

# Alabama Practice Based Research NETWORK

**A voluntary consortium of primary care physicians conducting practice-based research in Alabama**

**Special 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Newsletter**

December 2005

## Happy Anniversary

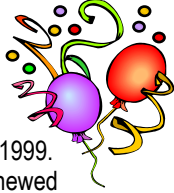
December marks the five year anniversary of the APBRN, which began as an idea in the spring of 1999. Sparked by the AAFP's renewed commitment to research, APBRN was formally established in 2000 with seed funds from the Alabama Family Practice Rural Health Board. With support from the US Health Resources and Services Administration, APBRN conducted its first survey studies and qualified for full membership in the Federation of PBRNs, which consists of 60 primary care PBRNs (54 in the US, 6 international) and provides a common voice in support of practice-based research under the AAFP. Since inception, the Alabama Academy of Family Physicians has also supported APBRN by hosting semi-annual meetings within its own educational activities.

The APBRN has now grown to include 44 primary care physicians in 32 practices, in 20 counties throughout the state. Its "curriculum vitae" boasts 18 presentations (including two international) and two publications: one article on the Prescription for Health study (published last summer in the *Annals of Family Medicine*) and another on the statewide survey of tobacco use assessment and counseling practices which was piloted by APBRN (recently published in *Quality in Primary Care*). Two new manuscripts on PDAs and Practice Extenders are also in development.

For the past 4 years, APBRN has focused on translating research into practice at the point of care with the aid of PDA and web-based technology. With extramural support, APBRN has completed two studies: Building the APBRN (AHRQ) and Testing PDA-Based Interventions for Smoking and Unhealthy Diet (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation "Prescription for Health" initiative).

Key accomplishments include:

- Development of a unique system of electronic data collection and transfer from multiple remote sites



- Creation of PDA-based interventions for smoking and obesity – and their delivery to over 1,000 patients
- Demonstration of the APBRN's ability to conduct practice-based studies that meet or exceed national standards
- Contributions to publications and presentations that have informed other PBRNs and studies
- Interest from other PBRNs in developing PDA- & web-based interventions
- Selection to participate in the ePCRN (see article to right).

Several member physicians have been especially instrumental to the APBRN's success (see **Star Performers**, page 2). We very much appreciate the time and effort all members have contributed, especially in light of the many competing demands of daily practice. We hope that the next five years are as positive and productive as the first five have been.

## Myra Crawford Retires

After 30 years on the faculty of the UAB School of Medicine, Myra A Crawford, PhD officially retired on October 31, 2005. As Director of the Division of Research for the



Department of Family & Community Medicine, she spearheaded the APBRN's creation in 1999 and, as its Deputy Director, led the network's research initiatives from inception to completion. She also oversaw all Coordinating Center operations, represented APBRN at national and international professional conferences, and served a 3-year term on the Steering Committee of the Federation of PBRNs. In addition to fostering collaborations and leading funding initiatives in partnership with other UAB departments and institutions, Dr. Crawford facilitated APBRN's participation in the ePCRN and will continue her leadership role in that project under a voluntary faculty appointment with the DFCM.



**ePCRN**  
(electronic Primary Care Research Network)

APBRN holds the distinction of being one of only ten PBRNs nationwide initially invited to participate in the ePCRN as part of the NIH Roadmap Initiative to reshape the way practice-based research is conducted in the US.

At least 25 physicians from each PBRN are being asked to participate in a pilot project ("connectivity demo"), followed by evaluation and testing of mock clinical trial protocols. Actual clinical trials will be the next step. To date, 25 APBRN members from 16 practices have enrolled; 7 have completed the connectivity demo, and 5 have completed the mock trial. Although initial setup requires several steps, detailed instructions are provided and, overall, the process is simple and brief.

The scope of the ePCRN project will continue to expand, so we encourage all interested physicians to participate in this groundbreaking initiative. For more information, please contact the APBRN Coordinating Center, or visit the ePCRN website, [www.epcrn.org](http://www.epcrn.org).



## Rural Diabetes Study

A multidisciplinary team of UAB researchers led by Jeroan Allison, MD, MPH, has received funding from the National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive & Kidney Diseases to improve diabetes care in rural areas. RDoc is an office-based internet CME intervention developed in close consultation with rural physicians to accomplish this goal. The project requires minimal time commitment and will include access to innovative practice management tools. Participating physicians will be reimbursed for time spent doing the CME modules. About 200 physicians in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and Tennessee will be invited to participate.

For more information on RDoc, please contact Dr. Chelley Alexander at (205) 348-1278 or [calexander@cchs.us.edu](mailto:calexander@cchs.us.edu).

## Meet Tamela Turner

Tamela Turner is a familiar and friendly face to many physicians across Alabama. As Director of the Division of Predoctoral Education, UAB Family & Community Medicine for the past 14 years, Dr. Turner has built longstanding relationships with hundreds of family medicine and rural preceptors throughout the state.

Dr. Turner played a key role in building the APBRN's foundation, providing training on research methods and conducting workshops on brief interventions for tobacco use and obesity. For the past three years, she has also been an investigator on three projects focused on physician and medical student training, successfully integrating tobacco cessation training into UAB's medical school curriculum, and conducting seminars for the Alabama Tobacco Free Families project which reached over 2,000 health care providers in the state.



Whereas previous APBRN research has focused on PDAs as data collection tools, Dr. Turner is building on unique insights about the utility of PDAs as teaching tools for incorporating evidence-based interventions into daily practice. With her combined expertise as an educator and scientist, Dr. Turner's leadership in this area promises exciting new developments.

## On the Horizon

Several initiatives have recently been announced which offer opportunities for APBRN to branch out in new directions.

The Coordinating Center is actively working to develop collaborative projects with other UAB investigators. Discussions are currently underway with the Divisions of Preventive Medicine and General Internal Medicine, and a new study to conduct translational research on interventions to assist patients and physicians in the treatment of diabetes was just announced (see **Rural Diabetes Study**, page 1). Collaborations with other PBRNs also continue to be explored, as do ideas submitted by APBRN members.

If you would like to propose a new research project for the APBRN at any time, please contact the Coordinating Center for an official submission form.



## Did You Know...

**AAFP CME** is available to APBRN members who also belong to the American Academy of Family Physicians? AAFP members are eligible for CME credits for participating in research and related activities: 10 per calendar year for direct participation, plus additional enrichment credits for activities like attending APBRN meetings (2 credits) and completing IRB training (4 credits). Throughout the year other opportunities may also arise, one example being the interviews conducted by the Rand Corporation last summer. From 2002 to date, 620 research and 172 enrichment credits have been earned by 34 APBRN members, for a grand total of 792 credits. AAFP credits may also count toward maintaining your Alabama medical licensure, however you must be an AAFP member to earn them. The Coordinating Center submits requests for credit on behalf of APBRN members, and provides documentation of APBRN activities for other purposes on request.

## Welcome New Members

Several new members have recently joined APBRN and are already enthusiastically involved in the ePCRn project. From Anniston Family Practice and Residency Program, Drs. Nelson Cook (Director), William Bohannon, Ty Stansell and David Chalk. From the UAH Family Medicine Residency Program, Dr. Allan Wilke, the new Director. And from the UAB Family & Community Medicine faculty, Drs. Bill Fulcher (Director of Student Health Services) and Nidhi Bansal. We encourage interaction and information sharing among members, so please extend a warm welcome to these new members as you meet them.

**Please feel free to pass on this newsletter to other interested physicians**

## Star Performers



A number of members have distinguished themselves through their exceptional dedication to, and consistent involvement with, the APBRN. Seven hold the designation 'star performer,' representing active, long-term membership, regular attendance at meetings, completion of IRB training and participation in one or more research projects. They are:

- Frances Bartel (Dadeville)
- Michael McBrearty (Fairhope)
- Thomas Horton (Rainsville)
- Vicki Moore (Pelham)
- Ross "Bob" Mullins (Valley)
- Marion "Barney" Sims (Birmingham)
- Randall Weaver (Rockford)

Thirteen more long-term members comprise the APBRN 'honor roll', having attended meetings and either completed IRB training or participated in at least one research project. They are:

- Robert Bartel (Dadeville)
- Don Beach (Moulton)
- Melissa Behringer (Huntsville)
- Gary Bullock (Bessemer)
- Robert Cater (Anniston)
- David Fagan (Valley)
- English Gonzalez (Birmingham)
- Jerry Harrison (Haleyville)
- Robert Kynerd (Birmingham)
- Gerold Sibanda (Greensboro)
- Lori Stanfield (Opp)
- Michael Swearingen (Sylacauga)
- Terry True (Pelham)

**Thank you !**

## Join Us!

Membership and participation in the APBRN are completely voluntary, and are open to any primary care physician currently licensed and practicing in Alabama. We especially encourage diversity in background, experience, perspective and interests, as this adds to the richness of all interactions. Our goal as a network is to address questions of particular importance to primary care physicians through practice-based research that, simultaneously, positively impacts patient health and health care.

## APBRN Coordinating Center

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