Summaries of UW ICTR AHEAD Pilot Grant Awards, 2015

Five new UW ICTR AHEAD Pilot Grants were awarded in 2015:

**The Survey of the Health of the Wausau Area Hmong Population (SHWAHP)**
Kevin Thao, MD, MPH, UW School of Medicine and Public Health | Family Medicine, Primary Care Fellow

The Hmong are a recent refugee group who arrived in the US from Southeast Asia as a result of the aftermath of the US Vietnam war. Although Hmong communities are located throughout the US the Hmong population comprises large Asian majorities in states such as California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The current challenge to health research in the Hmong community is the paucity of baseline health data on this community. The few things we do know about the Hmong indicate potential glaring health disparities between this community and mainstream America. The focus of initial research efforts will be to gather health information on the Hmong to identify these disparities. After these disparities have been identified and health priorities set, we hope to then address the health priorities by applying community health improvement interventions and investigating the efficacy of these interventions to improve the health within the community.

**Health Disparities: A Virtual, Experimental Model of Neighborhood Disadvantage**
Daniel Hackman, PhD, UW School of Medicine and Public Health | RWJ Health and Society Scholar

Neighborhood disadvantage is an important, independent predictor of health and development. However, the breadth of causal inferences that can be drawn regarding how neighborhood characteristics “get under the skin” to affect health is limited, due to conceptual and methodological challenges. This project capitalizes on the increasing sophistication and accessibility of virtual reality (VR) technologies that allow for an immersive experience that approximates the experience of being in different neighborhoods.

**Gender Differences in Early Life Adversities and Adult Obesity: An Examination of Psychosocial Pathways**
Chioun Lee, PhD, UW School of Medicine and Public Health | Health Disparities Research Scholar

The obesity epidemic is a major health concern in the U.S. Although individual factors are known determinants of body weight (e.g., genetic predisposition and behavior), persistent socioeconomic disparities exist in the risk of being obese. Furthermore, research has indicated that the social determinants of obesity originate early in life. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely than those from advantaged backgrounds to gain more weight and be obese, not only in childhood but also in adulthood. Few studies, however, have investigated whether gender differences are core mechanisms that explain differences in obesity. The overall goal of the proposed research is to pursue an interdisciplinary approach to identify gender-specific pathways from early life adversity to risk of obesity throughout adulthood.
Assessment of Maternal Care Services in Dane County
Sheryl Coley, DPH, MPH, UW School of Medicine and Public Health | Health Disparities Research Scholar

This study will investigate concepts of maternal care quality, with predominant focus on prenatal care, from the perspectives of African American and Caucasian mothers and providers of prenatal care, labor and delivery services, and postpartum care in Dane County. Perceptions in quality maternal care may differ by race and between patients and providers, but sparse literature exists that investigates these comparisons. Given these literature gaps and the continued racial disparities in health care utilization between African American and Caucasian mothers, more studies are needed to identify inequities in maternal care quality in order to improve utilization in services for African-American mothers.

What Shapes the Health of UW Women Veterans?
Tova Walsh, PhD, MSW, UW School of Medicine and Public Health | RWJ Health and Society Scholar

Women comprise an increasing proportion of the US veteran population, and while the male veteran population decreases, the population of women veterans is projected to steadily increase over the next 30 years. There is growing evidence of gendered health disparities among the veteran population, but little understanding of the mechanisms underlying these disparities. The proposed research will gather in-depth information about the understudied and rapidly growing population of women veterans, inform efforts to improve women veterans’ health and wellbeing, and provide a foundation for future research with male and female veterans to illuminate and reduce gendered health disparities.