



Spring Newsletter

February 2009

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Calendar of Events

**Award Nomination
Submission Deadline**

March 31

**Now accepting nominations for the Lilienfeld Award, Special Achievement Award (Outstanding Contributions to Etiologic Science in Epidemiology Award), and Student Prize Paper Award.

[Details](#)

**Abstract Submission
Deadline May 15**

[Details](#)

**SER Annual Meeting
June 23-26**

Anaheim, CA

**ACE Annual Meeting
September 12-15**

Silver Spring, Maryland

[Details](#)

Fellows Corner

Newly Appointed
Fellows - Spring 2009

Jonathan Tobin
Ann Scher

Complete Newsletter

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President's Letter

Roberta Ness



2009 is beginning as a year when the ACE had a major impact on American science policy.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) has just posted a pre-publication of its 2009 report entitled, "Beyond the HIPAA Privacy Rule: Enhancing Privacy, Improving Health through Research." The College worked for years to bring to light concerns about the impact of HIPAA on research and the College was represented in the IOM committee review. The resulting committee's report concludes: *"the HIPAA Privacy Rule does not protect privacy as well as it should, and that, as currently implemented, it impedes important*

health research. The committee recommends an entirely new approach to protecting privacy in health research." We hope members of the College will help us spread the word about the report to colleagues. You can view the full text at www.iom.edu/hipaa. An enormous barrier could be lifted from the conduct of clinical research in the U.S. should the new Secretary for Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) adopt the Committee recommendations, which suggest that an approach other than HIPAA be used for research subject privacy protection.

This month, the College joined more than 30 other health organizations and public agencies to work toward reducing salt in processed and restaurant foods. The nationwide initiative was launched by New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, as highlighted in a recent NY Times article http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/28/dining/28salt.html?_r=1. Americans get 77% of their salt intake from processed and packaged foods, according to the DHHS. Salt content in processed foods has increased 55% during the past generation. The DHHS recommends people eat no more than 2,300 mg of sodium/day per 2,000 calorie diet. However, the current national average is 4,000 mg. Excessive salt intake is an important cause of high blood pressure, which, in turn contributes to cardiovascular disease. The case linking salt to cardiovascular risk can be found in the new section of the Annals of Epidemiology, on controversies in policy in science (Ness RB. Controversies in epidemiology: Salt reduction and prevention of heart disease. February 2009 Vol. 19:118-120). The American Medical Association estimates that halving the salt content of processed and restaurant foods could prevent 150,000 premature deaths each year in the U.S. The salt reduction coalition is asking food corporations and restaurants to voluntarily lower their use of salt in packaged, processed and mass-produced meals.

In April, the Annals of Epidemiology will publish a special issue, brought together and edited by the Board of ACE and entitled, "Triumphs in Epidemiology." Inspirational stories are told by great epidemiologists of our time. These include Herb Needleman on the link between lead levels of childhood cognition; Palmer Beasley on hepatitis B and liver cancer; Godfrey Oakley's battle to fortify the U.S. wheat supply with folate to reduce the risk for neural tube defects; and Myrna Silverman on the high population prevalence of depression.

Finally, we look forward to the 2009 Annual Meeting, "Novel Methods at the Intersection of Epidemiology and Policy Making." We are lining up exciting keynote speakers and interesting workshops. We hope to see you there.

Top Stories

Meeting Memories

Edward Trapido

Westin La Paloma

The ACE began its 2nd quarter century with an extraordinary Annual meeting on the "Dawn of Evolutionary Epidemiology: Applying Evolutionary Theory in an Epidemiologic Context."



The meeting, held in Tucson in September, was in a breathtaking location, at the Westin La Paloma resort. The local host was the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health at the University of Arizona. The meeting attracted 191 participants, including 33 students. The meeting clearly reflected the ACE's role in "promoting the professional development of epidemiologists through educational initiatives."

The conference program was developed and organized by Betsy Foxman, of the University of Michigan. She, as well as then ACE President Nancy Kreiger, and incoming President Roberta Ness, expressed their thoughts that the meeting was scientifically exciting.

Dr. Foxman stated, "Although I already use evolutionary theory in my own work, the meeting nudged me to consider evolutionary theory formally as studies are planned rather than ad hoc as an explanation for what is observed. My take-home messages from the meeting might be most succinctly summarized by comparing epidemiology and evolutionary biology. Both fields have a population perspective, yet make inferences down to an individual case. They use some of the same organizing principles, characterizing phenomena with respect to person, place and time. However, each field has a different lens for interpreting the observed variation across these classifications. In epidemiology, person variables are host characteristics – generally age, gender and ethnicity, hypothesis generating variables meant to capture the 'big picture' of the phenomena. Person variables in an evolutionary sense are gene or epigenomic variants. Both fields look at geographic variation, but an evolutionary perspective might look at ancestral conditions as well as current locations. Finally, both fields examine changes over time; but the epidemiologic time frame is generally short (days, months, years) and the evolutionary time frame generally long (generations). Incorporating an evolutionary perspective into epidemiology promises to stimulate new ways of designing and analyzing epidemiologic

studies resulting in new insights into disease etiology. “

Roberta Ness also found the meeting to be stimulating and perhaps one of the best she had attended of any meeting type in a long time. She stated that “the intersection of ideas from some of the world’s foremost population geneticists, evolutionary biologists, and epidemiologists, resulted in a mind bending set of ideas.” She was particularly impressed that the cross-disciplinary approaches could be conveyed so readily and meaningfully. “Evolutionary biologists often use epidemiologic frameworks, such as classic cohort and family study techniques. Yet their thinking is quite different and information is sought about very different questions.”

As 2008 ACE President Nancy Kreiger stated, “It is difficult to identify the single most exciting thing I learned, since there were so many fascinating ideas in the presentations, which were new to me.”

Several presentations are available on the ACE Website:

<http://acepidemiology2.org/meetings/2008Tuscon/08AMSpeakerHandouts.asp>.

These include:

- Genome Wide Association Studies for Cardiac Repolarization and Sudden Cardiac Death.
- Understanding the power of ethnicity in explaining health disparities.
- Are There Genes for Hypertension? A Gene-environmental Conspiracy.

In The News

Award Winners

Annual Meeting

Abraham Lilienfeld Award: *Roger Detels*

Student paper: *Stella Koutros* (Use of Imazethapyr, an Aromatic Amine Pesticide, and Human Cancer Risk)

2008 Annals of Epidemiology Award: *Esben Budtz-Jørgensen* (Confounder Selection in Environmental Epidemiology: Assessment of Health Effects of Prenatal Mercury Exposure)

Committees

Communications Committee

Jiancheng Huang

The Communications Committee's top priority is to develop a plan for revising and updating the ACE website. Broadly, these goals include:

- Identifying contents of the website that appear out of date and in need of being updated.
- Developing an archival procedure for materials that are removed from the main website pages, but should be kept for historical and reference purposes.
- Re-designing a new user-friendly landing page for the website.

The Communications Committee is in the process of ensuring that there is a liaison between it and every other ACE Committee to ensure that all committees, as well as the Board of Directors, have input into the information that should remain, the information that should be updated or removed entirely, strategies for timely updating of information moving forward, and design ideas for a new landing page. These short term tasks will be completed by September 2009. The longer term plan for the website includes reviewing the current website architecture, and exploring ideas for improvement and sustainability of the website's maintenance and updating in the future.

Membership Committee

Janet Arrowsmith, Chair

The Membership Committee has a number of projects underway to address its objectives in the ACE Strategic Plan. One project is to increase the visibility of ACE to epidemiology leaders. With the help of First Point and the support of the Board of Directors, we have contacted the Deans and Epidemiology Program directors of all the ASPH-accredited Schools of Public Health and Medical schools with combined degree programs in North America as well as the State and Territorial Health Officers, introducing them to ACE and inviting them, their faculty members and students to investigate ACE's website and apply for membership. We hope to extend this outreach to NIH-employed epidemiologists and current and former Epidemic Intelligence Service Officers. Recently, we have been provided a database of the chairs of departments of epidemiology in Australia and New Zealand and hope to contact these institutions, as well.

Another objective is to provide detailed membership trends data to the Board of Directors each year. The Membership Trends subcommittee is working with First Point and the Admissions Committee to revise the admission application in order to more efficiently track membership trends data and provide measurements of response to the outreach efforts discussed above. We hope to establish procedures to standardize and streamline data acquisition and analyses to make this process more efficient.

We have developed a number of long- and short-term goals and objectives for the committee which will require close cooperation and coordination with a number of other ACE committees. As a result, we are relying on our liaisons to and from those committees to keep us apprised of their initiatives. On Membership, we are fortunate to have very active, enthusiastic and creative individuals working with us to maintain momentum in pursuing the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan.

Finally, we have a number of new members appointed to the committee, including Daniel Lackland, Linda Cohen, Jan Eberth, and Lawrence Lam. We also created the position of Secretary to help maintain continuity as we move forward with the initiatives outlined above. We encourage your ideas and comments. Please contact Janet Arrowsmith at arrowsmith@valornet.com; Vice chair Kathleen McDavid Harrison at kzm2@cdc.gov or Secretary Melinda Aldrich at melinda.aldrich@ucsf.edu.

We'd like to feature another section in the newsletter on teaching and educational ideas, innovations, or even problems. If you would like to submit an article, or just propose some ideas, please contact me. Carol

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Visit the ACE website at www.acepidemiology.org



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