CORT aims to increase community participation in all stages of research, foster research relevant to community needs, form and facilitate research network capabilities, and promote uptake of useful research findings in diverse health care settings. This quarterly newsletter is intended to serve communities in Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and Idaho (WWAMI). The ITHS is supported by grants UL1 RR025014 from the NIH National Center for Research Resources.

ITHS2: CORT’s New Aims and Scope of Work

CORT’s overall goal is to partner with communities, tribes, and clinical practices to support and conduct translational research that improves health and well-being in the WWAMI region. CORT works through the prism of community engagement and community participatory research to speed the translation of discoveries and new clinical applications into improvements in health. CORT encourages community engagement by building research networks in communities, by bringing community and academics together to brainstorm new research processes and programs, by providing pilot funding, and by promoting uptake of research findings in diverse settings. In the next five years, CORT will have a new focus on engaging Hispanic communities in the WWAMI region as well as a continuing focus on American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and community-based clinical practices. CORT consists of three partner groups including the University of Washington Department of Family Medicine, the University of Washington
Partner Profile

Ellen Lopez and Freda Williams

Freda Williams and Ellen Lopez represent a strong and mutually beneficial community-academic partnership focused on improving quality of life for Alaska Native cancer survivors. Williams directs the Fairbanks Native Associations’ (FNA) Community Services Division, which serves the Alaska Interior’s Fairbanks North Star Borough Area. Lopez, MPH, PhD is an Assistant Professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks with joint appointments in Psychology, and The Center for Alaska Native Health Research (CANHR). With an ITHS Community Award, the partnership conducted in-depth interviews with Alaska Native cancer survivors to better understand their strengths as a means to address their needs. For many survivors, this was the first time they discussed their cancer experiences. Findings revealed the desire for a safe and culturally-centered forum for survivors to share their experiences and wisdom. With a Community Grant from ITHS and Native People for Cancer Control, Williams and Lopez established the “Hopeful Connections” Cancer Support Group. The partnership is now evaluating Hopeful Connections, and is working to extend their research and intervention efforts to survivors across Alaska’s Interior Region.
Opioid addiction and deaths from prescription opioids is an epidemic problem. Long-term therapy for opioid addiction can help people resume productive lives, but methadone, the most common treatment for opioid addiction, is often unavailable in rural areas. Fortunately, in 2000, the federal government approved buprenorphine/naloxone (Suboxone®) or buprenorphine (Subutex®) for the office based treatment of opioid addiction.

The goal of Project ROAM, led by Roger Rosenblatt, MD, MPH, MFR, professor and vice-chair of the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Washington, is to decrease the rate of overdoses from prescription opiates by increasing the availability of buprenorphine treatment in rural areas. Project ROAM provides training to clinicians to certify them to prescribe buprenorphine. In collaboration with Project ECHO, weekly video-conferencing sessions are available for new buprenorphine prescribers. The sessions provide mentoring from psychiatrists, addiction medicine physicians and expert family practice physicians to help solve both clinical and practice based questions. After training, physician mentors are available by phone or e-mail to discuss questions.

Project ROAM conducts community consultations to work with and learn from community partners, with the goal of discussing issues related to the safe use of opioids, and to identify steps forward to reduce opioid related deaths.

Project ROAM is partnering with Group Health Cooperative to put on the National Summit of Opioid Safety: Strategies and Tools for More Cautious Use of Chronic Opioid Therapy October 31, 2012 and November 1, 2012 (register online at: www.eventbrite.com/event/3628531034)
Grid-Enabled Measures (GEM) is a web-based database using a wiki platform that provides researchers and program evaluators with standard measures, tools, and databases. If researchers use the same measures, then eventually they can share data across projects. The wiki platform enables collective improvements and shared learning. Examples of just a few of the many topics for which GEM offers measures are:

- Perceived quality of care
- Social support
- Organizational readiness for change
- Effective communication
- Health literacy/numeracy

GEM also organizes its measures into content areas such as cancer, smoking/tobacco, obesity, and mental health.

At the GEM web site, users can find content areas and topics, how the topic is defined and where it came from (its theoretical foundation), and download different measures for each topic. Characteristics of the measures (e.g., definition, intended population, reliability, validity) are also available. Users can add to the website, and provide feedback and rate the measures.

For more information about GEM, visit its Beta site: [www.gem-beta.org](http://www.gem-beta.org)

GEM Factsheet (PDF) – March 2012