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Photo: Telehealth Counseling Clinic faculty and staff at the Open House

The Telehealth Counseling Clinic Continues to Serve the Brazos Valley

Recent surveys conducted in the Brazos Valley have indicated that two persistent concerns in regard to health have been access to mental health services and lack of transportation. Dr. Jim Burdine, Interim Dean of the School of Rural Public Health, noted that “when we look at those [issues] in combination, tele-mental health...was a solution that met both of those concerns.” Therefore, the Telehealth Counseling Clinic was created to increase access to mental health services for residents of rural communities in the Brazos Valley. The clinic evolved from an ongoing collaboration between a group of community stakeholders, representatives of several health care and social service agencies, and the Center for

Community Health Development. The group identified resources to develop the clinical infrastructure and then partnered with the faculty and students in the American Psychological Association – accredited Texas A&M University Counseling Psychology doctoral program – as an avenue for the expansion of mental health counseling in rural communities. Since its inception, the Telehealth Counseling Clinic (TCC) has aimed to increase access to and provision of mental health services for indigent and low income residents throughout the Brazos Valley. The clinic does so by providing telehealth counseling and assessment services to underserved populations through remote clinics located in Centerville,

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Madisonville, and Brenham. The clinic's counseling services are available to adolescents and adults in English and Spanish via videoconference technology and include therapy sessions for a variety of presenting concerns with the most common being depression, anxiety, trauma, and addiction and substance abuse. In the last year, more than 350 counseling sessions were provided to rural residents who would otherwise not be able to receive the services they need.

Recently, the TCC hosted an open house to showcase the new main clinic location at the Texas A&M Health Science Center. The open house also spread awareness of the mental health services currently being provided as well as the planned expansion of services to Caldwell and Navasota by August of 2014. Over 50 people attended the open house including representatives from current and future rural Telehealth sites, community stakeholders, individuals from the Clinical and Counseling Psychology doctoral programs, the Student Counseling Service, the Center for Community Health Development, and doctoral students interested in the TCC's training program. Visitors toured the clinic, learned about the services being provided, the training program, and the research being conducted at the TCC. Additionally, visitors were able to experience live connections to the Leon County, Madison County, and Washington County remote clinics as it would appear during a real-time counseling session. For more information about the Telehealth Counseling Clinic, please visit their website at telehealthcounseling.org.



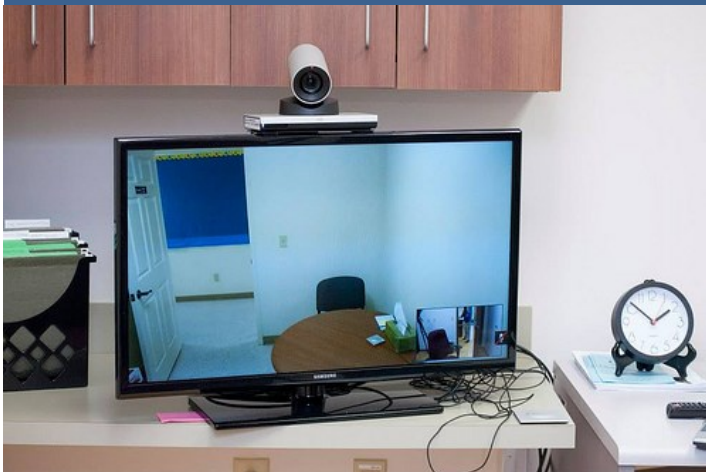
Photos: (above) TCC Principal Investigator, Dr. Tim Elliott, discusses telehealth procedures with Drs. Hugh McElroy and Darcy Moudouni; (bottom left) View of remote clinic sites from the TCC counseling office

New Affiliated Faculty Member



The Center is excited to welcome our newest affiliated faculty member, Dr. Brandy Kelly Pryor! Currently, Dr. Kelly Pryor is an Assistant Professor in the Youth Development program in the department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences (RPTS) in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Her interdisciplinary research interests include global

youth cultural studies - with a specific focus on the perception and performance of hope in marginalized youth populations; development of domestic and international social policy regarding youth; and the relationship between gender and race/ethnicity in the identity development of youth using community based participatory approaches. Prior to her work at RPTS, Dr. Kelly Pryor served as an evaluation consultant for the Ward 8 D.C. Drug Free Coalition, a SAMHSA funded coalition, and the Family to Family mentoring program, a holistic mentoring program for low-income families in Washington, D.C. She was also responsible for developing and managing service learning programs and social justice curriculum for middle and high school students in Baltimore as part of the Students Sharing Coalition. Additionally, Dr. Kelly Pryor worked as a tutor/teacher for the AmeriCorps, Heads Up program where she developed literacy curriculum to advance verbal and numeracy skills. Internationally, Dr. Kelly Pryor has spent time documenting facts related to religion, health, gender and education in Barbados, Haiti, Kenya, Tanzania, and Trinidad. We look forward to having Dr. Kelly on the CCHD team and hope for successful collaborations in future research projects.



CCHD Faculty and Staff Attend National Rural Health Association Conference

Last month, several CCHD faculty and staff were featured at the National Rural Health Association's (NRHA) 19th Annual Rural Multiracial and Multicultural Health Conference in San Antonio, Texas. The conference was designed for those who are dedicated to bringing quality health care services to underserved portions of the rural population and also offer attendees the opportunity to meet with experts and peers in the field. Attendees of the meeting included Dr. Jane Bolin, Dr. Wesley Dean, Dr. Joseph Sharkey, and Ms. Katharine Nimmons. These CCHD faculty and staff participated in presentations and poster sessions which have been outlined and summarized below:

Concurrent sessions

Availability and access to healthy and culturally preferred foods.

Wesley Dean, PhD, William Alex McIntosh, PhD, Joseph R. Sharkey, PhD

This session included discussion on the availability and accessibility of healthy and culturally preferred foods among Mexican-origin households and addressed using data from a community survey of south Texas colonia residents, a pilot study of child participants in a south Texas school garden pilot program and low-income focus group participants in central Texas.

Promotoras reducing hunger in Mexican-origin seniors.

Brenda Bustillos, Maria Garza, Joseph R. Sharkey, PhD

This session included the discussion of qualitative and quantitative approaches for determining the educational and skill needs of low income Mexican-origin seniors. Additionally, the session identified strategies for enhancing education, skills, development and implementation of promotora-driven tailored intervention.

Colorectal cancer screening and prevention for minority and rural Texans.

Jane Bolin, JD, PhD, Janet Helduser, MA

This session indicated that in order to meet the Rural Healthy People 2020 target for colorectal cancer screening in rural areas, access to care and screening capacity must be increased. The Texas Colon Cancer Screening Training and Education Program provides a model for reaching underserved populations through patient navigation and colonoscopy training for family medicine residents.

Community health worker (CHW) delivery of cancer education training.

Katharine Nimmons, MPH

Katy discussed how Lower Rio Grande Valley residents' trust in community health worker-delivered education messages and intention to change behavior can be taken to represent CHW effectiveness. Preliminary findings indicate that CHW effectiveness has a positive relationship with residents' change in cancer prevention, detection, treatment and survivorship knowledge over time.

Posters

Colorectal cancer screening: Are we reaching rural residents?

Jane Bolin, JD, PhD



CCHD Welcomes New Graduate Assistant



Merina Dhakal is a second-year student in the Department of Environment and Occupational Health at the School of Rural Public Health (SRPH). She completed her Bachelor's degree at The University of Texas Arlington where she majored in Microbiology. After graduating in 2011, she worked as a laboratory technician for a histopathology lab at the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory in College Station where she worked for a year and then joined the Masters of Public Health program in Fall 2012. Merina has been actively involved in student organizations within SRPH and is currently the secretary for the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) chapter at SRPH and will be graduating in May 2014. She hopes to find a job that utilizes her knowledge and understanding of the importance of health and safety in an occupational setting. Please join us in welcoming Merina!



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Geocaching Goes to Space



Geocachers hide caches all over the world in hard to find places, but recently a geocacher, who happens to be a United States astronaut, took geocaching to a new level when he took a cache into space! On November 6, 2013, Astronaut Rick Mastracchio took a geocaching game piece, known as a travel bug, to the International Space Station. Geocaching, which is a sport similar to a high-tech treasure hunt, has grown in popularity since May 2000 when it first started. Geocaching is appealing to people of all ages because it is an interactive activity that combines competition, fun, and exercise; however, the sport became even more popular when the travel bug made its way to the Space Station. As geocaching becomes more well known and engages additional participants, the Center for Community Health Development (CCHD) hopes to encourage

people to play the sport because of its health benefits. In 2012, CCHD initiated a research project, called Geocaching for Exercise and Activity Research (GEAR), in order to determine the extent people are physically active while geocaching. The study is ongoing, but preliminary results indicate that geocaching is a form of physical activity that is associated with meeting national physical activity guidelines set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.