



HWTF Mission

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission invests in programs and partnerships to address access, prevention, education and research that help all North Carolinians achieve better health.

NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission Elects New Chair

At the July 16 meeting of the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission (HWTF), Dr. Chuck Willson was unanimously elected as its new chair. Dr. Willson has served on the Commission since 2001, where he has chaired the Research, Education and Prevention Task Force and remains a member of the Obesity and Wellness Task Force. “Dr. Chuck Willson has been a committed and highly valued member of the Commission and a passionate advocate for the health of North Carolina’s citizens,” said Governor Perdue, former Commission Chair. “I am confident that the

Commission will continue its critical mission with the benefit of his exceptional leadership.” A pediatric physician and dedicated child advocate, Dr. Willson joined the faculty at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University after 19 years in private practice. He is a Clinical Professor of Pediatrics and serves as co-Director for the Center for Children with Complex and Chronic Conditions. Dr. Willson has served on the Executive Committee of the NC Pediatric Society since 1986. A former president of the North Carolina Medical Society, he is currently a

member of the NC American Medical Association (AMA) delegation. Last year, the UNC-CH Medical Alumni Association awarded Dr. Willson a distinguished service award. At the same Commission meeting, Robert Zaytoun was re-appointed as Vice Chair of the HWTF Commission, a position he has held since the Commission’s inception. Zaytoun continues to lead the Operations and Administration Committee. For more information, please visit www.HealthWellNC.com.



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N.C. Wellness Watch

Special Points of Interest

- Dr. Chuck Willson named HWTF Chair
- HWTF Oral Health Initiative Grants
- Upcoming Events

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New HDI Campaign Focuses on Stroke Prevention

In the spring of this year, HWTF launched a new media campaign focusing on the link between high blood pressure and stroke. The launch coincided with the national health observance of May as Stroke Awareness Month. The campaign is the latest in a series of ads designed as part of HWTF's \$22 million Eliminating Health Disparities Initiative (HDI). While North Carolina's stroke death rate is on the decline, it remains the 6th highest in the nation, and stroke is the 3rd leading cause of death in our state. African-Americans in our state have significantly higher stroke death rates than do whites, and they are more likely to die of stroke at younger ages than their

white counterparts. Among African-American men, 35% of stroke deaths occur before age 65, compared with 15% among white men; 20% of stroke deaths among African-American women occur before age 65, compared with 7% among white women. The campaign targets African-Americans because of the disparate rates of morbidity and mortality in this community as a result of stroke. It includes two television ads featuring Gladys Lundy, resident of Wake County and President of the Minority Women's Health Project. Lundy was only 45 years old when she had a debilitating stroke and spent many years in recovery. In the ads, she speaks honestly and

compellingly about her experience. "I was young. I never associated stroke with anyone my age," said Lundy. The ad underscores the importance of keeping blood pressure below 120/80 as a means of stroke prevention and encourages viewers to access the HWTF health disparities website (www.CaretoActNC.com) to learn more about high blood pressure, stroke prevention and the warning signs of a stroke.



NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund Awards Grant Funding to Address Oral Health

In June, the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) announced grant awards totaling \$1,930,000 to seven organizations as part of its Oral Health Initiative (OHI). At the June 1 meeting of HWTF, nearly \$2 million in funding was approved for Phase I of the OHI and awarded to seven organizations to increase access to treatment and preventive services for low-income, high-need populations and to train dental and other health care providers to better serve these populations. "It is unfortunate that many North Carolina

citizens do not receive basic dental care which is so critical for overall good health," said Vandana Shah, HWTF Executive Director. "We hope that these grant funds will provide more North Carolina citizens with access to high quality, accessible oral health care." In 2006, roughly 32% of North Carolina adults reported not visiting a dentist within the last year. The rates are even high among the state's minority populations (39% of Native Americans, 42% of African Americans and 56% of Hispanics).

Also, HWTF awarded a grant for \$350,000 to the Carolinas Center for Medical Excellence (CCME) to provide technical assistance as well as evaluation for the Oral Health Initiative. CCME is a non-profit organization that has over two decades of experience providing technical assistance and evaluation to health care programs across a variety of settings. The full list of grant awards can be viewed at www.HealthWellNC.com (click on 'HWTF Funding Opportunities' in the upper right corner).

Governor Charges HWTF with Coordination of NC's Health IT Effort

On July 16th, North Carolina Governor Bev Perdue signed Executive Order 19, charging the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) as the state-designated entity responsible for coordinating North Carolina's Health Information Technology (HIT) recovery efforts. The Governor, in consultation with the HWTF Chair, appointed members from the public, private and non-profit sectors to serve on the newly created North Carolina Health Information Technology

Collaborative (NC HIT Collaborative). The NC HIT Collaborative is responsible for securing the maximum amount of health IT federal recovery dollars from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, and for implementing North Carolina's health IT action plan. "By integrating information technology into our health care system, we can improve the quality and efficiency of care, and make sure North Carolinians get the right care at the right place, at the right time," said Perdue.

"I am confident that the Health and Wellness Trust Fund's expertise, and North Carolina's status as a national leader in the health IT movement, will allow our state to receive a significant amount of recovery dollars." Governor Perdue also appointed Mr. Stuart James, the Chief Information Officer for University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina, as chair of the Collaborative.

Breathe Easy, Live Well Conducts Healthcare Provider Training in Greensboro

On September 25th, Breathe Easy Live Well offered training in Greensboro to North Carolina psychiatrists, primary physicians, psychologists, nurses, social workers, counselors and other interested professionals. The training, "Pharmacotherapy Treatments for Tobacco Dependence Among Smokers with Mental Illness," instructed health-care providers to identify the connection between smoking and mental health disorders and provided additional

information on prescribing guidelines and side effects of the seven FDA-approved pharmacotherapies for tobacco dependence. The presenter for the training was Jill Williams, MD, nationally recognized expert in nicotine dependence and psychiatric co-morbidity. Dr. Williams is a Board Certified Addictions Psychiatrist specializing in the treatment of tobacco and other addictions in mentally ill populations. She is an Associate Professor and Director of the Division of Addictions Psychiatry at the UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson

Medical School, Department of Psychiatry. Breathe Easy Live Well is a three-year wellness and tobacco cessation program funded by HWTF, administered by the North Carolina Evidence Based Practice Center, and focused on NC Clubhouses, a comprehensive center of support and encouragement for members (people with serious mental illness).

NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund Announces Continued Funding of CheckMeds NC and NCRx

In June, the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) approved continued funding for two of its prescription drug assistance programs which provide critical services to North Carolina's seniors. The HWTF commission allocated an additional \$2 million to extend the CheckMeds NC program for another two years through June 2011. HWTF has also extended the NCRx program for another three years through December 2012. CheckMeds NC offers eligible seniors one-on-one consultations

with pharmacists to ensure that they are receiving the best information and advice about their medicines. Since its launch in October 2007, CheckMeds NC has served more than 21,000 NC seniors with an estimated cost avoidance of \$14.2 million. NCRx provides premium subsidy for Medicare enrollees. If a senior qualifies, NCRx will pay up to \$29 per month toward the monthly premium of a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan. Since NCRx launched in January 2007, nearly \$1.5 million in total premiums

have been paid for more than 5,000 seniors. In order to continue to gauge the efficacy of the CheckMeds NC program, HWTF has awarded a \$25,000 grant to the Carolinas Center for Medical Excellence (CCME) to evaluate the program. For more information on the CheckMeds NC and NCRx programs, please visit www.HealthWellNC.com.

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“Investing in a Healthy NC”

National Health Observances

November is American Diabetes Month

November 19th - Great American Smoke Out (GASO)

November is National Child Mental Health Month

www.HealthWellNC.com

Initiative Updates

Health Disparities

On July 1, 2009, Phase II of the Eliminating Health Disparities community grants program began. Twenty-one grants were made to faith-based organizations, community health centers, Native American tribal non-profits, health departments and universities to address the disparate health outcomes that are experienced by racial and ethnic minority populations in North Carolina. The community grants program focuses on addressing three chronic disease states: diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer in African American, Native American, Latino and low-income communities throughout the state. Several grantees are also focusing on increasing the cultural competency of health care providers in an effort to improve health outcomes for the target populations. In October, the grantee organizations participated in the Phase II annual meeting with a focus on how to build networks and relationship with partners that could lead to impacting policy.

Tobacco

The Teen Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Initiative launched “TRU Week” during the last week of October, an event that is expected to become an annual tradition. This week was dedicated to celebrating the meaning of being TRU—Tobacco Reality Unfiltered. Throughout the week, grantees promoted their TRU groups. The following themes were part of TRU Week 2009: What’s TRU?, Tobacco 101, Cessation, Environment and Media Literacy. TRU Week activities included wearing TRU gear; handing out one-pagers to interested students; a “Cigarette Butts Pick Up Day” and a “Tackle Smoking” event at the school’s football game. The TRU program began in 2004 and focuses on creating the first tobacco-free generation. For more information on TRU, please visit: TobaccoRealityUnfiltered.com.

Obesity

The North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) has provided a grant to UNC Chapel Hill’s Department of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention for a worksite wellness pilot program, Live Healthy, Work Well NC, designed to improve the health status of state employees as well as to reduce their overall health care costs. The pilot program will be implemented within the state Department of Commerce (DOC) over a two-year period. Living Well Health Solutions, a company located in Charlotte, NC that specializes in chronic disease management in the workplace setting, has been selected to administer this program. UNC Chapel Hill will provide the grant administration and external evaluation. The Department of State Treasurer employees will be used as a control group to measure the impact of this intervention. There will be a Nurse Practitioner on-site to provide convenient healthcare services to DOC employees.