March 31, 2011

Dear Colleagues:

We are issuing this Call for Papers for a special issue of Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education, & Action, which will focus on the "Science of Community Engagement." Our goal is to highlight concepts that form the foundation for assessing the impact of community engagement across all forms of research conducted with the intention of improving the health of those same communities. We are particularly interested in augmenting concepts and definitions with rigorous empirical studies that elucidate, operationalize and/or assess community engaged research, and the contribution (potential and actual) of community engaged research to comparative effectiveness research.

Manuscripts can be submitted for peer review in any of the following categories:

- Original Research
- Works-in-Progress and Lessons Learned
- Community Perspectives
- Policy and Practice
- Theory and Methods
- Education and Training
- Practical Tools
- Systematic Reviews
- Brief Reports

Social scientists studying the human condition have long engaged the challenge of explaining subjectivity in ways that clinical and translational researchers conditioned by the controls available in the laboratory are now starting to seriously engage. As anthropology in the 1990s studied aspects of contemporary culture, other scientific disciplines examining social problems have also sought to incorporate within their research an understanding of the dynamic between the observer and the observed. Over the past two decades, it has become increasingly clear that objectivity has its limits and that research into health should not mistake objectivity for generalizability.

In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) promoted the involvement of communities in research with its publication of the Principles of Community Engagement (1997).1 The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Roadmap’s commitment to translational research, characterized as moving “from bench to bedside” is also pushing researchers and academic institutions to create and expand partnerships with communities and to develop new skills, knowledge and methodological approaches. Founded in 1996, Community Campus Partnerships for Health has fostered conversations among academics and communities about the importance of community-based participatory research (CBPR). In recent years, CBPR has emerged as a central paradigm, emphasizing the value of involving communities and researchers fully and equally in every facet of research. Indeed, the emergence of this journal is itself further indication of interest in understanding the role of partnerships for advancing health research, and for the subsequent application of knowledge and formulation of policy. While there is a clear commitment to studying health through academic and community research partnerships, more work is needed to elucidate the viability and practicality of fully engaging communities in identifying important research questions, developing clinical research proposals, implementing protocols, interpreting data, and disseminating findings.

Studies of community engagement and health promotion activities must not only examine and interpret human beings in relation to lived contexts and environments, but also as persons who also directly constitute a context. In seeking to enhance our ability to understand community health and community health improvement efforts, we must cultivate an awareness of how social bonds (or their absence) inform and influence behaviors, interactions and health. In addition, we need a better understanding of community characteristics (e.g., the built environment, the availability of health care and social services, economic and business interests, arts and cultural activities) as contributors to health outcomes, so that we might better understand how such factors may shape the generalizability of new knowledge and its dissemination and implementation. These contextual factors are particularly important for improving population health. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) emphasizes the importance of including diverse populations, patient subgroups, and clinical settings in comparative effectiveness research, particularly those populations that are often underrepresented in research and for whom little evidence on best clinical practices exists.2

This special issue seeks to advance the “Science of Community Engagement” by inviting studies from large-scale community-academic joint ventures, particularly Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) recipients and Practice-Based Research Networks (PBRNs). Studies of community engagement should focus on the identification of a shared set of outcomes and measurement strategies.3 We seek a wide range of community-engaged research, including CBPR and research that engages a wide range of communities (e.g., clinicians, priority populations). Studies of community engagement that examine aspects of the social context including an understanding of the role of human social dynamics within the research process are particularly welcome. The following topics are of high priority for this special issue:

1) Developing shared approaches to measuring aspects of the impact of different types of community engaged research on improving health outcomes, as well as spreading and sustaining effective practices;
2) The unique contributions of community engaged research to better understand the effect of context and heterogeneity in comparative effectiveness research;
3) Articulating the role of community engagement for conducting comparative effectiveness research and for informing policy;
4) Identifying common contextual variables and parameters that facilitate comparison and contribute to dissemination and implementation research; and
5) Recognizing, documenting and addressing community benefits, needs, risks, and other ethical issues associated with collaborative community-based research activities.
6) Examples of well-designed research for translating interventions across different communities, including a means for evaluating the translational process between community interventions, and documenting the impact of community engagement on several dimensions, including the research process (e.g., recruitment), health care service delivery (e.g., uptake of clinical innovations) and population health outcomes (measures of morbidity and mortality).

The deadline for submitting papers is Monday, August 1, 2011.

Instructions for specific types of articles and submitting manuscripts can be found at: http://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/progress_in_community_health_partnerships/guidelines.pdf. For additional


3 For relevant background, see http://www.aptrweb.org/prof_dev/ce_workshop.html.
information regarding the mission of the journal, see Tandon et al. (2007), which is available at: http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/progress_in_community_health_partnerships_research_education_and_action/v001/1.1tandon.pdf.

In accordance with the mission of *Progress in Community Health Partnerships*, papers that reflect community voices and collaborations with community members will be prioritized. We encourage community authored and co-authored manuscripts, as well as those reflecting collaborations across multiple CTSA's and research from community-engaged practice based research networks (PBRNs).

Questions regarding the special issue should be directed to the Guest Editors listed below.

Very truly yours,

Milton "Mickey" Eder, PhD  
Director of Research Programs  
Access Community Health Network  
University of Chicago Institute for Translational Medicine (ITM)  
(312) 526-2116  
milton.eder@accesscommunityhealth.net

Michelle Proser, MPP  
Director of Research  
National Association of Community Health Centers  
Clinical and Translational Science Institute at Children's National (CTSI-CN) in partnership with The George Washington University  
(202) 296-1960  
mproser@nachc.org

Darius Tandon, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Pediatrics Deputy Editor  
Progress in Community Health Partnerships Director  
Johns Hopkins Institute for Clinical and Translational Research Community Engagement Core  
(410) 614-5281  
standon@jhmi.edu

Jonathan N. Tobin, PhD  
President/CEO  
Clinical Directors Network, Inc. (CDN)  
Co-Director for Community-Engaged Research  
The Rockefeller University Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS)  
(212) 382-0699 ext 234  
JNTobin@CDNetwork.org