

**Board of Scientific Counselors  
National Center for Health Statistics  
Coordinating Center for Health Information and Service  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

**April 26-27, 2007  
NCHS  
3311 Toledo Rd.  
Hyattsville, MD 20782**

All attendees are listed in Attachment 1.

**Thursday, April 26, 2007, 2:15 p.m.** The meeting was called to order by Dr. June O'Neill, Chair of the National Center of Health Statistics (NCHS) Board of Scientific Counselors (BSC). She recognized Katherine Wallman, Chief Statistician of the United States and new ex-officio member of the BSC.

**Update from Ed Sondik:** Dr. Edward Sondik, NCHS Director, presented an update of NCHS program activities and budget issues. He asked the BSC to advise NCHS on how to best conduct NCHS programs in the current budgetary environment.

**Discussion:** Board members asked about the impact on the NCHS budget of the separation of Leadership and Management costs from program costs. Dr. Sondik responded that the immediate budgetary decisions that have to be made are not related to this accounting change.

**NCHS Data Division Director Presentations:** Each of the four NCHS Data Division Directors--Charles Rothwell, Division of Vital Statistics (DVS); Clifford Johnson, Division of Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (DHANES); Jane Sisk, Division of Health Care Statistics (DHCS) and Jane Gentleman, Division of Health Interview Statistics (DHIS)--outlined options for conducting their programs under the current budget situation.

**Discussion:** The discussion centered on possibilities for NCHS to acquire sufficient funds to meet the needs to continue to collect high quality health data. The Social Security Administration, the National Institute on Aging and other Federal agencies need mortality data, and similarly, agencies need birth data. Could NCHS negotiate with other agencies to provide funds? NCHS staff reported that the agency already received a significant amount of funding from other agencies but that additional avenues could be explored. There was the belief expressed that there needs to be discussion at higher levels in Federal Government to examine priorities. Dr. Sondik reported that the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Data Council can help with priority-setting, but its purview does not extend beyond DHHS and a broader consideration may be necessary. A suggestion was made to chart what must be done vs. what can be done by others or not done.

Mr. Rothwell of DVS was asked about the possibility of sampling vital records and the different methods to do so. He stated that all the sampling options had not yet been thoroughly explored nor had the reaction of states to a sampling proposal. BSC members stressed the need to prioritize among NCHS programs, not just within each Division. A discussion was held regarding the pros and cons of reducing each program a little, e.g. smaller samples or a change in periodicity. It was stated that periodicity changes are costly entailing startup costs to re-introduce surveys to the field. From a budgeting standpoint, it is usually better to have steady flat budget than big hills and valleys. It was recommended that NCHS look at options that include major changes. The BSC felt strongly that NCHS not compromise the quality of the data that are collected by continuing to make relatively smaller cuts across the board, but consider whether the agency needs to make major cuts in one or two areas to preserve the quality of the remaining data collections. This approach may have the added benefit of raising the seriousness of the situation to the attention of the funders. The need for the BSC and NCHS to look at long-term plans and implications of the budgets was emphasized.

Several other points were raised for NCHS to consider. Could NHIS be contracted? Could there be more coordination with other Department surveys that would result in cost savings? Who are the constituents for our surveys and what's collateral damage for making the cuts?

The BSC agreed to prepare a letter with its recommendations to Dr. Sondik and to send a letter conveying the seriousness of the situation to the Secretary, DHHS.

**Update from Bill Scanlon:** Bill Scanlon, liaison with the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics, provided an update on activities of NCVHS.

**Retiring Board Members:** Dr. Sondik thanked the retiring BSC members, June O'Neill, Nicholas Eberstadt, Bill Kalsbeek, Janet Norwood, and Louise Ryan. He reflected on how far the BSC had come since it had initially started four years ago. This group of members was the first to retire having served a full four year term.

**Friday, April 27, 2007, 8:30 A.M.:** The Board continued to discuss the NCHS budget situation.

**Nativity Review status:** The BSC discussed how best to convey the report of the Natality Review Panel to NCHS with the BSC's own comments. There was discussion that the report did not adequately address the points raised by the Natality Program and that there was undue focus on the issue of the implementation of the new birth certificate at the expense of other areas that needed to be addressed in the review. However, BSC members did not want to change the report by the review panel feeling that doing so would set a bad precedent. Rather, the BSC would convey, along with the report and the NCHS response, a cover letter referring to corrections made by NCHS. Members suggested that the cover letter include a comment that the review did not address the criteria laid out by the BSC. Future reviews should include more

involvement by the BSC and possibly include a BSC member on the review panel in order to ensure the areas that need to be covered are included in the review.

**Katherine Wallman:** Ms. Wallman presented the history and role of her statistical policy office in the Office of Management and Budget. She described the federal statistical system, including 10 large statistical agencies and 70 plus smaller agencies which have statistical information as byproduct of their regulatory or administrative functions. The two main reasons to create an office of statistical policy are to improve statistical policy and to reduce reporting burden. Her office also works on data collection rules, duplication of data collection, standards of race and ethnicity as well as other topics relevant to Federal statistics.

**NHIS 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary:** Jane Gentleman described the activities associated with the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the NHIS. These include as one day scientific meeting with papers describing the NHIS over the years and scientific results from the survey. There will also be a reception held at the U.S. Botanic Garden. BSC members are invited to both events.

**Health, United States, 2006.** Dr. Amy Bernstein reported on results from the special chartbook on pain contained in the latest publication. She also gave a preview of the planned 2007 publication and asked for special topic ideas for the 2008 publication. Some members expressed preference for young adults as a special topic since they may be underserved and seem to be having increasing health problems. Also, they are not getting adequate preventive services.

**NHANES Tutorial:** Rosemarie Hirsch presented a web-based tutorial that had been developed to facilitate the use of the very complex NHANES data set. The Continuous NHANES Tutorial is designed to help users navigate through the dataset. Users can browse through different modules to gain insight into NHANES data. The BSC was very impressed with the tool.

**No public comment. Adjourned 1:30.**

I hereby confirm that these minutes are accurate to the best of my knowledge.

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June E. O'Neill, Ph.D.

**Attachment 1**  
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION  
BOARD OF SCIENTIFIC COUNSELORS  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

Attendees - April 26, 2007 - BSC Meeting

**BSC Members**

June O'Neill  
Nicholas Eberstadt  
Irma Elo  
Raymond Greenberg  
William Kalsbeek  
Thomas Koepsell  
Janet Norwood  
Louise Ryan  
Steven Schwartz  
Matthew Snipp  
Ruth Stein

**Liaisons and Ex-officio Members**

Bill Scanlon  
Katherine Wallman

**NCHS Staff**

Ed Sondik  
Jennifer Madans  
Virginia Cain  
Rob Weinzimer  
Charles Rothwell  
Jane Sisk  
Jane Gentleman  
Cliff Johnson  
Linda Bilheimer

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Linda Bilheimer  
Amy Bernstein  
Rosemarie Hirsch