



Partnerships to support rural health equity research in Wisconsin

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

9:30 - 11:00 am via Zoom

To register for the event, sign up [HERE](#), **Questions? Contact Kat Phelps at kephelps@wisc.edu**

Challenges to health equity in rural areas include an aging population, fewer health care providers, greater poverty rates and lower insurance coverage. National thought leaders in rural health recently shared four recommendations to shift us from describing the problem of rural health disparities to designing effective solutions: “(1) create mechanisms to allow the research community time to build sustainable rural community-based participatory relationships; (2) support innovative research designs and approaches relevant to rural settings; (3) sustain effective interventions relevant to unique challenges in rural areas; and (4) recognize and identify the diversity within and across rural populations and adapt culturally and language-appropriate approaches.” (Cacari Stone, L., Roary, M. C., Diana, A., & Grady, P. A., 2021. *State health disparities research in Rural America: Gaps and future directions in an era of COVID-19*. The Journal of Rural Health.

In this session, researchers will:

1. **Describe community-engaged research projects with organizations supporting rural health**
2. **Reflect on the recommendations for rural health research put forward in Cacari Stone et.al (2021)**
3. **Discuss lessons learned and practical tips for rural health research in Wisconsin**

Moderator: Tim Size, founding and current Executive Director of the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative

Susan Racine Passmore, PhD, is Senior Scientist & Collaborative Center for Health Equity (CCHE) Assistant Director for Community Engaged Research. She brings to this role significant experience in community engaged research, health equity and the promotion of research equity. Dr. Passmore leads a project funded by the CDC to identify key behavioral insights that will inform solutions to increase confidence in COVID-19 vaccines. The project seeks to build trust among Wisconsin's rural families, and partners with organizations with considerable relationships and reach in rural communities. **Southwestern Wisconsin Community Action Program (SWCAP)** works to mitigate the causes and conditions of poverty in Southwestern Wisconsin, building resilience and self-sufficiency by providing supportive services and programs, and by collaborating with partners. SWCAP is a catalyst for building communities of hope, inclusion, and social justice, where poverty is overcome, and all people are empowered and thrive.

Meghan Brennan, MD, MS, is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Infectious Disease within the Department of Medicine, where her research and clinical practice both focus on diabetic foot ulcers. She began by defining the rural disparity in major amputations among patients with diabetic foot ulcer (rural patients are 37% more likely to undergo major amputation than their urban counterparts). Dr. Brennan has been partnering with the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative since 2018 to address this gap. Together, they described current care, prioritized areas for improvement, and designed a health system intervention to address these priorities. Dr. Brennan and the Cooperative are now poised to begin testing these interventions in a clinical pilot. **Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative (RWHC)** has been providing affordable and effective services to healthcare organizations since 1979. RWHC is owned and operated by forty-four, rural acute, general medical-surgical hospitals. The Cooperative's emphasis on developing a collaborative network among both freestanding and system affiliated rural hospitals distinguishes it from alternative approaches.

Florence Becot, PhD, MS, is a rural sociologist and associate research scientist at the Marshfield Clinic Research Institute (MCRI) National Farm Medicine Center. In addition, she co-leads the ICTR Community Engagement & Collaborations component at MCRI. Dr. Becot's research program focuses on the health, well-being, safety, and economic viability of farm families. Consistent with her training at two land grant universities, her research agenda is problem-based, often includes collaborators inside and outside academia, and aims to assist community leaders and policy makers in making evidence-based decisions. **Marshfield Clinic Research Institute (MCRI)** strives to enrich lives through the discovery, translation and application of scientific knowledge that improves health and well-being. The Research Institute, founded in 1959, is the largest private medical research institute in Wisconsin, with more than 30 PhD and MD scientists and 200 other staff.

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