

Health & Science



OHSU Goal To Boost Minority Health Care Enrollment

In Oregon, only 2.4 percent of practicing physicians are minorities. Only 3 percent of registered nurses and 0.8 percent of dentists are part of under represented groups. According to these figures collected by the Area Health Education Center at Oregon Health Sciences University, minority groups in health care fields are vastly under represented in the state.

However, the new nationwide Project 3000 by 2000: Health Professionals Partnership Initiative, implemented locally by the AHEC program and the Office of Multicultural

Affairs at OHSU, aims to change those statistics and unleash the potential stored in Oregon's minority youth.

"We hope to create a culturally sensitive support system of institutions, faculty, staff and health professionals interested in helping minorities pursue their dreams in health care fields," said John Saultz, assistant vice president of regional education at OHSU and the project's coordinator. "The state's quality of health care stands to gain a great deal from the diversity brought by researchers and practitioners of different ethnic

backgrounds and different life experiences."

Project 3000 by 2000 is a national program sponsored by the American Association of Medical Colleges to increase the number of under represented minorities enrolled in medical schools across the country by the year 2000. It is designed to increase enrollment figures nationwide in health care education programs to 25 percent (approximately 3,000) by the year 2000. A partnership program between the AAMC and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is offering \$350,000 seed grants to institu-

tions such as OHSU to carry out this vision on a statewide level.

The grant program at OHSU tracks students through high school programs such as Jefferson High School's health sciences/biotechnology curriculum program, through college and into their health professions education. Project coordinators keep a database of each student's progress and act as a support system. Jefferson High School, Portland Community College and the Columbia-Willamette AEHC are the key partners in the pilot phase of the project. "The time is right in Oregon

to encourage minorities into this health career pathway," said Alfonso Lopez-Vasquez, director of Multicultural Affairs at OHSU and project manager. "Oregon's education policy is evolving to focus substantial commitment on the development of magnet schools. This is our way of supporting that effort and maximizing the potential of the state's greatest resource -- its youth".

The program will focus on regions covered by the Columbia Willamette AEHC, which includes the Portland-metro area where 59 percent minority popu-

lation lives.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care. It became a national institution in 1972 and concentrates its grantmaking in four areas: assuring access to basic health services; improving the way services are organized and provided for people with chronic health conditions; reducing the harm caused by substance abuse; and helping the nation address the problem of rising health care cost.

Oregon's Students Need To Improve Health Behaviors

Oregon's students demonstrated generally healthy behaviors in 1995, but there is lots of room for improvement, a recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey Report released by Oregon Health Division reveals. The study identifies strengths and pinpoints areas where improvement can be made.

Key findings show that in 1995, most Oregon students did not carry a

weapon in the 30 days prior to being surveyed. They were also highly aware of the risk of HIV, and most students did not use drugs. About half reported healthy eating habits and more than half maintained a healthy level of physical activity.

Areas where work is needed include tobacco use, physical violence, alcohol and drug use, and vehicle safety.

Health Division Consumer Protection Notice

Health officials issued a consumer protection notice to private well owners who are disinfecting and testing their drinking water as they recover from recent flooding.

"Not all Oregon laboratories that test drinking water are certified to do so," says Michael Skeels, public health laboratory director at Oregon Health Division. "Our recommendation is that private well owners concerned with the safety of their water make sure

that the laboratory they use has been certified for drinking water testing by the Health Division, and that it uses an EPA approved drinking water method for testing."

"Because there is no state regulation of testing of private drinking water wells, anyone can open a laboratory and use any method for testing, according to Skeels.

He also warns that a small number of certified labs may be using non-standard collection and testing methods for private samples.

"We have also heard that some people have been offered home test kits for water testing, and this is not a reliable procedure," Skeels warns.

Homeowners may obtain information about certified drinking water labs in their area by contacting their county health department.

Additionally, the state public health laboratory will do private well water testing, but homeowners must have the work approved through their local

health departments.

"Any private well that has had flood water flow into it is considered contaminated," Skeels said. "It is extremely important that these wells be properly disinfected and properly tested to assure that the water is safe to drink."

Skeels also said that the IDEXX Corporation, makers of Coli-ert, an EPA approved method, has donated materials to do several hundred water tests to help people recovering from the flood.

Womens Health Study Opens

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oregon has joined forces with Kaiser Permanente's Center for Health Research to help carry out the largest long-term study of women's health issues ever undertaken in the United States.

Known as the Women's Health Initiative, this 15-year nationwide study seeks to learn how to prevent the three major causes of death and disability in older women - heart disease, cancer (breast and colorectal), and osteoporosis.

The study is open to women of any race who are 50-79 years old and past the menopause. Study participants must plan to remain in this area for at least three years. Women interested in joining can call for more information at (503) 335-2450 or (360) 418-6002.

More than 4,000 women in the Portland-Vancouver area are expected to join the study. Because

of the study guidelines, though, many more times this number need to be contacted.

"We are very pleased to be part of this important effort to prevent diseases that have such an enormous effect on women in this country," says John Santa, MD Medical Director for Blue

Cross and Blue Shield of Oregon. "If we can find effective ways to prevent these diseases, it would be an enormous boon to women and to our society." Many people still think of heart disease as a man's disease, but the fact is that 52 percent of all cardiovascular deaths in the U.S. occur among women. Breast cancer is the second largest cause of cancer death among women, after lung cancer, and colorectal cancer is the third. And the number of women who die of hip fractures resulting from osteoporosis is nearly the same as the number

who die from breast or colorectal cancer.

"The preventive approaches being tested in this study - hormone replacement therapy, dietary intervention, and calcium and vitamin D supplements - have all shown promise but have not yet been proven," says Barbara Valance, Dr. P.H., and principal investigator of the Portland study. "Our plan is to recruit nearly 160,000 women throughout the United States and to follow them for 12-15 years. When a research study is this large and long, we should be able to provide women and their health care providers with valid scientific information about the benefits and risks of these preventive approaches."

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National Cholesterol Education Program
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Tri-Met Service Adjustments Public Workshops

Tri-Met is proposing adjustments for September 1996 to improve bus service. Some popular routes will receive service increases, while other routes will receive minor service reductions. Participate in public workshops to express your comments and ideas.

Monday, March 25
Sunnyside School Library
13401 SE 132nd Avenue
Clackamas
7-8:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 26
Portland Building
2nd Floor Auditorium
1120 SW 5th Avenue
Noon-1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 26
Alameda School Cafeteria
2732 NE Fremont
7-8:30 p.m.

If you would like more information on the proposed service changes, call 238-7442 and leave your name and mailing address, TTY 238-5811. Persons requiring a sign language interpreter may call 238-4952 or TTY 238-5811 weekdays 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., at least two working days prior to the workshop.



Wildlife PROTECTION is an environmental responsibility with a long history at Pacific Power.

Company biologists, together with local agencies and community groups, have **WORKED TOGETHER** to insure effective protection of native wildlife from dangers associated with utility operations.

In 1995, Pacific Power was **recognized** by the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation

for its work protecting hawks, eagles and other raptors from harm. The presentation of the **Guy Bradley Award to Pacific Power** was made for

significant contributions to wildlife protection.



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