

Initiatives

Developing efficacious strategies for preventing harm and promoting health among youth.

Fall 2007

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What is the AHB Research Institute?

The mission of the Addictive & Health Behaviors (AHB) Research Institute is to develop efficacious strategies for preventing harm and promoting health among vulnerable populations, such as children, adolescents, and young adults.

Founded in 2004, the University of Florida's Addictive & Health Behaviors (AHB) Research Institute is located in Jacksonville, Florida, and is affiliated with the Department of Health Education & Behavior, College of Health and Human Performance. The AHB Research Institute is directed by Dr. Chad Werch, Ph.D., and employs over thirty Research Coordinators and Assistants, Research Communications Specialists, Trained Health Behavior Interventionists, and Collaborating Research Scientists. During its brief existence, the Institute has been awarded over \$7 million in National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding to conduct research examining strategies to prevent harm and promote health among adolescents and young adults.

Since its inception in 2004, the AHB Research Institute has co-hosted annual Symposia on Addictive & Health Behaviors Research providing a forum for the multi-disciplinary exchange of both scientific and application knowledge in health behavior intervention. The AHB Institute also provides Graduate Research Fellowships and Post-Doctoral Appointments in health behavior and prevention intervention research. ■



Make A GIFT

For information on making a gift to the University of Florida's Addictive & Health Behaviors Research Institute, please call (904) 281-0726.



AHB Research Institute Faculty & Staff - May, 2007

Photograph by Alifed Barba

Current Research News

Since its creation in 2004, the University of Florida's Addictive & Health Behaviors Research Institute has conducted randomized community trials providing thousands of adolescents and young adults with prevention and health promotion interventions. This research supplies critical health services to a broad range of at-risk youth, while examining strategies and mechanisms for enhancing their well-being and personal development. These studies have evaluated innovative strategies found to significantly reduce alcohol, tobacco, and drug use and problems, while increasing physical activity, nutritious eating, sleep, stress management, self-control, perceived health status, and personal goal setting among participating adolescents and young adults.

Planned SUCCESS

The primary purpose of this on-going National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) funded research is to test the feasibility and efficacy of innovative drug abuse prevention strategies using positive personal development messages for young people who are transitioning from high school into adulthood. Preliminary results from this study indicate that brief image-based positive youth development interventions are feasible and have the potential to significantly impact problem and positive behaviors among high risk adolescents.

Project FITNESS

The primary purpose of this on-going National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) funded research is to test the validity, feasibility and efficacy of brief, innovative screening and preventive interventions using fitness and positive image communications for high-risk older adolescents in a university primary health care setting. Preliminary results from this study indicate that brief interventions based on the Behavior-Image Model are acceptable to college students, can be feasibly implemented in a university setting, and have the potential to significantly impact multiple health promoting and risk habits of college-age youth.

Active!

The primary aim of this National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) funded project is to test the efficacy of innovative, brief alcohol abuse prevention strategies in the form of an interpersonal consultation, parent communication materials, and a combined strategy, which integrate positive youth development messages and health risk messages for adolescents in diverse high school settings.

Research Projects with Mayo Clinic

In addition to research projects lead by the AHB Research Institute, a number of other studies are directed by Mayo Clinic in collaboration with the Institute, primarily examining smoking cessation and tobacco use among young adults. ☐

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3rd Symposium on Addictive & Health Behaviors Research

The University of Florida's Addictive & Health Behaviors Research Institute, in collaboration with Mayo Clinic and The American Academy of Health Behavior, hosts the 3rd Symposium on Addictive & Health Behaviors Research titled **Health Behavior Intervention: Combining Research and Practice**. This is the first year that the Symposium is open to national participation and will

be held at the beautiful Amelia Island Plantation Resort in Northeast Florida, September 24th and 25th, 2007. The 3rd Symposium provides a forum for the multi-disciplinary exchange of both scientific and application knowledge of *health behavior intervention*. Visit our registration website for more details at <http://www.doce-conferences.ufl.edu/addictive/>. 

Speakers and Topics:

Gilbert J Botvin, PhD - Cornell University
"Advances in School-Based Prevention: Effects on Multiple Health Behaviors"

Thomas H Brandon, PhD - H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center
"Two Approaches to Preventing Smoking Relapse"

Kelly Brownell, PhD - Yale University
"A New and Important Frontier: Food and Addiction"

K. Michael Cummings, PhD - Roswell Park Cancer Institute
"What the Marlboro Man Can Teach Us About Tobacco Control"

Meg Gerrard, PhD - Iowa State University
"Using Social Images in Health Behavior Interventions"

Frederick X. Gibbons, PhD - Iowa State University
"A Dual-Focus, Dual-Path Model for Health Intervention"

Michael G Perri, PhD - University of Florida
"Improving the Long-Term Management of Obesity"

Judith Prochaska, PhD, MPH - University of California, SF
"Multiple Risk Behavior Change: What Most Individuals Need"

Linda Carter Sobell, PhD - Nova Southeastern University
"Self-Change: Processes and Implications for the Treatment of Addictive Behaviors"

"The 3rd Symposium will provide a forum for the multi-disciplinary exchange of both scientific and application knowledge of health behavior intervention."

Collaborating Scientist Spotlight

Carlo C. DiClemente, Ph.D. received his MA in Psychology at the New School for Social Research and his Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the University of Rhode Island.

Dr. DiClemente is the co-developer of the Transtheoretical Model of behavior change with Dr. James Prochaska. Dr. DiClemente is the author of numerous scientific articles and book chapters on motivation and behavior change and the application of this model to a variety of problem behaviors. Dr. DiClemente is a co-author of a self-help book based on this model of change, *Changing for Good* and several professional books, *The Transtheoretical Model*, *Substance Abuse Treatment and the Stages of Change*, and *Group Treatment for Substance Abuse: A Stages of Change Therapy Manual*. His most recent book, *Addiction and Change: How Addictions Develop and Addicted People Recover* was published by Guilford Press in 2003. His current projects involve smoking prevention and cessation, brief interventions for problem drinking in medical settings, adolescent and adult dietary change and health risk reduction, and addiction prevention and treatment.

For the past 25 years he has conducted funded research in health and addictive behaviors. He has directed an outpatient alcoholism treatment program and serves as a consultant to private and public treatment and prevention programs. In 2002 he was given the Distinguished Contribution to Scientific Psychology award by the Maryland Psychological Association. For his work in the addictions he was given the Innovators Combating Substance Abuse award by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in 2003 and the John P. McGovern Award from the American Society on Addiction Medicine (ASAM) in 2006. He has served as president of the APA Division on Addictions (50) and was recently named a Fellow of the American Psychological Association.

When not working, Dr. DiClemente enjoys traveling, spending time with his family, and helping coach soccer, hiking, and skiing. 



AHB Research Institute Awarded \$3.2 Million to Study Alcohol and Fitness Interventions for Adolescents

Story By: Michele Dye



The AHB Research Institute, part of the University of Florida College of Health and Human Performance, received a \$3.2 million grant from the National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) to continue research on alcohol interventions for adolescents. NIAAA will fund the research for the next five years.

Dr. Chad Werch, director of AHB Research Institute and principal investigator, said this study is unique because adolescents from diverse high school settings will receive positive youth development messages along with health risk messages for substance abuse, thus targeting multiple health behaviors during a single, short intervention session.

“This project strives to reduce alcohol abuse and problems among high-risk older adolescents often ignored in prevention research and services,” Werch said.

Some of the problems the intervention study Active! hopes to combat are physical inactivity, alcohol and drug misuse, poor nutrition and lack of sleep, all of which are common issues among today’s teenagers. According to research, more than half of American youth are not physically active on a regular basis. National health data for high school students also show an alarming 25.5 percent of students have been involved in heavy episodic drinking in the past month, according to the Youth Risk Behavior and Surveillance Survey in 2005.

This grant will allow AHB Research Institute to provide a free, activity-based health promotion program for at-risk high school students at various Northeast Florida public schools, Werch said.

Werch said research on an initial intervention titled SPORT showed an increase in moderate and vigorous physical activity, and a decrease in alcohol use,

heavy drinking and alcohol problems among participating adolescents.

“Active! is built on years of previous research funded by the NIH,” Werch said. “It is designed to increase physical activity, decrease alcohol use and promote better nutrition and sleep habits.”

The first phase of the program will have students evaluate future intervention strategies for content and design. The next phase will consist of evaluating a 20-minute screen, fitness consultation, and goal plan delivered by computer or a fitness specialist. A third phase will examine a parent-based program delivered by mail to participating adolescents’ homes.

“Our trained intervention staff will provide brief motivational programs addressing a variety of health behaviors including, exercise, eating healthy, resting properly and avoiding alcohol and other drug use,” Werch said.

The project described was supported by Grant Number R01AA009283 from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism or the National Institutes of Health. 

Did You Know?

Major activities of the AHB Research Institute include:

- Providing Graduate Student Research Projects, Fellowships, and Post-Doctoral appointments in health behavior and prevention intervention research•
- Organizing and hosting the Symposium on Addictive & Health Behaviors Research•
- Implementing externally funded prevention and intervention research trials involving high risk youth•

Six Invited to Participate as Florida Health Promoting Research Schools



Six High Schools in Duval County, Florida have been invited to participate as **Florida Health Promoting Research (FHPR)** schools by the University of Florida's AHB Research Institute. FHPR schools are selected to participate in National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded studies to test novel health promotion programs designed to help adolescents set personal development goals and improve health habits. Participating FHPR schools will receive a \$500 stipend and a plaque honoring the schools' dedication to promoting the health, well-being, and academic achievement of its students in the latest Initiatives. Congratulations to all schools invited!

Duncan Fletcher High School has a total enrollment of 2747 students and is located at 700 Seagate Ave. in Neptune Beach, Florida. The principal is Mr. Dane Gilbert.

Englewood High School has a total enrollment of 2204 students and is located at 4412 Barnes Road in Jacksonville, FL. The principal is Dr. Alvin Brennan.

Mandarin High School has a total enrollment of 3065 students and is located at 4831 Greenland Road in Jacksonville, FL. The principal is Dr. Crystal Sisler.

Sandalwood High School has a total enrollment of 3306 students and is located at 2750 John Prom Blvd. in Jacksonville, FL. The principal is Ms. Victoria Shultz.

Terry Parker High School has a total enrollment of 2124 students and is located at 7301 Parker Schools Road in Jacksonville, FL. The principal is Mr. Scott Flowers.

Wolfson High School has a total enrollment of 2076 students and is located at 700 Powers Avenue in Jacksonville, FL. The principal is Mr. Hammond Gracy. 🗳️

Graduate Research & Post-Doctoral Fellowships

Currently, the Institute offers opportunities for graduate and doctoral students to receive research training:

Graduate Research Projects & Fellowships

- 3-12 credit hours
- 10-30 hours/week minimum

Post-Doctoral Fellowships

- 2-4 year appointments
- 40 hours/week minimum

Graduate Research and Post-Doctoral Fellows work under the supervision of Chad Werch, Ph.D., with assistance from the Institute's professional and highly trained staff. Graduate and doctoral students from the Department of Health Education & Behavior will be given preference. Students should have a basic knowledge of experimental research methods, health behavior theories, and descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Applications are due on the pre-registration deadline for the requested semester.

For more information about the application procedure, contact Melissa Wezniak by email at mwezniak@hhp.ufl.edu or by calling (904) 281-0726. You may also visit our website for additional Institute information at <http://www.hhp.ufl.edu/heb/Institute>. 🗳️



Faculty & Staff:

Institute Director

C. Chad Werch, PhD

Research Coordinators & Assistants

Hui Bian, PhD - Data Coordinator
Michele Moore, PhD - Project Coordinator
Alison Mendez, MS - Project Coordinator
Andrea Hart, MPH, CHES - Project Coordinator
Alan Alfaro, BS
Amber Barnes, BA
Justin Blanton, BA
Heather Boggess, BA
Steven Dolan, BA
Brian Hultgren, BS
Alvin Wong, MS, CHES

Communication Specialists

Melissa Wezniak, BA - Communications Coordinator
Jennifer Hamilton, BA - Communications Specialist
Zendra Mathis, BSH - Communications Assistant
Steven Dolan, BA - IT Specialist

Collaborating Research Scientists

Dolores Albarracin, PhD - University of Florida
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Tom ter Bogt, PhD - Utrecht University, Netherlands
Britt Brewer, PhD - Director, Virtual Brands, LLC
Kelli Brown, PhD - University of Florida
William Chen, PhD - University of Florida
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Health Behavior Interventionists

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Nancy Archer, RN
Jan Foster, RN
Regina Fountain, RN
Susan Landmark, RN
Sue Kreichelt, RN
Kaye Morris, RN
Mary Padzer, RN
Stevie Schoof, RN
Marie Wilkinson, RN

New Location!

The AHB Research Institute has a new home! We have recently relocated to the beautiful Belfort Building at 7800 Belfort Parkway, Suite 270 in Jacksonville, FL.

Jacksonville is a major metropolitan area with access to urban, suburban, and rural populations.

This location is critical to the successful planning and implementation of studies involving a broad range of populations located within easily accessible settings, including schools, health clinics, hospitals, health departments, businesses, and other institutions and agencies.



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