

# **Regional Institute on Aging**

## **Fourth Year Highlights**

The Regional Institute on Aging (RIA) is a virtual research organization designed to serve the citizens of metropolitan Wichita, Sedgwick and the adjacent counties, the state of Kansas, and, eventually, the surrounding Midwestern states. Highlights of the fourth year of operation include collaboration with the KUSM-W, the development of Wichita Women in Science (WWiS), completion of the Gridley Hoover Pilot Research Program, the Work Group on Falls, the Falling LinkS Toolkit , and the Work Force Work Group.

Collaboration with Kansas University School of Medicine—Wichita (KUSM-W): With the arrival of the new KUSM-W Associate Dean for Research, Dr. Michele Mariscalco, a significant effort during this period has focused on the development of research relationships between WSU and KUSM-W. This has included regular meetings and communications with Dr. Mariscalco, the launch of WWiS described below, construction of work groups that will ultimately lead to joint

There are many models for such an organization including Women in Neuroscience and The Society of Women Engineers. Most are, however, organized around a scientific discipline or profession. Wichita Women in Science is focused on a city and region and crosses scientific, technical, and professional boundaries.

The long range goal is to establish a strong core group of scientists, clinical investigators, and senior science administrators to help construct and solidify the research relationships between the two universities as well as linking with businesses, foundations, medical centers, community organizations, and other colleges in the south central Kansas region.

behalf of the WSU Foundation, Dr. James Rhatigan and the donors, Mr. Curt Gridley and Ms. Tracy Hoover.

Mr. Gridley, who recommended the plan, has also suggested that the event be filmed and a short documentary produced. The documentary would include brief interviews with each investigator, their community partners and the above noted WSU representatives. The documentary may then be used by the WSU Foundation to illustrate the types of programs that can be developed with donor funds and the type of involvement donors may have with university investigators.

Development of Research Teams:

*Work Group on Health Care Resources in Rural and Frontier Kansas (Work Force Work Group):* The Work Group first met in the fall of 2008. The focus of its discussions is on direct care workers (DCW) who provide short-term care that allows older people to remain in their homes and long-term care (LTC) in institutional settings for those too frail or ill to live at home. In rural areas, where access to health care is limited by distance and supply, DCWs are a critical health resource for older adults. However, high turnover rates for these key healthcare providers put the health and welfare of older adults at risk.

There is evidence for the extra personal burdens borne by rural DCWs in both the research literature and in anecdotal reports by rural LTC workers and facility administrators. Studies consistently find challenges in rural areas relating to child care, transportation, and other services that assist workers in finding and keeping a job. A study of Kansas nursing ho

at home”; (2) it is designed for areas of low population density that lack the common supportive services and programs typically found in urban areas; and (3) it uses a web-based delivery method to allow around-the-clock private access while minimizing costs for employers.

The research team submitted an Academic Research and Enhancement Award (AREA or R15) to the National Institutes of Health in February 2010 which was not funded. It was revised and resubmitted in February 2011. Other potential funders will be explored for this neglected and under-researched area.

Members of the Work Group are: Drs. Richard Muma, Pennie Myers and the T3 Team, Teresa Radebaugh, Betty Elder, Ms. Amy Ham and Ms. Rosemary Wright.

#### *Falling Less in Kansas (Falling LinKS)*

The Falling LinKS Toolkit was completed during this year. This is a major accomplishment that offers an important self-care tool for older adults residing in rural America. The Toolkit is accessible at [www.wichita.edu/aging](http://www.wichita.edu/aging).

Work to disseminate information about the development of the Falling LinKS Toolkit and the next research steps include the following:

- o The primary paper, “Falling Less in Kansas: Development of a Fall Risk Reduction Toolkit,” is in press in the Journal of Aging Research.
- o A paper emphasizing the role of the vision professional in the reduction of the risk of falling, “The Falling Less in Kansas Toolkit: A Self-Care Intervention,” is in press in the Envision newsletter, Visibility, a professional newsletter with a nationwide circulation of 8000.
- o On April 9, 2011, the Falling LinKS Research Team made a day-long presentation on



used, or disciplines engaged. Multi-disciplinary efforts and community-based research submissions were particularly welcome. The research had to: 1) be reasonably current, i.e., not published and presented extensively and 2) address questions in human aging or be clearly related to human aging.

The posters were juried in two divisions: faculty and student. The posters were assigned to the appropriate division based on lead authorship and scientific contribution to the research. The jury was composed of experts external to WSU. Representatives from Lakepoint nursing facilities and the Wichita Medical Research and Education Foundation served on the jury.

The posters were displayed from late October to mid-November in the lobbies of Ahlberg and Jabara Halls.

2<sup>nd</sup> place Deborah Ballard Reisch, Ph.D. and team. “Development of the Falling LinKS Toolkit: An Example of a Community-Grounded Health Promotion Initiative.” Dr. Ballard-Reisch is the Kansas Health Foundation Distinguished Chair in Strategic Communication, Elliott School of Communication. Her team consists of WSU faculty from three colleges and several departments and two community groups.

3<sup>rd</sup> place Nicole Rogers, Ph.D. and team. “Impact of First Step to Active Health on Older Adults Functional Fitness, Balance and Daily Activity.” Dr. Rogers is Assistant Professor and Head of the Gerontology Program, Department of Public Health Sciences, College of Health Professions. Her team includes colleagues from Nagoya City University, Nagoya, Japan, and Louisiana State University.

Sue Nyberg, MHS, PA-C, DFAAPA: "Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of a Senior Mentor Program in PA Education"

Nicole Rogers, Ph.D.: "Increasing the Intensity of Physical Activity of Older Women"

David Eichhorn, Ph.D.: "Model Complexes for the Active Site of Nickel Superoxide Dismutase--an Enzyme Important in Preventing Common Diseases of Aging"

July 19, 2011 T. Radebaugh