



# NC CoOp Notes

*A newsletter serving the communities of Durham, Wake, Orange, Johnston and Chatham Counties, North Carolina*

Vol 8 No. 2

Fall 2007

## Working in the Community, Supporting People Where They Are

The mission of the CoOp Studies is to help substance abusers in community-based settings. Our research aims to reduce substance use, HIV/STI/HCV-risk, sexual violence, and comorbid conditions; and to increase risk- protective factors that improve health and well-being.

Our work involves collaborating with communities to address social problems by:

- ♦ using nontraditional outreach methods to reach populations that typically do not access services,
- ♦ fostering community participation to develop and evaluate appropriate interventions, and
- ♦ sharing the research findings with the community

Under the direction of Dr. Wendee Wechsberg, we have field sites in Durham, Smithfield, Siler City and Raleigh, North Carolina, as well as in South Africa. In each community, we forge partnerships between RTI's scientific expertise and community agencies and community advisory boards (CABs) made up of citizens and professionals dedicated to improving the lives of substance abusers.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: FALL 2007

### *New CDC Project: Adapting the Women's CoOp for At-Risk Teens*

Both national and North Carolina data indicate that young African-American women are disproportionately affected by HIV and AIDS. In addition, data from our Women's CoOp studies show that many African-American women are at risk for dropping out of school, using drugs, and becoming sexually active in their adolescence. By targeting this population in adolescence, it may be possible to reduce high-risk behaviors and prevent HIV infection.

This new 5-year study funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will adapt the Women's CoOp for at-risk African-American female teens between the ages of 15 and 17 in Wake and Durham Counties. During the first phase of the study, we will solicit input from teens and other community stakeholders on how to adapt the intervention. In the second phase, we will conduct a randomized trial with 400 teens to test the effectiveness of the adapted intervention relative to a standard control intervention. The adapted intervention will address knowledge about HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs); health consequences of substance abuse; healthy relationships with males; condom communication with partners; positive social supports; HIV, STI, and pregnancy risk-reduction; and violence prevention methods.

If you have ideas about how to recruit participants for this study please contact Rachel Middlesteadt Ellerson at 919-541-7255 or [rachelm@rti.org](mailto:rachelm@rti.org).

### *Women's CoOp II*

Data collection for Women's CoOp II will be completed by December 2007. This project has been in existence for nearly 10 years, and although we are sorry to see it come to an end, we are excited by the current and future studies that are adapting the Women's CoOp intervention for other populations in North Carolina.

To date, 454 women have completed Intake 1 and 402 women have completed Intake 2. The follow-up rates are 77% (n=354), 79% (n=232), and 83% (n=199) at 6, 12, and 18 months, respectively. Our field staff is continuing to locate the remaining women during the final phase of data collection. If you know of women who have been in this study, please spread the word!

*Special thanks to Theresa Frye (Durham County) and Shirley Brown (Wake County) for their leadership at the field sites, and to Elchico Williams who has been working with us for over 7 years. Your efforts are greatly appreciated by us and the women who participate in our studies.*

### *The Pregnant Women's CoOp*

The past few months have been an exciting and busy time for project staff in the Pregnant Women's CoOp study. In May, we began recruiting women for this study and we hope to have 100 participants by the end of July 2008. To date, we have recruited only eight women in the study, so please spread the word about the Pregnant Women's study!

To be eligible for this study, women must

- ♦ be at least 14 weeks pregnant,
- ♦ be African American,
- ♦ have used an illegal drug in the past 12 months, and
- ♦ be currently enrolled in a drug treatment program (either inpatient or outpatient).

To make sure that we reach as many women as possible, we have made this study completely portable. We have installed all of the questionnaires and intervention sessions onto laptops so that our project staff members can conduct the sessions at drug treatment centers around the area, in addition to our long-standing community field sites in Raleigh and Durham. If you know of any treatment centers that see pregnant women, we would love to hear from you.

The Woman-Focused HIV Prevention with Pregnant African Americans in Treatment (Pregnant Women's CoOp) is funded under grant number 1R01 DA020852-01 from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

## Winding Down the Family CoOp

This summer, a number of youth and family projects ended, such as the Families Overcoming Risks Together (FORT). Other projects completed data collection and field activities, such as evaluations of the Parent-Child Communications Video (PCCV) and Multi-Problem Youth (MPY) and Adolescent Drug and Alcohol Abuse Screening Instruments (ADASI)

In addition, we bid farewell to Dr. Lam, who joined the faculty at the University of Rochester in New York. Dr. Lam hopes to continue collaborating with folks in NC and has some plans in the works to continue the family work in NC. Feel free to contact her at [KK\\_Lam@urmc.rochester.edu](mailto:KK_Lam@urmc.rochester.edu), or (585) 276-3952.

*Thank you* to all of the amazing and dedicated community members and providers in NC for their help and support in establishing the family work thus far. It could not have been done without you. We'll keep our fingers crossed that other collaborative projects will come through to continue this work in the future.



## Men's Attitudes on Sex & Health (MASH) Study

Dr. Zule and his team kicked off a new CDC-funded cooperative agreement project working with gay and bisexual men who use methamphetamine. They are currently conducting in-depth interviews and focus groups with these men as well as with area service providers working with this population. These data will be used to refine a single-session motivational intervention to help reduce sexual risk while using methamphetamine.

If you know or work with any men 18 years of age or older in the Raleigh-Durham area who might be interested in participating in this study, please have them contact Curt Coomes at (919) 990-8348 to see if they are eligible.



## Rural-Urban Health Study

This study, funded by NIDA, operates in Wake, Durham, Chatham, and Johnston Counties. It is part of a cooperative agreement studying HIV transmission among networks of drug users and men who have sex with men (MSM). To date, more than 1,500 participants have been interviewed on their risk behaviors and have undergone HIV/STI screening. Some key findings from the preliminary analysis of Year 1 data include the following:

**Sexual risk is associated with the use of specific drugs and drug combinations.** In a sample of heterosexual participants, in sexual encounters where alcohol was the only drug used, there was no increase in sexual risk-taking. However, when alcohol and crack cocaine were combined, participants were more than twice as likely to engage in unprotected anal sex.

**Participants' perceptions of sex partners' other partners and HIV status were not accurate.** In a sample of participants who reported information on their sex partners and then brought those partners to be interviewed separately, 58% underestimated the number of additional sex partners that their sex partners had. Almost half (48%) did not know or were incorrect about the HIV status of their partners.



## Sexually Active Men's Study

Dr. Costenbader recently received funding from the UNC–Center for AIDS Research to conduct a small formative study of HIV risk among men who have sex with both men and women (MSMW). MSMW may be a particularly important risk group in the HIV epidemic as they are thought to be a bridge between population groups at high-risk for HIV (e.g., MSM) and population groups with low rates of HIV (e.g., heterosexual females). This study proposes to conduct an examination of bisexual behavior among high-risk men recruited from a variety of venues in Durham and Raleigh. The overall goal of this study is to collect pilot data that will inform the development of a larger intervention project tailored to the needs of MSMW most at risk for HIV transmission and acquisition. This research builds on our current NIDA- and CDC-funded work with HIV among drug users and MSM in the Raleigh-Durham area.



## Chronic Hepatitis Intervention Project for Drug Users (Hep-C)

We recently completed analyses comparing the outcomes of the motivation and education interventions that were tested in this project. We found that both interventions were successful in reducing alcohol use, injection risk, and sex-risk behaviors. However the motivational intervention was more effective than the educational intervention in reducing alcohol use at 6-month follow-up. This is an important finding because most injecting drug users (IDUs) are infected with the hepatitis C virus, and alcohol use is one of the main risk factors for cirrhosis and liver cancer among people who have hepatitis C. The motivational intervention was also more effective than the educational intervention in getting people to use a new syringe the last time that they injected.

We have written a paper based on these findings, and will make it available to the CAB when it is published. Other findings from this study that have been published recently include the effects of alcohol on quality of life and the effects of methamphetamine on heterosexual risk behaviors. We will be happy to provide these articles to CAB member on request.



## Donations Please!

We are in need of donations for the North Carolina field sites, including adult, maternity, children's and baby clothing; books; development toys; car seats; magazines; toiletries, etc. Your donations are greatly appreciated and will be put to good use! Please contact Rachel Middlesteadt Ellerson at 919-541-7255 or email [rachelm@rti.org](mailto:rachelm@rti.org) about ways you can donate.

*Thank you so much!*



## We've Moved

Our Wake County field site has moved to our old location!

As of August 30, our new address is:

507 East Martin Street  
Apartments E and F  
Raleigh, NC 27601

Telephone:  
(919) 838-0494

(Right around the back of the same building.)



Please visit our website:

[www.rti.org/satei](http://www.rti.org/satei)

# OUR RESEARCH AROUND THE WORLD

## SOUTH AFRICA

### Pretoria, South Africa

The Women's Health CoOp study in Pretoria, South Africa, in collaboration with Sizanang, Inc., is now starting its fifth and final year. The primary objective of this study, funded by the National Institute on Alcohol and Alcoholism, is to better understand the relationship between alcohol and other drug use, violence against women, and HIV risk behaviors. Unprotected sex with their main or casual sex partners place SA women at risk for HIV. Additionally, alcohol and other drug use is known to impair judgement and may increase the risk for other negative consequences, such as victimization.

#### Study Milestones

As of mid-August 2007, the following Pretoria study milestones have been achieved:

- 771 women met the study eligibility requirements
- 554 women enrolled in the study
- 90% returned for the 3-month follow-up
- 93% returned for the 6-month follow-up



*Pretoria staff member, Moira, doing outreach*

#### Intervention Effects: Preliminary Findings

##### Sexual Risk

- Study participants report an increase in condom use with their main sex partners.
- Significant increases are being observed in the proportion of women who are confident in discussing condom use with their main partners.
- Using role-play and demonstration, the women are increasing their skills to use condoms correctly.

##### Substance Use

- Study participants report reductions in the use of marijuana, crack/cocaine, and alcohol from baseline to the 6-month follow-up.

##### Violence

- Study participants indicate significant reductions in violent acts by partners, with the average number of violent acts experienced in the past 90 days decreasing from baseline to 6-month follow-up.

### Women's Health CoOp

We are excited to announce a new study in the Western Cape Region of South Africa, with the Medical Research Council (MRC) and Sizanang, Inc. as collaborating partners. This study builds on findings from our recently completed Cape Town Women's Health CoOp pilot study funded by NIDA. The primary aim of the pilot study was to adapt a woman-focused HIV prevention intervention for substance-using Black and Coloured women. Findings from the pilot study indicated that participants reported a reduction in their substance use, sex-risk behavior, and experiences with victimization at the 1-month follow-up assessment. This new 5-year study, funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), is designed to reach a larger sample of women in the Western Cape.

### Cape Town Methamphetamine Supplement Study

In collaboration with the MRC and with sponsorship from NIDA, RTI conducted a survey among 13- to 20-year-old female school dropouts to examine the pervasiveness of methamphetamine use in poor Black townships and Coloured communities. Field operations for this study began in March 2006 and ended in August 2006. A total of 450 young women (189 Black African and 261 Coloured) were surveyed. The average age was 17 years old. The average age of dropping out of school was 15 years old. The majority of participants reported high levels of substance abuse, particularly use of methamphetamine, which can lead to other risky behaviors. However, racial differences were found between coloured and Black women. Coloured women were more likely to use methamphetamine, whereas Black women were more likely to use alcohol and cannabis.



*Women prepare for a focus group in Cape Town*

### Cape Town Focus Groups

During summer 2006, focus groups were conducted in both Black and Coloured communities with female adolescents who were involved in the methamphetamine study to better understand the issues they face in their communities and to receive feedback about an intervention under development. The focus groups revealed that young females turn to substance abuse because they are stressed and bored, and because their boyfriend's are drug dealers and/or gang members.

## RUSSIA

In partnership with the Leningrad Regional Center of Addictions, we will be testing an adapted version of the Women's Health CoOp study to investigate injection drug use and HIV risk in St. Petersburg Russia. One hundred female IDUs will be recruited for this study. To be eligible for the study, an individual must (a) be female, (b) have injected drugs in the past year, (c) currently be in substance abuse treatment, (d) be between the ages of 18 and 30 years old, (e) consent to participate in the study, and (f) provide locator information for follow-up assessment in the St. Petersburg area.



**For more information on these programs,  
please contact:**

Rachel Middlesteadt Ellerson..... 919-541-7255  
Field Coordinator.....[rachelm@rti.org](mailto:rachelm@rti.org)  
Dr. Wendee Wechsberg.....919-541-6422  
Women's & South Africa CoOps.....[wmw@rti.org](mailto:wmw@rti.org)  
Dr. William Zule.....919-485-2797  
SATH-CAP, MASH, & Hep-C.....[zule@rti.org](mailto:zule@rti.org)  
Dr. Elizabeth Costenbader.....919-541-7026  
Sexually Active Men's Study..[ecostenbader@rti.org](mailto:ecostenbader@rti.org)

**Employment Opportunities at Study Sites**

For more information, please contact  
Rachel Middlesteadt Ellerson:  
919-541-7255 or [rachelm@rti.org](mailto:rachelm@rti.org)

**Volunteer Opportunities**

This fall, we are starting a volunteer program! Volunteers will be asked to do marketing and community outreach for several of our research studies. They will contact community organizations to talk about our studies and post fliers and brochures around the community. This is an excellent opportunity to network with social and humanitarian organizations and to learn more about substance abuse research.

The next volunteer orientation and confidentiality training session is scheduled for October 13, 2007.

If you are interested in volunteering or know someone who is, please contact  
Rachel Middlesteadt Ellerson, at (919) 541-7255 or [rachelm@rti.org](mailto:rachelm@rti.org).

**Active CAB Members**

Dr. Craig C. Brookins.....Director, Africana Studies, N.C. State University  
Jacqueline S. Clements.....HIV Test Counselor, Lincoln Community Health Center  
Dr. Tad Clodfelter, Jr.....Chief Executive Officer, SouthLight, Inc.  
Jacquelyn Clymore.....Executive Director, Alliance of AIDS Services-Carolina  
Mike Gauss.....Chair, Board of Trustees, St. John's Metropolitan Community Church  
Gibbie Harris.....Director, Wake County Health Department  
Trudy Harris-Adeeyo.....Director of Treatment, Greensboro  
Rev. Dumas A. Harshaw, Jr.....Pastor, First Baptist Church Raleigh  
Franklin Ingram.....Community Member at Large  
Jeri Jeffreys.....Director, SHAPE Program, Women's Center of Wake County  
Stella Kirkendale.....CORE Community Program Manager, Family Health International  
Floyd Laisure.....Director, Boys and Girls Club  
Ann Milligan-Barnes.....Nurse, Durham County Health Department  
Jan Muller.....Co-Chair, Triangle Community Works  
Rev. Michael D. Page.....Pastor, Antioch Baptist Church  
Gudrun Parmer.....Director, Durham County Criminal Justice  
Joyce Snipes.....Nurse, Lincoln Community Health Center  
Jean T. Sutter.....Executive Director Chrysalis Foundation for Mental Health  
Yvonne Torres.....HIV/STD Program Manager, Wake County Health Department  
Linda Warren.....Community Member at Large  
Samuel Williams.....Substance Abuse/Mental Health Counselor, W.E.B. DuBois Community  
Development Corporation

**To reach us in the community:**

**Wake County Field Site**

Telephone: 919-838-0494  
507 East Martin Street, Apartments E & F  
Raleigh, NC 27601

**Field Staff**

Shirley Brown Joyce Stancil-Williams  
B.J. Tatum

**Siler City Field Site**

Telephone: 919-742-1039  
125 North Fir Ave. Siler City, NC 27344

**Field Staff**

Valerie Smith

**Johnston County Field Site**

Telephone: 919-963-5025  
201-1 South Brightleaf Boulevard,  
Smithfield, NC 27577

**Field Staff**

Elizabeth Parish

**Durham County Field Site**

Telephone: 919-956-2854 or 919-682-3354  
Antioch Baptist Church  
1415 Holloway Street, Durham, NC 27703

**Field Staff**

Rodney Bratcher Theresa Frye  
Danielle Gary Felicia Kelly-McClain  
Elchico Williams

**The Important Role of our  
Community Advisory Board**

The Community Advisory Board (CAB) is made up of representatives from the community, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), government, and professionals from Durham, Wake, Johnston, and Chatham Counties. CAB members provide input and valuable support to help make our work more effective. The CAB can help identify other resources and services for participants in the CoOp studies, identify gaps and/or difficulties in the projects, and help to interpret the findings. If you are interested in serving on our CAB and having the opportunity to work on cutting-edge research, please contact Rachel Middlesteadt Ellerson at (919) 541-7255 or [rachelm@rti.org](mailto:rachelm@rti.org).



**Upcoming  
Community  
Events**

**October**

National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month

**Oct. 7:** Raleigh Crop Walk

**Oct. 13:** Works of Heart-The Triangle's Art Auction against AIDS

**Oct. 20- 28:** Red Ribbon Week

**Oct. 27:** Triangle Community Works: Coming Out in Style! Fall Fashion Show

**November**

**Nov. 25:** International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

**Nov. 16:** Days of Activism against Gender Violence (continues until December 10)

**December**

**Dec. 1:** World AIDS Day

**February**

**Feb. 23:** Church Walk

[www.rti.org/satei](http://www.rti.org/satei)



*Special thanks* to Rev. Michael Page and the Antioch Baptist Church for their many years of support and for providing us with a great work environment!