

Women's Wellness Quarterly

Healthy Women, Healthy Families, Healthy West Virginia
National Center of Excellence in Women's Health

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NCoEWH Update

By: Elizabeth "Betty" Critch

March 20th was the first day of spring. The days are growing longer and there are finally signs of buds, renewed growth, and new life. During this season, we encourage you to turn your attention to the renewal of yourself and the women in your lives. National Women's Health Week is celebrated **May 8-14, 2011**. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health coordinates this week-long event to promote women's health. The theme for 2011 is "It's Your Time." National Women's Health Week empowers women to make their health a top priority. It also encourages them to take steps to improve their physical and mental health.

Here in West Virginia, we feel promoting women's health is so important that we do not just spend one week celebrating it, we dedicate the **entire month of May** to it!

At the Center of Excellence in Women's Health, we have been busy planning activities and events to encourage women to place a priority on their own health and wellness. Below are a few of these initiatives aimed at empowering women to take charge of their own health:

- **"Leading Women to Healthy Lifestyles" workshop, April 14th** at the Association of Social Workers conference in Charleston
- **"Community Strategies to Relate to Women's Health Experiences" workshop, April 26-27th** at The World Congress 2nd Annual Leadership Summit on The Business of Women's Health in Boston, MA.
- **2011 Spring Women's Extravaganza on April 30th** in Morgantown. The CoEWH will be providing health care screenings, health information and other things at this special day for women at Mylan Park's Expo Center.
- **WVU Employee Fest, May 9th** in Morgantown. The CoEWH is partnering with WV Healthy Start/HAPI project and is encouraging women to sign the Office of Women's Health pledge to make a health care appointment, and distributing health information.
- **WV's Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health conference on Women's Health, May 10-11th** in Charleston.



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(NCoEWH Update Continued)

- **“WOW: Women Leading the Way to Healthier Lifestyles” workshops, June 10th** at the Women’s Leadership Institute hosted by Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College at Chief Logan Convention Center, Logan, WV.
- **Preston County WOW Retreat , June 11th** at the 4H Camp in Bruceton Mills. The CoEWH is partnering with the Preston County Family Resource Network to offer a WOW retreat that will focus on adolescent girls and their mothers, as well as other women in the community.
- **“Addressing Leadership Roles in Fostering Healthy Behaviors” workshop, June 22-23** at the US Public Health Service’s symposium in New Orleans.
- **Greenbrier County WoW , July 9th** at the WV School of Osteopathic Medicine in Lewisburg. The CoEWH will once again partner with the Greenbrier Valley Medical Center and the School of Osteopathic Medicine to host a WOW retreat for the women of Greenbrier and the surrounding counties.
- **Marion County WOW , July 30th** at the Heston Farm in Fairmont. The CoEWH will hold its 7th annual WOW Retreat for the women of Marion, Monongalia, Harrison and other North Central counties. We are currently putting together a steering committee of community leaders to help guide us in the organization of this event. If you would like to be part of this committee, please contact our office at (304) 293-0946 or ecparsons@hsc.wvu.edu.

As you can see, we are working hard to empower women by celebrating and promoting their health, not only during May, but in the upcoming months. We hope that you will share with us activities you and your organizations are planning to celebrate Women’s Health Month. We will be updating our web page as more information becomes available. We also encourage all of you in our network to register your Women’s Health Week events at the U.S. Office of Women’s Health website. Check out the print-ready materials and information and register your May events for Women’s Health at www.womenshealth.gov

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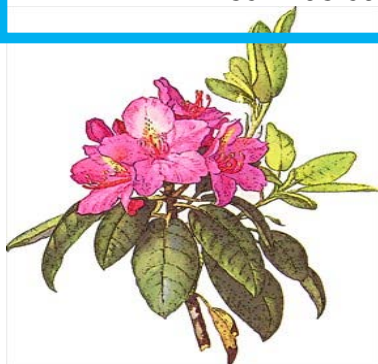
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Mark your calendar--

the next Community Advisory Network (CAN) meeting is June 7th from 9:00-10:30 am Room 4080 Health Sciences Center Morgantown, WV.

Take the pledge!

The ninth annual National Women's Checkup Day will be held on Monday, May 9, 2011, during National Women's Health Week. The day is dedicated to encouraging women to visit health care professionals to receive or schedule a checkup and to promote regular checkups as vital to the early detection of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, mental health illnesses, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and other conditions.

We encourage all WV women to:

- Contact their current health care professional to schedule a checkup and get important screenings.
- Discuss with health care professionals which screenings and tests are right for them, when they should have them, and how often.
- Use the [interactive screening chart and immunization tool](#) at <http://www.womenshealth.gov/whw/health-resources/screening-tool/> to learn what screenings and immunizations are needed and at what age.
- Schedule at least one preventive health screening during May 2011.

Take the pledge at www.womenshealth.gov/whw/check-up-day/

New Study Ranks Counties by Health

A new report finds that McDowell County residents are the least healthy in West Virginia. The County Health Rankings report released by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin evaluates more than two dozen factors that researchers believe influence a person's health, including behaviors like smoking, access to hospitals and clinics, income, and the physical environment where they live. They also look at the number of people who die before the age of 75, because a large proportion of those deaths are preventable.

Many of the healthiest counties in West Virginia are located in the northern and eastern parts of the state. These included: Pendleton, Tucker, Monongalia, Grant, Wirt, Jefferson, Putnam, Hampshire, Marshall and Berkeley. The 10 least healthy counties are: McDowell, Mingo, Wyoming, Logan, Boone, Lincoln, Mercer, Wayne, Gilmer and Summers.

For more information visit:

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org>

HEALTH INSURANCE EXCHANGE BILL PASSES LEGISLATURE

West Virginia passed a bill during the 2011 Legislative session that will allow the state to run its own health insurance exchange starting in 2014.

Senate Bill 408 is part of the Obama administration's health-care law that would be a marketplace where people and businesses could buy insurance policies. West Virginia will be eligible this spring for up to \$50 million in federal funds to run the exchange.

The Health Insurance Exchange Act will lead to better health coverage and lower insurance premiums," says Acting Senate President Jeff Kessler.

Affordable Care Act Turns One Year Old!

March 23, 2011 marked the one year anniversary of President Obama signing the Affordable Care Act into law. It is important for women to examine how this sweeping legislation impacts them and their families. According to HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius the Affordable Care Act is the “strongest women’s health law since Medicare.”

A study by the Commonwealth Fund, a private foundation, found that the new law is likely to stabilize and reverse women's growing exposure to health care costs over the next decade. Up to 15 million women who now are uninsured could gain subsidized coverage under the law. And 14.5 million "underinsured" women will benefit from provisions that improve coverage. While women are as likely as men to be without health insurance, their role as [caregivers](#) and their own unique health care needs leave them [more exposed](#) to the rapidly rising costs of care and to the problems resulting from loss of health coverage.

Some of the provisions most important to women include:

- Insurers can no longer deny coverage because of pre-existing health conditions. This allows many women who might have been denied coverage before (sometimes for being a victim of domestic violence) to obtain insurance, but also gives them the freedom to change jobs without worrying about health coverage.
- It will be illegal to charge women extra for health insurance. (Some women have been charged 150% more than men for the same insurance.)
- New plans will be required to cover newborn and maternity care.
- Lifetime dollar limits on benefits are banned.
- New plans will have to offer preventative screenings at no cost.

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For more information, see: <http://www.commonwealthfund.org/Content/Publications/Issue-Briefs/2010/Jul/Realizing-Health-Reforms-Potential.aspx>

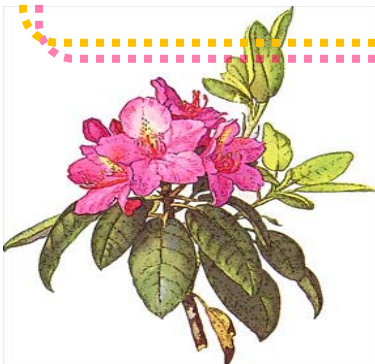
The WVU Mary Babb Randolph Cancer Center is hosting a Breast Cancer Survivors Dinner on **October 9, 2011**. Also there will be **FREE** clinical breast exams offered on **October 24, 2011** at MBRCC.

TAKE THE HEALTH CARE REFORM QUIZ

There is a lot of confusion and misinformation about changes to the health care system under the Affordable Care Act. To find out how informed you are, take the short 10 question quiz at:

<http://healthreform.kff.org/Quizzes/Health-Reform-Quiz.aspx>

Want to get together with others who like to walk and need to be more active? Wild Wonderful Walking Groups are forming in communities all over the state. A new walking kit is available for group leaders. Contact Elaine Bowen at Elaine.Bowen@mail.wvu.edu to request a kit: *Women’s Health Week/Month Event*



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Senior Nursing Students “Take Time to Talk”

Submitted by Susan Pinto, RN, BSN, FNP-BC , Clinical Instructor, WVU School of Nursing

Senior nursing students completing their community health rotations last fall were involved in a different kind of clinical experience that satisfied their course requirements and provided a unique opportunity for them to “take time to talk”. The talking, and more importantly, the listening occurred at the local homeless shelter in Morgantown, The Bartlett House. The idea for a student- and faculty-led service Project at Bartlett House grew from observations of families in general and women in particular while visiting Bartlett House every other Thursday after participation in MUSHROOM rounds (**M**ultidisciplinary **U**nsheltered **H**omeless **R**elief **O**utreach of **M**organtown). The nursing students partnered with medical students who were responsible for organizing and leading this bi monthly homeless outreach project. They expressed concern about what it might be like for women to face the challenges that come with spending time in a homeless shelter. While at the shelter, they saw mothers trying to “keep it together” for their families after being uprooted from the place that they called home. The women were at the shelter for various reasons - financial crisis, domestic violence, mental health problems or substance abuse issues – but they all shared a common bond. They were all struggling to maintain stability for themselves and their children.

Project planning and development were initiated in collaboration with Randall Brown, Program Manager. Along with clinical instructor and project organizer, Susan Pinto, the first meeting was also attended by Dr. Sue Coyle, Director of Rural Health Education at the School of Nursing. Mr. Brown expressed an interest in having nursing students come to the shelter on a regular basis to participate in “Lifeskills” sessions that the women were required to attend. A plan to have nursing students come bimonthly (every other Tuesday) @ 1 and 6 PM was developed. The evening time slot was created to accommodate women who were at work during the day. All agreed that the sessions provided by the students should be based upon topics identified by the women. A flier was created to announce the first session, inviting women to think about topics that they would want to discuss over the course of the semester.

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The first meeting was attended by 5 nursing students and 6 women. Initially, the women were a bit hesitant to suggest ideas. But after some general discussion, they expressed interest in discussing topics covering general women's health issues and locating health care providers and resources in the area. They were also concerned about making sure that their children were up to date on recommended screenings and immunizations. Additionally, they expressed an interest in discussing stress management and intimate partner violence.

A total of 10 sessions were held throughout the semester. Six to seven women attended each session. As is common in homeless shelters, there were some women who only attended a session or two before moving on. Additionally the 12 year daughter of one of the women attended several of the sessions. Seven students went to each session and two other students came to at least 2 sessions. A total of approximately 60 community service hours were accumulated by the students.

Several separate sessions were coordinated for 2 women who were pregnant. Arrangements were made to have these sessions led by Family Nurse Practitioner student, Holly Grogg. Holly provided prenatal style education classes for these women because they were unable to afford the cost of attending classes at the local hospital. Fortunately, one of these women was able to secure housing and moved out of the shelter with her family before the new baby was born. All of the students held a baby shower for the other expectant mom during the last session at the end of the semester. They donated food and planned games. Faculty from the SON donated enough money to buy a double stroller as a gift. This was particularly helpful because the expectant mom also had a 16 month old.

The sessions were well received by all of the participants. The director reported that the women spoke favorably of the project and always expressed interest in attending. Many of the students continued to come even after they had completed their community service requirements. These students indicated that they were committed to the project and that they enjoyed coming.

There are plans for the project to continue in the upcoming semester. The School of Nursing has committed to provide services to the HUD SHP(What does this stand for?) Program for the West Run Permanent Supportive Housing Project and the West Run Transitional Housing for Families Project of Bartlett House, Inc. when the shelter relocates to a larger facility outside of the city limits.

Plans for the future include incorporating an evaluation component- inviting the women and students to provide feedback. Additionally, involving other faculty members to share their expertise and support the students as the project expands is essential.

Providing an opportunity for the women's voices to be heard served everyone involved. Based upon their response, gathering around a table and sharing stories proved to be a great stress reliever for the women in the midst of a very vulnerable time in their lives. Just as important, the students were introduced to a nursing intervention very different from anything they had been exposed to previously- the power of "taking time to talk".



Setting small, weekly goals to improve your health is the most practical way to make improvements. The WVU Extension Service has weekly fun challenges just for you. Join in the fun at <http://fh.ext.wvu.edu/wellness>

The first annual **Women's Leadership Institute** is scheduled **June 10-11 at Chief Logan Conference Center, in Logan, WV.** It is hosted by Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College. This is an exciting opportunity for women across the coalfields to come out and engage in new learning experiences, build their network of friends and colleagues, and have fun. Workshop descriptions, including several on women's health topics, and registration information can be found on the web page: www.women.southernwv.edu. Due to generous donations by many sponsors, the conference registration is a low \$25 per person. A limited number of scholarships are also available. Don't miss this chance to develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence to be a successful leader in your family, community and workplace. To register go to: www.women.southernwv.edu

"Wellness Opportunities in the Workplace – WOW"

At HARRISON POWER STATION

The Wellness Committee at Allegheny Energy's Harrison Power Station is hosting an Annual Health Festival on Thursday, June 23, 2011. With over 230 employees the Harrison Power Station is Allegheny Energy's largest plant. Over 300 attend the Annual Health Festival as all family members and retirees are invited.

This year's Festival will begin at 10:30 a.m. and will last until 2:00 p.m. Shelter, tables, electricity and food are provided. To participate contact one of the members of the Wellness/Health Festival Committee listed below:

Tom Walls (twalls@alleghenyenergy.com)
Julie Ford (jford@alleghenyenergy.com)
Fred Willard (awillard@alleghenyenergy.com)

Lennie Cain (lcain@alleghenyenergy.com)
John Graziani (jgrazia@alleghenyenergy.com)



WVU study finds link between early menopause and environmental chemicals

A study by researchers in the West Virginia University Department of Community Medicine found that women with high levels of an environmental chemical are at increased odds of having experienced menopause earlier in life than those with lower levels.

Perfluorocarbons (PFCs) are manmade chemicals that are used in a variety of household products, including stain repellants and waterproofing found in food containers, clothing, furniture, carpet and paint. Because of their widespread use, PFCs are also found in water, air, soil, plants, animals and humans.

“PFCs are toxins that shouldn’t be in our bodies in the first place, but 98 percent of people tested have measurable levels of PFCs in their blood,” Sarah Knox, Ph.D., epidemiologist and professor in the Department of Community Medicine and lead author of the study, said.

The study included 25,957 women ages 18-65 in eight water districts in the Parkersburg area. Researchers found a significant association between high PFC levels in the blood and an early onset of self-reported menopause as well as low estrogen levels. However, the causality is still unclear.

“If the PFCs are causing early menopause, then those women are at an increased risk for heart issues. If they aren’t, there are still toxins accumulating in the body that shouldn’t be there,” Dr. Knox said. “Either way, it’s bad news.”

The next step, Knox said, is to determine an estimated age of menopause and to conduct a population-based study to figure out the causality.

In the meantime, Knox said there are things that people can do to reduce their exposure to PFCs:

- Have hardwood floors in the home instead of stain-resistant carpeting
- Wear all-cotton clothing; do not put children in flame-resistant clothing
- Make popcorn in an air popper instead of a microwave
- Microwave food in glass instead of plastic containers
- Use cast-iron cookware instead of non-stick coated cookware

Other WVU researchers who participated in the study include: Alan Ducatman, M.D., Anoop Shankar, M.D., Ph.D., Stephanie Frisbee, Ph.D., and Beth Javins of the Department of Community Medicine and Timothy Jackson, M.D., of the Department of Medicine.

The study, “Implications of Early Menopause in Women Exposed to Perfluorocarbons,” will appear in the June issue of the “Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism,” the world’s leading peer-reviewed journal for endocrine clinical research and cutting-edge clinical practice reviews. The abstract can be viewed online at <http://jcem.endojournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/jc.2010-2401v1>.



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If you would like to contribute an article to our newsletter or need to contact the NCoEWH for any reason please call (304) 293-0946 or email:

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West Virginia University Robert C. Byrd Health Sciences is proud to be one of 20 nationally designated National Centers of Excellence in Women's Health. This designation is awarded by the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office of Women's Health. West Virginia University (WVU) joins institutions such as Harvard University, University of California, Los Angeles; Boston University Medical Center; and the University of Illinois at Chicago, among others. More than prestige, the designation reflects the quality and scope of care, research, and education we offer at WVU and gives us an opportunity to build on that foundation and enrich the lives of the women in West Virginia

www.wvhealthywomen.org www.wowicandoit.com

www.womenshealth.gov

