

## **What is LCRN?**

In October 2010, the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities was awarded a three-year grant from HRSA-MCHB to develop the Maternal and Child Health Life Course Research Network (LCRN). This exciting project – which was funded for another three years as of October 2014 - represents a unique opportunity to improve our understanding of how health develops over the life course by providing researchers, practitioners, policymakers and consumers with a mechanism for interacting, sharing information and tools, and engaging in collaborative and innovative projects. These projects are initiated and led by network members with support from UCLA staff, with the goal of advancing the field of life course health development (LCHD) research and enabling evidence-based practice and policymaking at the family, local, state, national and international levels.

## **What have we accomplished?**

- Recruited over 900 members.
- Created two webinar series – one that examines The State of Life Course Health Development Research: Past, Present and Future; and one that explores Using Existing Data to Conduct Life Course Analyses.
- Created a key informant interview series that gathered input from a variety of experts regarding the design of LCRN and the

challenges and opportunities of life course health development research.

- Fielded a web-based survey that gathered input from members regarding the design of our network.
- Built a state-of-the-art website and social network where members can connect, exchange ideas and materials, and access webinars and publications.
- Convened a meeting of the LCRN design team at which input from network members and a review of the science of network design and function were used to create the LCRN charter and plan for an initial set of activities.
- Constituted the LCRN advisory committee, which is comprised of a diverse group of experts from around the country.
- Convened the MCH Life Course Research Agenda-Setting Meeting, which took place February 20-22, 2013 in Washington DC, and where 75 invited experts were engaged in a consensus-based process aimed at identifying and prioritizing among potential research areas and questions.

## **What are our next steps?**

### **Publications**

To inform and frame the February 2013 agenda-setting meeting and ultimately determine the priorities for an MCH life course research agenda, we developed a comprehensive set of more than 20 background papers. Several of these papers were developed via a traditional process of

commissioning expert co-authors to write on a particular topic, while others were developed through an innovative wiki-based swarming process whereby designated team leaders/ editors engaged a diverse group of co-authors while ensuring quality control.

Each of the commissioned and swarmed background papers synthesizes existing life course health development research, identify research gaps, and recommends priorities related to future research and efforts to ensure the appropriate and timely translation of that research into practice and policy. The papers were presented and discussed at the meeting, and are in the process of being readied for print and online publication.

### **Webinar Series**

Our webinar series on the State Of Life Course Health Development Research has already featured such luminaries as Clyde Hertzman, Matthew Gillman and David Barker discussing their work and how it relates to the rapidly emerging field of LCHD research. Upcoming webinars will feature the authors of our agenda-setting background papers examining the existing evidence base for a variety of topics including life stages, particular health conditions, and cross-cutting issues in LCHD research.

Through our webinar series on Using Existing Data to Conduct Life Course Analyses, leading experts offer practical guidance to

researchers, MCH practitioners and others on how to explore life course health development with public use data sets such as the NLSY, PSID, NEFS, FFCWS and others.

### **Research Nodes**

LCRN is in the process of developing research nodes (groups of highly-motivated and self-organizing individuals) who together will plan and implement collaborative research projects to advance the field of LCHD and contribute to our ever-expanding knowledge base. With administrative and/or funding support from LCRN, these nodes - each of which will focus on a particular topic (e.g., a specific health condition or life stage) - provide members with an opportunity to employ innovative research strategies and work across disciplinary and institutional boundaries.

### **Why join?**

Membership in LCRN offers you:

- An opportunity to build new trans-disciplinary relationships and share knowledge with experts nationally and internationally with backgrounds in disciplines ranging from applied psychology to women's studies.
- The chance to advance both our members' unique interests and the field as a whole.
- Timely access to new knowledge, tools, methodologies and funding opportunities as they emerge.

- The chance to help build substantial new funding to support life course health development-related research.
- An opportunity to participate in a project that will ultimately facilitate a paradigm shift in how we think about health promotion and disease prevention.

### **How to join**

Membership in LCRN is free and open. If you or a colleague would enjoy being a part of our network, please email [lcrn@lcrn.net](mailto:lcrn@lcrn.net), or visit our website at <http://lcrn.net>.

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