for amending the ByLaws reflects a balance between maintenance of the key features of the College which have withstood the test of time while providing a level of flexibility permitting the College to evolve with the needs of the field of epidemiology.

Impressions of the 2004 ACE Annual Meeting

by Sunday Clark, MPH (Associate Member)

From a student's perspective, attending the ACE Annual Meeting is not only a great opportunity to be exposed to epidemiology research it also is a great way to observe the application of epidemiology beyond the research process.

I was glad I went to the ACE Annual Meeting because I was able to meet leaders in the field and hear their perspective on how to use our research findings to improve public health, and on how current events affect epidemiology – and vice versa.

For example, implementation of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) has had quite an impact on the field and ACE has worked hard to educate its members on this issue. They also have testified on behalf of the specialty and tried to lessen the burden on epidemiologists who are simply trying to do their job. The Policy Forum this year – “Confidentiality, HIPAA and What's a Researcher to Do?” – brought together a diverse panel that allowed for a thorough discussion of the issues surrounding HIPAA. I believe that the presentations, questions from the audience, and discussion encouraged the attendees to reflect on how the regulations affect their own work. The speakers challenged us to think about what we can do as individuals, and as an organization, to overcome the problems that many researchers are experiencing due to HIPAA.

This education and advocacy role distinguishes ACE from other more research-oriented epidemiology organizations. ACE truly is dedicated to education and advocacy for its members as they promote public health. Thus, the Annual Meeting is an environment where students can learn about the influence of epidemiologic research beyond the study results, and about our role in helping to shape policy based on this research. The desire to create change (based on epidemiologic findings) is a major focus of the College and was evident throughout the Annual Meeting.

While the “professional” emphasis of the College is clear, the Annual Meeting is enhanced by the

presentation of scientifically sound research on a broad array of topics. If you didn't attend, I think you missed out on excellent scientific presentations, and the chance to speak with investigators to learn more about their work. The Annual Meeting also is a great place to discuss your own research ideas. In sum, the Annual Meeting provides a unique opportunity for attendees to benefit directly from the depth and breadth of knowledge of the ACE membership.

ACE 2005 Meeting in the Big Easy

by John Acquavella

In 1728, Sieur de Bienville and John Law founded a new French city named for the Duc d'Orleans on the confines now known as the French Quarter. At the time, the founders were roundly criticized for siting a city among swampy undergrounds. Many predicted the city would simply be washed away. Yet today, New Orleans is a vibrant city known for a gentle and relaxed pace of life, for jazz, for having 37,000 hotel rooms in the metropolitan area, and for being among the most popular convention venues. New Orleans is also a city where medical care disparities and environmental pollution are important social issues. Against this backdrop, the American College of Epidemiology is pleased to hold its 2005 meeting: Epidemiology and Advocacy in the Real World. In keeping with the College's support for epidemiology students, 10 travel stipends will be awarded to PhD students to come and present posters on their PhD research. Details of the stipend award process will be available soon.

The meeting program will include three plenary sessions illustrative of the impact of advocacy on epidemiology. They are:

Influenza: Epidemiology, Molecular Characteristics, Vaccination, and Policy Issues

Environmental Risk Factors and Stakeholder Groups: Breast Cancer in Long Island and Gulf War Syndrome

Epidemiology and the Courts

A number of special event are also planned including a varied slate of pre-meeting educational workshops, a "meet the editors" seminar, breakfast roundtables chaired by leaders in our field, a debate on political interference in epidemiology, and, of course, the annual awards luncheon.

The annual ACE meetings are known for their relaxed and gentle pace, for interactions between epidemiologists at all stages of their careers, and for the myriad opportunities that are afforded for attendees to participate actively in all aspects of the meeting. The organizing committee has done their best to organize a relaxed and gentle meeting around provocative topics. We hope to see you September 17-20 in the Big Easy.

Congress of Epidemiology 2006

by Betsy Foxman, Chair, Program Committee

From June 21 through 24, 2006, epidemiologists representing the breadth of areas addressed by epidemiology will meet together at the Seattle Westin Hotel. The 2006 Congress is sponsored, co-sponsored and supported by 19 national and international organizations that have epidemiology as a primary focus. The plenary sessions will address both the breadth and depth of epidemiology: working titles are "Meeting Public Health Problems with Epidemiology", "Epidemiology and Public Health Policy", and "Global Health Present and Future," with examples ranging from cervical cancer to depression to tuberculosis.

In addition, each co-sponsoring organization will be presenting a symposium reflecting their focus area, and other groups and individuals are encouraged to submit symposium proposals. Nine hundred and sixty poster presentations, pre-meeting workshops and special events for students are planned. This is a large undertaking, and the program committee welcomes assistance! Volunteers to assist in reviewing abstracts, poster judging, planning breakfast roundtables and social events are welcome. For more information, abstract deadlines, to submit a symposium topic, or to volunteer to assist in Congress planning see our website: <http://www.epicongress2006.org/> .

In the News

ACE Award Winners

We are pleased to announce the prize winners at the Annual Meeting. Manning Feinleib from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and former head of the National Center for Health Statistics won the Lilienfeld Award. He is now recognized as a lifetime Honorary Fellow of the College. The Student Prize Award went to Richard Kwok from the University of North Carolina School of Public Health. A Distinguished Service Award was given to Victor Schoenbach, also of UNC.

The poster winners are as follows: First Place - Joanne S. Colt, Second Place - Julie E Dunn, Third Place - Sandro Galea, Best Student - Yvette C. Cozier

Congratulations!

From the Board of Directors

The ACE Board of Directors, at its September meeting, agreed to collaborate on a proposal regarding research integrity. See Committees, below in this newsletter, to learn more about the Project on Integrity of Epidemiologic Research (PIER).

From the Council of State & Territorial Epidemiologists

A national effort is underway to define competencies for public health applied epidemiologists. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) have convened an expert panel to define competencies for applied epidemiology from mid- to senior-level governmental public health epidemiologists. These competencies may be useful to inform public health practices of other professionals as well. This panel has representation from state and local health agencies, academia, private industry, and from across CDC.

The panel, convened by Denise Koo, M.D., M.P.H. from the Office of Workforce and Career Development at CDC and Matt Boulton, M.D., M.P.H. from the School of Public Health at the University of Michigan (representing CSTE as a co-convenor), first met on October 14-15, 2004. Gus Birkhead, M. D., M.P.H. of the New York State Department of Health and Kathleen Miner, PhD., M.P.H., C.H.E.S. from the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University co-chair the expert panel.

The panel began by examining existing public health and epidemiologic competencies which had been mapped to the Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice (<http://www.phf.org/Link.htm>) competency framework for public health practice. Currently, the panel is refining these further

and identifying those competencies needed for the effective practice of epidemiology in the governmental public health setting. The goal is to develop a set of instructional competencies that map to workforce competencies. The draft competency set will be vetted widely throughout the public health community and will be available for comment in early spring 2005. In late spring, as part of the process, CSTE plans to conduct a validation study with practicing epidemiologists prior to the final revision, dissemination, and use in the field.

Please go to: ww.cste.org for information about the timeline, process, and draft competencies. Comments are encourage and welcomed. CDC and CSTE are aware of a complementary effort by the Association of Schools of Public Health to define core competencies for all MPH graduates, including core competencies in epidemiology, and have agreed with ASPH to keep in touch throughout the process. Two panelists are participating in both the CDC/CSTE effort and the ASPH effort, which will facilitate communication and sharing of drafts.

Committees

Ethics & Standards of Practice Committee

by Robert McKeown

Submitted Grant Proposal in Response to RFA

We are all familiar with the procedures for protection of human subjects in research. Most of us also know much of the background and rationale for those regulations and processes; and, I hope, we are all committed to the ethical principles that underlie them, and feel an obligation to act responsibly in accordance with them. Less clear are the issues related to protecting the integrity of research. Some cases of egregious violations of research integrity have received widespread publicity, but there is considerable uncertainty, and some debate, about whether these cases represent aberrations or the tip of an iceberg of widespread departures from ethical practice. Nor is it clear how researchers themselves perceive the issues, the extent to which practice conforms to perceived ideal standards, and the factors that threaten or enhance the responsible conduct of scientific research.

Recently, the Office of Research Integrity, in coordination with several institutes at the NIH, issued a Request For Applications (RFA) calling for "Research on Research Integrity". The ACE Board of Directors agreed to collaborate on a proposal. A proposal, the Project on Integrity of Epidemiologic Research (PIER), was submitted in November.

If funded, we plan to conduct focus groups at annual meetings to explore epidemiologists' perspectives on (1) standards of responsible conduct of research, (2) individual, institutional, organizational, and professional factors that are most influential in enhancing or threatening the integrity of research; and (3) methods and effectiveness of self-regulation. In addition, we will conduct interviews with editors of journals relevant to epidemiologic research to explore their perspectives on determinants of integrity in research publication and effectiveness of self-regulation with special focus on peer-review. We will also develop a web-based survey to collect data from a much larger group of epidemiologists and other health researchers. If funded, the project will sponsor a workshop at the 2006 Congress of Epidemiology to share the results of the research.

Those of us who worked on the proposal are grateful to Peter Kralka and the staff at Olson Management, and the officers and Board of ACE for their support and contributions to the submission. If successful, this project will be an important contribution to our knowledge of responsible research conduct and our

understanding of the individual, institutional, social, and professional factors that are important in promoting it. We will alert the membership if the proposal is funded and we will then begin recruiting for focus groups and responses to the web-based survey. We hope to work with many of you in implementing this research proposal.

Members of the PIER research team: Robert McKeown, Chair, Ethics and Standards of Practice Committee, Sara Corwin (qualitative research) and George Khushf (bioethicist) (both at the University of South Carolina), Ken Goodman (bioethicist, University of Miami), and Nancy Kreiger (University of Toronto) and Carlos Camargo (Harvard University), both from the ACE Board of Directors.

Commentary

Don't forget to renew your ACE membership today! Planning and organizing the Annual Meeting and Epidemiology Congress is a huge undertaking. Please consider volunteering to assist in reviewing abstracts, poster judging, or planning breakfast roundtables and social events. John Acquavella (jacquave@amgen.com) or Betsy Foxman (bfoxman@umich.edu) will welcome any help you can offer. We are still looking for a photo editor to help organize the College's photo library. Please contact me if you have an interest. Thanks. Carol Burns (cburns@dow.com)

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