

EXTRAMURAL PREVENTION RESEARCH PROGRAM

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- Many of the nation's leading causes of premature death, disease, disability, and injury—including cancer, heart disease, asthma, suicide, and motor vehicle crashes—are preventable. These conditions are strongly affected by behavior, lifestyle, and the environment.
- Much is known about behaviors that affect health. However, far less is understood about how best to assist individuals and communities to establish and maintain healthful lifestyles and environments.
- Practitioners, policymakers, and communities often question whether research results and guidelines developed in other locales, using populations different from their own, are appropriate and affordable for their community.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

CDC is committed to funding high-quality public health research that makes the transition from basic research to practice. All research is initiated and proposed by researchers working in conjunction with communities to address local health priorities and concerns. All research projects also undergo peer review by expert researchers external to CDC to identify the highest quality proposals.

Through the first round of grants in 1999, CDC funded over 50 projects on topics such as asthma, traumatic brain injury, workplace safety, health disparities, heart disease, and violence. In 2002 and 2003, 26 more grants were funded from among 300 applications. This second round of grants was intended to stimulate investigator-initiated participatory research on community-based approaches to prevention. The participatory approach requires the researchers to engage practitioners, policymakers, and others in the community in defining the research questions of most importance to their community, as well as interpreting and applying the study findings in their own community.

Example of Program in Action

The University of Pennsylvania is evaluating the effects of a school-based nutrition policy initiative on the prevalence, incidence, and remission of overweight among mostly low-income, African-American middle school students. This community-based initiative seeks to change the school environment by supporting healthy eating, increasing physical activity, and decreasing the prevalence of overweight and diet-related diseases in children.

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are representing the Multnomah County Health Department in Portland, Oregon, and several community and academic partners in an effort to engage community members in a program to prevent priority health problems. The study will assess the role of CHWs and social capital in supporting the participatory process for community assessment and taking action on health concerns.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC and other public health organization programs are typically disease-specific, yet many research needs are similar across diseases and conditions. For example, poor living conditions can lead to violence among youth, learning problems in children who come to school hungry, and drug and alcohol abuse. The prevention research program, in addition to supporting research grants to deal with such cross-cutting issues, is also creating opportunities for broad-based dialogue and community input so that results of importance to more than one health condition are shared among all who might benefit from them.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

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