

Faculty News and Notes



Gladys Block, Ph.D., professor of epidemiology and public health nutrition, is principal investigator of a study showing that vitamin C

can significantly reduce levels of oxidative stress in people exposed to secondhand tobacco smoke. The research was published in the August 5, 2003, issue of *Nutrition and Cancer*.

Researchers tested for levels of a reliable and sensitive biomarker, F2-Isoprostanes, which is generated through a form of oxidative stress called lipid peroxidation. They compared 67 adult nonsmokers who had been randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups in the double-blind trial. One group took daily doses of 500 milligrams of vitamin C, a second group took a daily mixture of vitamin C with vitamin E and the antioxidant alpha-lipoic acid, and a third group took daily placebo capsules. Researchers found that after two months of treatment, blood levels of F2-Isoprostanes dropped by 11.4 percent and 12.7 percent for those in the vitamin C and the combined supplement groups, respectively—a statistically significant difference compared with those taking the placebo.

Joan Bloom, Ph.D., professor of health policy and management, is principal investigator for two studies seeking better ways to make sure that African American men are informed about prostate cancer screening.

The first, CHOICES, is a two-year project funded by the CDC for the purpose of evaluating a telephone counseling protocol that gives men the facts about screening, presents the choices, and tries to help them with informed decision-making. Three hundred African American men ages 40–74, half of whom have a brother or father with prostate cancer, will be interviewed about their knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of prostate cancer screening. Half the men will be randomly assigned to receive telephone counseling immediately, and half will receive it at the end of the study. **William A. Satariano, Ph.D.**, professor of epidemiology, is among the project's co-investigators.

The second study, BRIDGES, is a three-year effort funded by the California Cancer Research Program. It will test a telephone counseling protocol designed to inform the brothers and sons of prostate cancer survivors of their increased risk of prostate cancer and assist them in overcoming barriers to screening. Two hundred African American men and two hundred Euro-American men ages 45–74 will participate. Both studies are being conducted in conjunction with researchers at the Northern California Cancer Center.

Patricia A. Buffler, Ph.D., M.P.H., dean emerita and professor of epidemiology, spoke about her investigations of childhood leukemia and cancer clusters at “Current Topics in Cancer Research,” a symposium held last June by the Northern California Chapter of the Society for Risk Analysis and the Northern California Chapter of the Society of Toxicology.



Chin Long Chiang, Ph.D., professor in the Division of Biostatistics, authored *Statistical Methods of Analysis*, published by World Scientific Publishing Co. in August, 2003.

Jeffrey B. Gould, M.D., M.P.H., professor emeritus in the Maternal and Child Health Program, is lead author of “Neonatal Mortality in Weekend vs Weekday Births,” published in the June 11, 2003, issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Researchers analyzed 1,615,041 live births in California during the period 1995–1997 to determine if infants born in California during the weekend have a higher neonatal mortality than those born on weekdays. “After controlling for birth weight, we found no evidence that the quality of perinatal care in California was compromised during the weekend,” the study concludes.

Helen Ann Halpin, Ph.D., professor of health policy, is lead author of “State Medicaid Coverage for Tobacco-Dependence Treatments—United States, 1994–2001,” published in the May 30, 2003, issue of the CDC’s *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. The report says that although 36 percent of Medicaid recipients are smokers, many states do not provide Medicaid coverage for tobacco dependence treatments, and during the period surveyed, only one state offered coverage for all treatments recommended by the Public Health Service. The authors write, “Substantial action to improve coverage will be needed if the United States is to achieve the national health objective for 2010 of reducing the prevalence of smoking to 12 percent among adults.”

Nicholas P. Jewell, Ph.D., professor of biostatistics and statistics, is an author of an analysis showing that countries that quickly initiated control measures against SARS saw a slower spread and a lower fatality rate. The research was published in August 2003 in the *CDC Journal Emerging Infectious Diseases*. “One of the main questions addressed by our statistical analysis was whether there’s a different version of the virus that is more infectious and more virulent in some countries than in others,” says Jewell. The analysis suggests that there is not.

Joyce C. Lashof, M.D., professor and dean emerita, has been selected to chair the University’s Emeriti Committee, which looks after the academic needs and well-being of emeriti faculty.



Professor in Engineering, has been appointed vice provost for academic planning and facilities, succeeding William C. Webster, effective April 1, 2004. Koshland served as chair of the Berkeley Division of the UC Academic Senate in 2002–2003 and cochaired the internal committee that reviewed new interdisciplinary initiatives. She was a member of the Strategic Planning Committee in 2001–2002. A member of the Berkeley faculty since 1984, she teaches engineering, energy resources, and environmental health.

Malcolm Potts, M.B., B.Chir., Ph.D., F.R.C.O.G., Bixby Professor of Population and Family Planning, and **Julia Walsh, M.D., D.T.P.H.**, adjunct professor of maternal and child health, published research in the June 21, 2003, issue of the *British Medical Journal*, warning that the HIV/AIDS epidemic in India is following the same pattern as that of sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s. Like in Africa, large numbers of men in rural areas are migrating to the cities for work and being exposed to changing cultural values, the researchers say.

Catherine P. Koshland, Ph.D., professor in the Division of Environmental Health Sciences and Wood-Calvert

“Certain sexual practices that were inhibited in a village suddenly become easier with the anonymity that comes with living in a large city,” says Potts. “Men also start earning more money, so they have disposable income. And because the ratio of men to women is so low, the men spend their money on prostitutes, which contributes to the spread of HIV.” Although recent estimates indicate that the HIV prevalence in India is less than 1 percent, there is evidence that HIV infection is already spreading from the core high-risk groups of sex workers and intravenous drug users into the general population and that the number of infections will rise dramatically without preventive action.

Potts also authored, “Two pills, two paths: a tale of gender bias,” published in the September 2003 issue of the British journal *Endeavour*. The paper looks at differences in the research, marketing, media coverage, and theological treatment of the contraceptive pill and Viagra. Potts suggests that the different standards applied to the two drugs “is not accidental, but is an expression of a deep-seated dual standard that is ultimately driven by biosocial differences in male and female power, and reproductive agendas rooted in human evolution.”



David Ragland, Ph.D., M.P.H., adjunct professor and director of the Traffic Safety Center, is lead author of “Reasons given by older people for limitation or avoidance of driving,” to be published in an upcoming issue of *Gerontologist*. **Professor William A. Satariano** is a coauthor of the paper.

Ragland also authored and presented “The Risks and Needs of Pedestrians in/around Multi-modal Corridors” at the “New Partners for Smart Growth” meeting held in San Diego in June, 2003. His presentation addressed data on pedestrian safety, focusing on populations that are particularly vulnerable and at high risk for pedestrian injury and fatality, and the need to consider pedestrians when planning for community and transit development.



In addition, he is an author of “San Francisco ‘PedSafe’ Study: An Intensive Pedestrian Safety Engineering Study Focused on Seven Zones with Higher Levels of Pedestrian Injury, Using PBCAT Software.” The research was presented at the “4th International Conference on Walking in the 21st Century, Walk21-IV: Health, Equity & Environment,” in Portland, Oregon, in May 2003.

Richard M. Scheffler, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor of Health Economics and Public Policy and director of the Nicholas C. Petris Center on Health Care Markets and Consumer Welfare, is co-principal investigator for “An



Nobel Laureate Daniel L. McFadden delivers a plenary address at the International Health Economics Association’s Fourth World Congress. Richard M. Scheffler (right) served as the meeting’s program chair.

Analysis of the Economic Impact of Diversification,” a project that seeks to answer a critical question in health economics research: Does diversity pay? Scheffler and Petris Center researchers are collaborating with researchers at Duke University to determine if positive wage differentials exist for minority physicians who work in predominantly minority communities, controlling for other important wage determinants. The Petris Center was awarded \$50K from the Kellogg Foundation as a subcontractor for the project.

Scheffler also served as program chair for the International Health Economics Association’s “Fourth World Congress,” held this past June in San Francisco. The Petris Center provided local administrative support for the conference, which was attended by more than 1,500 attendees and culminated with a gala dinner at San Francisco City Hall.

Scheffler and **Paul Kirby**, project coordinator at the Petris Center, authored “The Occupational Transformation of the Mental Health System,” which will be published in *Health Affairs* in a forthcoming special issue focusing on mental health.

Stephen M. Shortell, Ph.D., M.P.H., dean of the school and Blue Cross of California Distinguished Professor of Health Policy and Management, travelled to the United Kingdom to serve as a consultant to the Ministry of Health on the many quality improvement reforms being implemented in their National Health Service. While there he met with Prime Minister Blair’s senior health advisers, the Leadership Centre, and the Modernisation Agency. He also delivered lectures at Imperial College, London, and at Manchester.



S. Leonard Syme, Ph.D., professor emeritus of epidemiology, presented “Social Determinants of Health:

The Community as an Empowered Partner” at the “17th National Conference on Chronic Disease Prevention and Control,” held in St. Louis in February 2003. The paper will be published in the inaugural issue of the CDC’s new peer-reviewed e-journal, *Preventing Chronic Disease*, in January 2004. 📄