

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

Minutes of the Ninth Meeting  
May 4-5, 2006  
National Center for Health Statistics Headquarters  
3311 Toledo Road  
Hyattsville, Maryland 20782

June O'Neill, Ph.D., Chair of the Board of Scientific Counselors (BSC), National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), convened the ninth meeting of the BSC at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 4, 2006. Dr. O'Neill welcomed Dr. William Scanlon, liaison from the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics (NCVHS), and Dr. Barbara Luke, chair of the newly-formed Vital Statistics Natality Review panel. All attendees are listed in Attachment #1.

### **Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Vital Statistics and NCHS Surveys**

Dr. Stephanie Ventura, Chief of the Reproductive Statistics Branch, Division of Vital Statistics (DVS), NCHS made a presentation on the impact of Hurricane Katrina on data collection. (See attached PowerPoint presentation.) Board members asked about lessons learned, and Mr. Rothwell said that NCHS staff have had discussions with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) emergency preparedness office about possible improvements in response. Board members stated that significant funding increases were needed for the vital statistics system, and that in order for that to occur, much more public attention needed to be focused on the importance of vital statistics data.

### **Data Release Discussion**

Dr. Irma Elo identified issues related to improved access to restricted data. These included: 1) possible use of the Census Bureau's data centers for release of NCHS data; 2) improving Research Data Center (RDC) processes; and 3) exploring the possibility of making public-use versions of linked data files. Dr. Madans responded that NCHS is getting close to an arrangement for Census to house NCHS files. (Census responsibility would be limited to "housekeeping" functions; NCHS would still control the files.) Dr. Madans outlined efforts to upgrade RDC software and to evaluate the RDC pricing structure. Dr. Madans said that the outcome of negotiations with the National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information System (NAPHSIS) will determine the extent of vital statistics data that can be released. Dr. O'Neill suggested that Dr. Elo's access working group provide advice to NCHS about the vital statistics variables most needed by users in order to help NCHS make decisions about how to protect confidentiality at the same time making available the information most-needed by data users.

## **Update on NCVHS Activities**

Dr. William Scanlon, NCVHS liaison to the BSC, provided an update on NCVHS activities. He said the major focus continued to be on electronic health records, data linkages, emergency preparedness, and data on race and ethnicity. Dr. Scanlon and Dr. Elo proposed holding a joint session between the BSC and the NCVHS in September. They said that the areas of focus listed by Dr. Scanlon were all areas of interest to the BSC as well. Drs. Elo and Scanlon agreed to present a draft agenda for a combined session. There was general consensus that a joint meeting must be more than a “meet and greet”—it should be substantive in nature, and perhaps include small working groups each focusing on an issue of mutual concern.

## **Demonstration of Trends in Health and Aging Database**

Dr. Jim Lubitz, Acting Chief, Aging and Chronic Diseases Statistics Branch, Office of Analysis and Epidemiology (OAE), NCHS, presented a demonstration of the Trends in Health and Aging Database on the NCHS website. (See attached PowerPoint.)

## **NCHS Update:**

Dr. Edward Sondik, Director, NCHS, provided an update on the NCHS budget, program activities and data releases. (See attached PowerPoint presentation.) In the discussion that followed, several Board members emphasized the need for additional funding for NCHS, and Dr. O’Neill suggested that this need could be a topic of discussion at the joint BSC/NCVHS meeting being arranged for September.

## **NCHS Response to Mortality Review Panel:**

Mr. Robert Anderson, NCHS, summarized the NCHS response to the Mortality Review panel’s report. (See attached PowerPoint.)

## **Discussion of Next Steps in Mortality Review:**

Dr. O’Neill opened the discussion by thanking Dr. Kalsbeek for developing the protocol that guided the work of the Mortality Review Panel. It was the consensus of the Board that a significant increase in funding for NCHS would be needed in order for NCHS to carry out the recommendations of the review panel, and it was agreed that the transmittal letter from the Board to NCHS include a statement to that effect. Although the Board was generally in agreement with the recommendations of the panel and felt they should proceed if funding was available, the BSC did not endorse the Review Panel's recommendation calling for an ongoing working group to guide implementation on the grounds that it was both costly and redundant, given that the BSC engages in oversight. The Board agreed that future BSC reviews of NCHS programs should build in an opportunity for an NCHS response to draft recommendations, prior to formal submission of reviews by panels to the Board. (This was based on recognition by the Board that

some of the Panel's recommendations did not take into account actions already being undertaken by NCHS.) The Board asked that NCHS draft a synthesis of the report and the NCHS response, after which, the Board would respond with an endorsement that included a call for additional NCHS resources and excluded the provision of an oversight group to monitor implementation

#### **Natality Statistics Review Update:**

Dr. Barbara Luke, Chair of the Natality Statistics Review Panel, stated that her panel will benefit from the experience of first review panel. She said that, with the help of Dr. Steven Schwartz, she is supplementing the expertise of her panel with the advice of vital statistics registrars. She developed a timetable for her group's review that builds in time for NCHS to review a draft report and provide feedback in time for her group to make revisions and submit a final product at the September BSC meeting.

#### **Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) Evaluation, and Next Steps:**

Mr. Edward Hunter, NCHS, discussed the PART process and summarized the evaluation received by NCHS. (See attached PowerPoint). Rob Weinzimer described the new PART measure related to customer surveys, and identified four groups of customers that NCHS plans to survey. Ann Aikin, NCHS, asked the Board for advice about organizations to survey and questions to ask for the second phase of the customer survey activity—the survey of key organizational users. Suggestions of whom to survey included: data librarians of population research centers; Society for Epidemiologic Research (SER) and other professional organizations. Suggestions of questions to ask included: ease of access and quality of documentation. Other advice from the BSC: make sure to distinguish between users of published data vs datafiles; make sure to distinguish between users of the various NCHS data collection programs.

#### **Redesign of the National Hospital Discharge Survey:**

Dr. Jane Sisk, Director, Division of Health Care Statistics, NCHS, briefed the Board about plans to redesign the National Hospital Discharge Survey (NHDS) (see attached PowerPoint). In the discussion that followed, BSC members encouraged Dr. Sisk to consider opportunities for private sector support for the survey—through such vehicles as modules targeted to providing more detail about selected conditions of interest. Board members also emphasized the importance of working closely with CMS on the survey.

#### **Announcements:**

The next meeting of the BSC will take place on September 14 - 15, 2006.

The Chair adjourned the meeting of the BSC at 2:00 p.m. on May 5, 2006.

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

/S/ \_\_\_\_\_  
June E. O'Neill, Ph.D.

**Attachment #1: Attendance: Ninth Meeting of the Board of Scientific Counselors,  
NCHS, May 4-5, 2006.**

Members present were:

Chair: June E. O'Neill, Ph.D.

Designated Federal Official: Virginia S. Cain, Ph.D.

Nicholas Eberstadt, Ph.D.

Irma Elo, Ph.D.

Ray Greenberg, M.D.

Michael Grossman, Ph.D.

William Kalsbeek, Ph.D.

Thomas Koepsell, M.D.

Janet Norwood, Ph.D.

Steven Schwartz, Ph.D.

Matthew Snipp, Ph.D.

Members not present were:

Neil Powe, M.D.

Louise Ryan, Ph.D.

NCHS staff present were:

Robert Weinzimer

Nathaniel Schenker

Stephanie Ventura

Martha Munson

Melonie Heron

Sharon Kirmeyer

Brady Hamilton

Paul Sutton

Joyce Martin

Eve Powell-Griner

Marian MacDorman

Susan Schober

Julia Holmes

Jane Sisk

James Lubitz

Pamela Pressly

Kenneth Kochanek

Elizabeth Arias

Irma Arispe

Robert Anderson  
Krystal Davis  
Robert Pokras  
Marni Hall  
Jean Kozak  
Michelle Podgornik

Other Attendees

Barbara Luke  
William Scanlon