



Published in final edited form as:

*Matern Child Health J.* 2012 May ; 16(4): 749–752. doi:10.1007/s10995-012-1022-y.

## Recognizing Excellence in Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Epidemiology: The 2011 MCH Epidemiology Awards

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The Coalition for Excellence, formed of 16 organizations, sponsors the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Epidemiology Awards to provide national recognition for individuals, teams, institutions, and leaders who make significant contributions to improve the health of women, infants, children, and families by advancing public health knowledge, practice, research, and use of data (Table 1). Multiple awards are presented each year in different categories, including advancing knowledge, effective practice, outstanding leadership, excellence in teaching, young professional achievement, and lifetime achievement in MCH epidemiology. In 2011, three deserving public health researchers, one administrator, and one clinic were recognized for noteworthy contributions to MCH epidemiology.

### Greg Alexander Award for Advancing Knowledge: Paul W. Newacheck, DrPH

Dr. Paul Newacheck is one of the leading child health researchers in the United States. His ground-breaking work on children with special health care needs, including children with chronic illnesses and disabilities, has had an impact on state and national policies related to the organization of services for this population. In the 1980s, researchers defined children with chronic conditions based on the presence of specific illnesses; Dr. Newacheck's work has led to a change in the measurement and description of these children by broadening the focus of research to include the consequences of these diseases. Additionally, his seminal work reshaped the classification of children with special needs from having disabling conditions to having chronic conditions to the current classification of special needs. The body of knowledge resulting from his research has further shaped the scientific community's understanding of child health, disparities, and health care utilization.

The impact of Dr. Newacheck's work is clear when reviewing the body of his publications. His noteworthy publications may be found regularly in *Pediatrics*, and in other journals

including the New England Journal of Medicine, the Journal of the American Medical Association, and the American Journal of Public Health. Additionally, he actively advises many national boards and committees on child health. He has served as chair of expert panels for the National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs and the National Survey of Children's Health. His contribution to these surveys has affected how data are collected and used at the state and national levels by program managers, epidemiologists, and policymakers across the United States.

Dr. Newacheck's career is represented in part by his over 150 publications in prominent peer reviewed journals, his contributions to research, and his advocacy through scientific work for children with special health care needs. This broad body of work has culminated in deserving recognition of the Greg Alexander Award for Advancing Knowledge, an award that acknowledges individuals or groups who contribute substantially to advancing the knowledge base in applied work, develop new methods or generate new information that benefits women, infants, children, and families.

### **Effective Practice at the State Level: Isabelle L. Horon, DrPH**

Dr. Isabelle Horon's career in public health has led to innovation in use of vital statistics data in research and administration. Her more than 30 year career in maternal and child health includes seminal work in the underreporting of infant deaths. She published a series of articles from 2001 to 2010 with fellow researchers that documents significant underreporting of pregnancy mortality in the United States. The national news media highlighted her finding that homicide is the leading cause of pregnancy-associated death. Her work on pregnancy mortality estimation methods has led to a re-emergence of the discussion of approaches to measurement using multiple data sources. Further, she has presented research that shows the extent to which infant mortality in the United States is understated when state vital statistics offices fail to follow-up on very low birth weight deliveries. Dr. Horon's reports have resulted in states focusing more attention on these births, with an increased emphasis on accuracy and quality of data, and the National Center for Health Statistics implementing a process to follow up and reconcile reports of very low birth weight deliveries not linked to death certificates.

Dr. Horon also advocates for privacy of maternal and child health records at the state and national levels. Her work with data release standards involved providing authorized access to established researchers conducting bonafide maternal and child health research while safeguarding individual patient identities. In addition to this vital statistics and advocacy work, Dr. Horon is an active member of the National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems, and recently completed a two-year term as President.

Dr. Horon's depth of work on issues of mortality in the maternal and child health population in Maryland and the United States exemplifies the meaning of the effective practice award. By definition, the award recognizes work at the community, state, regional, and national levels that significantly affects specific maternal and child health populations, which is much of the focus of Dr. Horon's work.

## Effective Practice at the State Level: C. Meade Grigg, MA

C. Meade Grigg is the Director of Florida's Office of Health Statistics and Assessment, State Registrar of Vital Statistics, and has served in this capacity since 1984. He has been quoted as asking, "What good is the data if we don't use it?" Mr. Grigg's dedication to using data has ensured that the Department of Health and its many partners have timely and ready access to the data necessary for improving the health of mothers and children in Florida. Under Mr. Grigg's leadership, Florida became one of the first states to implement the 2003 National Center for Health Statistics model birth certificate, and the first state to implement all three revised certificates including birth, death, and fetal death certificates. Mr. Grigg has led his team to create a centralized Department data library in Florida with a single request and access point for all users and investigators. The library contains linked datasets including vital records and other surveillance systems.

Mr. Grigg has led his team to develop timely and readily available data to all users. The Florida Community Health Assessment Resource Tool Set (CHARTS), an Internet data portal, provides data customized to user needs and abilities. The data available include county profiles with information for rapid assessment from state and national sources on five topical areas: general, pregnancy and young child, school-age children and adolescents, chronic disease, and minority health. Additional indicator-specific reports provide counts, rates, and trend graphs and maps at a county and state level for 650 indicators. The birth certificate query data include 36 indicators dating as far back as 1989. Updated birth certificate data are available as recently as information entered into the system in the last week.

Mr. Grigg's approach to ensuring data is user friendly, accessible, and interpretable allows for public health professionals to quickly and reliably obtain data to support programs and policies in Florida. His work is a clear example of effective practice at the state level.

## Effective Practice at the Community Level: Center for Women's Health, Trover Health Systems

The Center for Women's Health has shown continued dedication to innovative services, continued quality improvement, and a focus on data quality and increased epidemiologic capacity, all of which support its receipt of the Effective Practice Award. Based in Madisonville, Kentucky, the Center for Women's Health is a part of the Trover Health System of western Kentucky and has developed strong relationships with local clinical and obstetric providers, certified nurse midwives, nurses, and other staff to meet the needs of the Medicaid population. The Center for Women's Health is the only obstetrical and gynecological practice in Kentucky that screens all pregnant women for substance abuse at the initial prenatal visit and on admission to labor and delivery. Women who test positive are counseled and referred to treatment.

The Center for Women's Health has implemented multiple programs to improve clinical care and provide data for research purposes. The CenteringPregnancy program was implemented in 2006 and became the basis for the CenteringPregnancySmiles program that

is focused on providing dental education to expectant mothers. This program, implemented at the Center and tailored to Medicaid enrollees, was used as a program to recruit participants for a retrospective cohort study to examine birth outcomes among women in 2006 and 2007. Additionally, in 2007 the Center for Women's Health participated in the Healthy Babies are Worth the Wait program to prevent preterm birth and served as one of three sites included in a comparison study for this initiative. In 2010, the Center for Women's Health chose to participate in the Voluntary Review of Quality of Care Program sponsored by the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. The impact of participation in these programs and research studies has been a steady improvement in birth outcomes among the Trover Health Systems primary service population between 2005 and 2010 (18 % decrease in preterm birth; 33 % decline in low birth weight deliveries).

Despite limited resources, the Center for Women's Health has developed data systems and data collection tools to ensure program evaluation for all activities and designed programs that can be replicated in other rural communities throughout the United States. For these reasons, it is appropriate that the Center for Women's Health and its staff receive the Effective Practice at the Community Level Award.

### **Young Professional Achievement Award: Reem M. Ghandour, DrPH**

Dr. Reem Ghandour is a senior public health analyst with the Office of Epidemiology, Policy, and Evaluation at the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). Her work began at the MCHB as a Presidential Management Fellow and she continued to work for MCHB while obtaining her doctoral degree from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. While at Johns Hopkins, she received the National Institutes of Health National Research Service Award Pre-doctoral Fellowship in Violence Prevention Research and the John and Alice Chenoweth-Pate Fellowship.

In her career, Dr. Ghandour has served as the managing editor for the government reports "Women's Health USA" from 2003 to 2010 and "Child Health USA" from 2008 to the present. These publications provide the most recent information on women's and children's health to policymakers and program managers. Dr. Ghandour has worked to develop the maternal and child health goals for the nation through Healthy People 2020 (HP 2020) and she is the HRSA lead for the Maternal, Infant, and Child Health Topic Area of this initiative. Healthy People 2020 is a set of health objectives for the nation to achieve by 2020 and was built on previous Healthy People objectives and health priorities. Dr. Ghandour has been the primary liaison between HRSA and three different centers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and has worked diligently to build consensus among these partner and external subject matter experts as the workgroup identified goals and targets within each area. The resulting Topic Area HP 2020 goals provide the framework for public health practice in maternal and child health for the next decade.

Dr. Ghandour has authored or co-authored 16 peer-reviewed articles focused on the emotional and behavioral health of children, children with special health care needs, and intimate partner violence. She has received numerous awards for her work at the agency

(HRSA) and departmental levels, and has continued to be a leader in the field. For these reasons, she is deserving of the Young Professional Achievement Award.

### **Awards for the Upcoming Year**

The Coalition for Excellence in Maternal and Child Health Epidemiology will convene this fall to review nominations and select recipients for the 2012 awards. Applications for awards will be accepted until June 15, 2012. To continue increased recognition of outstanding contributions by MCH professionals, the Coalition strongly urges readers to nominate deserving colleagues and peers to highlight their important accomplishments. For more information, go to <http://www.citymatch.org/mchepiawards.htm>. The awardees will be announced at the National MCH Epidemiology Awards Luncheon at the 18th Annual MCH Epidemiology Conference, December 12–14, 2012, in San Antonio, Texas.

**Table 1**

## Coalition for Excellence in Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Epidemiology Member Organizations

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American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
American Public Health Association (APHA)
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP)
Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH)
Association of Teachers of Maternal and Child Health (ATMCH)
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Division of Reproductive Health (DRH)
CityMatCH
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE)
Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB)
Maternal and Child Health Journal
National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)
National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems (NAPHSIS)
National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN)
National Institutes of Health (NIH), Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (NICHD)
National March of Dimes Foundation
Society for Pediatric and Perinatal Epidemiologic Research (SPER)

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