



ATMCH Newsletter

Association of Teachers of Maternal and Child Health

Fall 2000

Providing Leadership in Maternal and Child Health Education, Research, and Service

A Letter from the President by Pierre Buekens, MD, PhD

ATMCH is ready to move towards new endeavors, building on our increasing membership and on the recent reorganization of our secretariat. I am extremely grateful to the Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH) for hosting our new secretariat, and to the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) for its generous support. The secretariat has developed full electronic communication and accounting system, and a new website (www.atmch.org). Newsletters, membership forms, and other useful information are now easily available on the website. In addition, the numerous links included guarantee that it will be an extensively used portal. Other good news is that the 501(c)(3) status of ATMCH has been officially confirmed. Also, our relationships with sister organizations have been strengthened, as illustrated by our participation in the coalition for MCH-Epidemiology.

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The strategic planning process, initiated earlier this year, involved many members and generated interesting new ideas about the future directions ATMCH could take. The process started with the identification of our strengths and weaknesses. Our strengths include unity and shared vision and effective advocacy for our programs. One of our weaknesses is a tendency to be exclusive because ATMCH is mostly composed of faculty who are supported by MCHB training grants, with few members from medical schools, nursing schools, and schools of social work. Another weakness is that ATMCH often addresses teaching issues in isolation of other academic endeavors, following an old model of MCH Departments, which had not been research oriented. It was also pointed out that few activities occur between meetings and that business meetings are not stimulating.

Participants in the strategic planning process did have suggestions for improvements, and also articulated a general direction for our plans for the future. The main practical suggestion was to shorten the November business meeting, and to use the remaining time for an annual ATMCH meeting with focused presentations and substantive discussions. Our education, policy, and research committees could be charged to organize such annual meetings.

The suggested plan for the future included four main components:

- Become a leader in MCH education for

- research and practice;
- Promote faculty development;
- Identify, develop and establish new partnerships; and,
- Strengthen ATMCH membership.

Ideas to make this plan operational were generated at our March business meeting, and will continue to be discussed. I am extremely pleased that members have outlined a new vision for the organization, and are so enthusiastic about making it become a reality.

From the Desk of Peter C. van Dyck, MD, MPH, Associate Administrator for Maternal and Child Health, HRSA

Dear Colleagues,

Once again, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to give readers of the *ATMCH Newsletter* an update from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. The Bureau's most significant news for all of you is that it is currently taking applications (until December 15) for a new MCH public health training grant. Public Health Training in Maternal and Child Health is aimed at developing the public health workforce through innovative strategies that address the specific educational needs of health professionals. These professionals may live in isolated geographic areas or where the population is underserved. They may need to enhance their skills while continuing to meet daily work or family responsibilities. It is this committed group of individuals the Bureau seeks to serve with its new training opportunity. Schools of public health and other public or nonprofit private institutions accredited for graduate or specialized training in public health, but which are not currently receiving an MCH training grant, may apply for one of two 3-year projects, totaling an estimated \$324,000. You can find the grant guidance on our Web site, www.mchb.hrsa.gov. For more information, look at page 59 in the Summer 2000 *HRSA Preview* or call Captain Nanette Pepper at 301-443-6445.

On October 2, we celebrated National Child Health Day, as we do every year on the first Monday in October. It is actually a day set aside by law, and first proclaimed by Calvin Coolidge in 1928, to "direct our thought towards the health and well-being of our children." The Bureau meets the mandate of the day by distributing thousands of information kits to schools, communities, public health agencies and child care centers around the country. This year's National Child Health Day kit, with space-age graphics and the slogan "Mission 2000: Launching Healthy Futures," was based on an early childhood development theme. It was intended to raise awareness of how critical the first five years of a child's life are, in terms of physical, mental and social development. Step-by-step guidelines on how schools or communities can initiate their own National Child Health Day events as well as tips on how to deal with the media were supplied, along with materials from MCHB and other federal agencies on health supervision guidelines, nutrition and safe child care, injury and violence prevention, and children's mental health. National Child Health Day creates a wonderful opportunity for the programs and systems MCHB already has in place to address important child health issues.

MCHB and the American Academy of Pediatrics took the lead in the preparation of *Newborn Screening: A Blueprint for the Future*, the National Newborn Screening Task Force recommendation report. The report calls for model state regulations to assure quality; uniform standards; and guidelines and, policies for screening, follow-up, diagnosis and treatment. It encourages evaluation and research related to developing technologies and health outcomes, and urges better education and more involvement of health professionals with families. Recommendations also direct attention to the need for systems that link infants to a medical home, integrated information systems, adequate financing, and a strong public health infrastructure. The report is available on the

Bureau web site at www.mchb.hrsa.gov.

More Bureau-sponsored research has hit the pages of professional journals. “Trends in Twin Birth Outcomes and Prenatal Care Utilization in the United States, 1981-1997,” led by Michael Kogan, PhD, director, MCHB’s Office of Data and Information Management, was published in the July 19 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. It investigated the apparent puzzle that rates for preterm birth and low birth weight in the United States are rising while more women are receiving prenatal care. Researchers concluded that part of the rise in preterm birth rate might be due to more aggressive management of high-risk births (i.e. twin). A four-year-study sponsored by the Bureau’s Research Program was published in the April issue of *Child Development*. It provided new evidence that infants and toddlers in higher-quality child care develop better intellectually and gain language skills faster than children in lower-quality programs. In the study, “Relating Quality of Center Child Care to Early Cognitive and Language Development Longitudinally,” the average IQ of children from predominantly low-income families in higher-quality care in the Southeastern United States was a full 12 points above their peers.

Child Health USA 2000, the annual report of statistical trends related to the health of America’s children, was also recently published, among other new MCH publications, all of which can be ordered by calling the National Maternal and Child Health Clearinghouse at 1-888-434-4624 or by visiting www.mchb.hrsa.gov.

In addition, there have been more changes in Bureau leadership. Cassie Burdine Lauver, ACSW, has been appointed director of the Division of State and Community Health. She comes to us from the Kansas Department of State and Community Health and Environment, where she was director of the Bureau of Children, Youth and Families. Jeffrey J. Koshel, MA, is DSCH’s new deputy director. He joins the Bureau from

the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Planning and Evaluation, HHS, where he was director of State and local initiatives. Henry Spring, MD, JD, has resigned as director of the Division of Perinatal Systems and Women’s Health, with Maribeth Badura, MPN, RN appointed as acting director.

These are just some highlights of what’s happening within the Bureau. We’re all looking forward to a new year serving the needs of our nation’s mothers, families and children. I’ll keep you posted in the next issue of this newsletter.

MCH Council and ATMCH—Similar Goal, Different Missions

by Carol J. Rowland Hogue, Chair, Association of Schools of Public Health Council on Maternal and Child Health

The 1999 Annual Meeting of the ASPH MCH Council was historic. Under the leadership of Dr. Pierre Buekens, President-elect of ATMCH and Chair of the ASPH MCH Council for 1998-99, the ASPH MCH Council chose a chair who was not the President of ATMCH. The reasons for this decision reflect both the growing business of the ASPH MCH Council and an increasing awareness that the two organizations have different, if overlapping, missions.

As the Chair of the ASPH MCH Council for 1999-2001, it has been my pleasure to begin to understand the role of the Council and appreciate its potential for affecting improvements in maternal and child health educational programs within schools of public health. Officially, “the Council advises the deans on MCH programs in general and the 14 training programs that receive substantial funding from the Bureau of Maternal and Child Health in particular. The Council continually reviews MCH curricula to maintain the highest national standards for graduate education and

training and communicates those standards to other groups of MCH professionals with which many MCH faculty in the schools of public health are affiliated. The Council is composed of at least one MCH faculty member from each school appointed by the dean.”

The Association of Teachers of Maternal and Child Health (ATMCH) is a non-profit organization 501(c)(3) governed by a constitution and by-laws. Its mission is “to provide leadership in education, research, and service in the field of academic maternal and child health.” Furthermore, ATMCH offers an interdisciplinary forum through which MCH faculty from schools of public health and other institutions of higher learning can share the knowledge, ideas, and skills essential to educating students, advancing MCH research, and applying research results to MCH policies, programs, and services. Membership in ATMCH is open to all faculty teaching MCH or related subjects in schools of public health and other institutions of higher learning in the US and other countries; faculty who formerly taught MCH or related subjects; staff of MCH teaching programs; and, students of MCH or related subjects.

Thus, while the two organizations share leadership responsibilities in improving MCH training, they differ in several important respects:

- The primary audience for the Council is the ASPH deans, whereas the primary audience for ATMCH is its membership.
- Because the Council is advisory to the schools of public health deans, its official membership is limited to faculty appointed by the deans. ATMCH membership is open to all MCH faculty, staff, and students.
- The Council members provide advice to the deans through their annual fall business meeting, and they also represent MCH interests throughout the year, including membership on the ASPH education and accreditation committees.

Two activities of the Council this past year may serve to illustrate how it is implementing its mission. Because of its recognized leadership among professional schools and organizations, ASPH was asked by the March of Dimes about its interest in pulling together representatives from health professional schools to develop and promote a folic acid education curriculum. The goal is to assure that all health professional students both understand the role of folic acid in the prevention of neural tube defects and other health benefits and how to communicate the benefits to their future clients. In accepting this challenge, ASPH asked the MCH Council to take the leadership in developing and administering the project. Karen Helsing, who staffs the MCH Council, is supervising the project. The advisory committee includes representatives from allied health, dentistry, osteopathic medicine, optometry, nursing, pharmacy, and public health. This is an exciting and innovative strategy that may be applicable to a number of health promotion and disease prevention goals for maternal and child health.

The second activity is more global and long term. ASPH, in collaboration with APHA, is beginning a process that may lead to credentialing of the public health workforce. Dr. Charles Mahan, Dean of the University of South Florida College of Public Health and MCH Council member, is one of the representatives on this committee. In addition, the Council is seeking funds to sponsor a workshop to explore ways in which MCH educators may contribute to this process. Because maternal and child health programs have a long-established history of competency-based education—developed under the leadership of ATMCH, AMCHP, and HRSA—the Council should have an important role to play in helping to shape the direction of credentialing of the large and growing MCH workforce.

Fall ATMCH Meeting

Sunday, November 12, 2000 is the date for the fall ATMCH meeting in Boston, MA, to be held in conjunction with the APHA annual meeting. The site will be at the Sheraton Boston Hotel, 39 Dalton Street. Below are the scheduled meeting places and times.

Executive Committee Meeting

Meeting date: Sunday November 12, 2000
 Time: 10:00-1:00
 Location: *Room A*
 Sheraton Boston Hotel
 39 Dalton Street
 Boston, MA

Business Committee Meeting

Meeting date: Sunday November 12, 2000
 Time: 2:00 - 4:00 pm
 Location: *Clarendon A & B*
 Sheraton Boston Hotel
 39 Dalton Street
 Boston, MA

Committee Meetings (Membership, Education, Research, Policy)

Meeting date: Sunday November 12, 2000
 Time: 4:30 - 6:00 pm
 Location: *Republic A*
 Sheraton Boston Hotel
 39 Dalton Street
 Boston, MA

Other News:

- Change in Staff – Karen Helsing (klh@asph.org) is now staffing the ATMCH Secretariat along with Liz Weist. Please contact Karen with any comments or suggestions. She maintains the ATMCH website (www.atmch.org) and distribution list, so please let her know any items that you would like to post.
- Membership dues were mailed out in early October. Dues checks have been starting

to arrive – please make sure to mail your check in soon! We'd like to have results tallied by our fall meeting.

- Please keep our directory up-to-date! Please send Karen Helsing (klh@asph.org) any updates or changes in your contact information.
- ATMCH letterhead on the way! Our envelopes and letterhead should soon appear more professional. ATMCH's home (along with ASPH headquarters) moved over the summer to 1101 15th Street, NW, Suite 910, Washington, DC 20005.
- Preliminary statistics from ASPH's data center indicate that there has been an increase in the number of students enrolled in maternal and child health programs in accredited schools of public health. There are now about 750 graduate-level MCH students!
- Make sure to take advantage of the ATMCH discount subscription to *Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology*. Their web site can be accessed at: <http://www.blackwell-science.com>.
- Save the Date – the 2001 Spring ATMCH Meeting in conjunction with the AMCHP Annual Meeting will be held at the Grand Hyatt Hotel Washington, DC March 23 through 28, <http://www.amchp1.org/wnew/meeting.htm>

The *ATMCH Newsletter* is produced by Karen Helsing, who works closely with Allison Foster and Liz Weist to staff the ATMCH secretariat.

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