

MPH Alumni Newsletter

Spring 2008; Volume 2, Number 1

Public Health Connections from the Last Frontier



Faculty Profile: Betty Buchan, Ph.D., DFTCB

Dr. Buchan has been on faculty with the UAA Department of Health Sciences since the fall of 2003. She received her Ph.D. in epidemiology from the University of South Florida. Prior to moving to Alaska, Dr. Buchan served as a Forensic Toxicologist with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Hillsborough County (Florida) Medical Examiner's Office for 25 years. She is a Diplomat of the Forensic Toxicologists Certification Board (DFTCB) (i.e., a board certified Forensic Toxicologist).

As a Toxicologist and Epidemiologist, Dr. Buchan's primary area of research is drug use and abuse (drugs being defined as drugs of abuse, prescription medication, and over-the-counter drugs). This also includes drug pharmacology, medication management, drug impaired driving, and drug treatment.

Dr. Buchan contracts with the State of Alaska through the UAA Center for Human Development and the Alaska Geriatric Education Center to provide medication management education to Senior Citizens and Alaska Native Elders throughout the state of Alaska. The project is now in its third year, and Dr.

Buchan has traveled to Metlakatla, Ketchikan, Sitka, Homer, Ninilchik, Nikiski, and many other sites. This summer a few of her sites will include Nome, Kodiak, Cordova, Tok, and Kotzebue.



Dr. Buchan also just received a UAA Chancellor's grant to conduct drug impaired driving research in Alaska. This research will create and organize a statewide database to conduct surveillance on the public health problem of drug impaired drivers on Alaska's road system.

Dr. Buchan currently serves on the board of directors for the Narcotic Drug Treatment Center (Center for Drug Problems) in Anchorage and the UAA Institutional Review Board (IRB). She also served on the board of directors for the Alaska Public Health Association for one year.

When not working, Dr. Buchan enjoys summer hiking and camping in Alaska, international travel, and ballroom dancing. She will compete in her first ballroom dancing competition this fall in South Lake Tahoe, Nevada. 👍

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UAA Alumni Logo Contest

The UAA Alumni Association needs a new official logo and is holding a logo design contest open to UAA students and alumni. Submissions will be accepted through 5 p.m. on April 30 with judging taking place on May 1. For a submission form and contest rules, visit

www.uaalumni.org and download the form or contact the Alumni Association at (907) 786-1942.

If you haven't checked out the UAA alumni association website, this might be a good time to do so. There are a lot of interesting updates and resources available. 👍

Visit the MPH web site: <http://health.uaa.alaska.edu/mp/>

Coordinator's Corner (continued from back page...)

We continue to make good progress toward national program accreditation. We are actively engaged in the self-study required by Council on Education in Public Health (CEPH) and are on target for a site visit in Spring 2009. If all goes as planned, we anticipate program accreditation by Fall 2009.

We have added several new affiliate faculty this past year, and look forward to stronger collaborations with other graduate programs, including nursing, social work, medicine, anthropology, MEDEX PA, and the new joint UAA-UAF PhD in community and clinical psychology.

We just completed our Admission review for Fall 2008, and can confirm that this was our largest, most competitive applicant pool yet. Our program continues to attract highly motivated individuals with a wealth of experience to share.

Alumni should have received our first ever Alumni Survey in March and an invitation to participate in a follow-up telephone in-

terview to provide additional insight and suggestions as we move forward with our current program review and expansion. We look forward to hearing from you!

On the national front, our Dean, Dr. Cheryl Easley, was chosen as President-elect of the American Public Health Association (APHA) in November 2007, and will assume the Presidency at the October 2008 meeting in San Diego. And this year, National Public Health Week (April 6-13) focuses on "Climate Change: Our Health in the Balance." This is a topic that many Alaskans know about first-hand. So, in many ways, public health professionals in the Last Frontier are in the forefront of positive change and "assuring the conditions in which people can be healthy."

As always, we welcome your comments, and are always happy to hear about your public health successes and challenges. We can all do so much more when we join forces.

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Alumni Profile: Mariko Selle

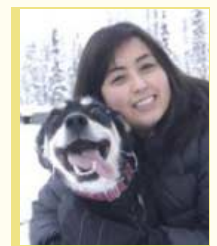
Since completing her MPH degree, Mariko has joined several boards, taken up Pilates, become an active Rotarian, and even indulges in Thursday night television. In February 2008, she accepted a new position as Director of Development and Quality for the Wrangell Medical Center. Mariko credits the MPH program for preparing her for this new role, and for making her a viable candidate during the selection process.

In this new position, Mariko will work towards building a strong culture for quality at the hospital, streamlining compliance-related activities, and establishing systems for strategically managing the hospital's future. She will also be coordinating WMC's participation in a multi-state performance improvement project. This project includes 3 other Alaskan Critical Access Hospitals, and over 100 Critical

Access Hospitals across 7 states. The project is funded through the Rural Hospital Flexibility (FLEX) program and focuses on helping small rural hospitals develop stronger quality and performance improvement structures.

Mariko also hopes to engage the hospital in community-wide wellness activities.

Mariko says she is looking forward to working at the hospital and is excited about packing her rain gear and moving to Wrangell with her two Pomeranians. Until February, Mariko worked for the State of Alaska's Health Planning and Systems Development Unit on the FLEX program and the Alaska Primary Care Office, addressing state-wide health care related issues such as rural access to health care, workforce development, and health care quality.



It's never too late to join the MPH Book Club!

The MPH Book Club holds meetings once a month during the fall and spring semesters, and is usually hosted at a member's home. Books are suggested by and agreed to by members and have some connection to public

health. The next meeting will be in late April or early May. The book selection is "Fourth Uncle in the Mountain: The Remarkable Legacy of a Buddhist Itinerant Doctor in Vietnam" by Marjorie Pivar and Quang Van Nguyen.

For more information, visit the Public Health Book Club discussion on Blackboard under the MPH Home Base. 👍

Alumni Profile: Dan Lien

Dan Lien graduated from the MPH program in Summer 2007 and has remained actively involved with the program, lauding the program to prospective students of public health. He currently serves as the president of UAA's MPH Alumni Association, and has remained connected with former and current students.

Outside of UAA, Dan works as a district manager for a pharmaceutical company and remains fascinated by the ongoing stress that chronic disease places on Alaska's patients, health care programs, insurance programs, and finances.

His thesis project focused on a Medicare program that allows pharmacists to bill insurance for patient counseling services, and gen-

erated baseline data that will allow pharmacists statewide to see the benefits that Medication Therapy Management (MTM) can bring to Alaskans in the years ahead. He remains involved and interested in MTM.

Dan and his family enjoy skiing, hiking, camping, and playing hockey and softball.

"Every graduate should attend commencement and the Masters' hooding ceremony," Dan said. "It's a wonderful experience for a graduate's family to experience - and a well-deserved reward for all the years of hard work!"



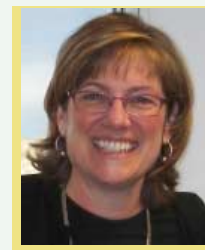
Alumni Profile: Lisa Balivet

Lisa Balivet completed her thesis defense in November 2007, and has since presented her thesis in two public meetings: the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Advisory Committee Annual Meeting and the Arctic Health Sciences Seminar. Lisa's thesis centered on hearing loss in Alaskan infants and toddlers. For the past six years, she has served on a statewide committee to improve early hearing loss detection and intervention.

Lisa works for the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Office of Children's Services, Infant Learning Program. Her role as a program monitor takes her out to 18 regions around the state, providing technical assistance and evaluation services for early intervention/infant learning program grantees. These agencies are funded by state and federal

grants, and offer early childhood developmental evaluations, parent support, special instruction, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language services, and family service coordination to children with developmental delays. Lisa is also responsible for data management and federal compliance reporting. She has especially enjoyed developing a new web-based data system for grantees.

Lisa's next academic goal is to investigate the world of public health informatics, honing her data management skills. She sends kudos to the UAA Public Health Masters program for an academically stimulating and career enhancing curriculum, and a special thanks to her friends and family for their unending support throughout the program.



MPH Alumni Newsletter

Three Electives & Two Core Courses Available This Summer

Three new graduate electives will be offered this summer via Blackboard (see descriptions in boxes). In addition, two core courses will be taught: HS 626 Principles of Epidemiology and HS 615 Health Services Administration.

Public Health Policy

-Taught by Dr. Brian Saylor, PhD, MPH

This course focuses on national, state, and local public health policy issues. It will outline the process of making national health policy, including detection of public health issues, consideration of alternatives, and adoption and implementation of solutions.

Infectious Disease Epidemiology

-Taught by Dr. Julianna Grant, MD MPH

This course will review the basic principles of infectious disease (ID) epidemiology including transmission mechanisms and dynamics, methods for investigating infectious diseases, and approaches to disease control and prevention activities.

Public Health and Leadership

-Taught by Dr. Linda Chamberlain, PhD, MPH

This course provides an overview of different leadership styles, with particular emphasis on collaborative leadership practices. It integrates theoretical frameworks and lessons learned from a variety of fields, including leadership theory, business management, public health, and sports.



Coordinator's Corner

Happy Spring! As noted in our last newsletter, we are in the midst of new faculty hires, with negotiations ongoing. Thanks to Dr. Tom Hennessy, Director of CDC Arctic Investigations Program and member of our MPH Advisory Committee, who graciously served on our Faculty Search committee, and to all of you who came out for the candidate seminars and/or provided feedback based on their resumes and potential contributions to our program.

We expect several new faculty members, as well as a new Director of the Institute of Circumpolar Health Studies (ICHS) to join us this summer. We will introduce them in the next newsletter. Our office-area has undergone construction and renovations to accommodate these new staff members. We expect the dust to settle sometime later this spring.

In the meantime, this may be a good time to highlight some of our many student successes. Congratulations to MPH candidate Kerry Pride who was among 80 individuals selected nationwide to participate in the CDC Epidemiologic Intelligence Service (EIS) Pro-

gram, beginning this summer. Kerry, a veterinarian, will be completing her MPH thesis project this summer and graduating this fall. She joins about a dozen other students who are actively working on their capstone practicum projects. Watch the departmental calendar on our website to see dates/topics for these interesting project presentations. As the alumni profiles in this issue suggest, our graduates are up to much good lately, and if the projects currently underway are any indication, our future alumni will continue this positive trend.

Congratulations to MPH students Peggy Cobey, Shannon Deike-Sims, Yvonne Goldsmith, Meg Kurtagh, and Kelby Murphy, all of whom wrote successful scholarship proposals to attend the Intercultural Cancer Council national meeting in Washington, DC in April. Kelby's poster abstract relating to her work on health literacy and cancer communication was also accepted for the Cancer, Culture and Literacy Biennial Symposium to be held in Clearwater Beach, FL in May.

Congratulations to Amanda Walch who presented highlights from her MPH thesis project in progress at the first annual UAA Graduate Student Symposium held on campus in March.

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