



The Empowerer

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER PROJECT EMPOWERMENT

Issue 1A
Spring 2009

(funded through NIDRR
grant #H133A080060)

Welcome to the inaugural issue of THE EMPOWERER, the quarterly newsletter of Project Empowerment. The purpose of this publication is to provide quarterly updates on the research and scholarship, capacity building, training/dissemination and knowledge translation activities, and upcoming events of Project Empowerment. You can expect to routinely see the specific sections of this newsletter in each issue of THE EMPOWERER.

We believe that our success in improving understanding of both the experiences of minorities with disabilities in the services system and the current science around the conduct and dissemination of such research will be enhanced to the extent that we remain open to full participation by all stakeholders who are so inclined to collaborate with us. To this end, we attempt to make all of our grant activities and processes as transparent as possible, and always invite your participation and feedback. We also believe strongly in the concept of continuous quality improvement, which means that wherever we start in this process, we want to strive for constant advancement going forward. Therefore, feel free to talk to us about whatever is on your minds related to Project Empowerment.

Sincerely,

Allen Lewis
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Spotlight on Minority Disability Scholarship

In the first one-half year of NIDRR DRRP grant funding, several manuscripts are already in the process of being published and numerous invited and peer reviewed conference presentations have been conducted.

Journal articles:

- Gary, K.W., Arango-Lasprilla, J.C., Ketchum, J.M., Kreutzer, J.S., Copolillo, A., Novack, T., & Jha, A. (in press). Racial differences in employment outcome after traumatic brain injury at 1, 2, and 5 years post-injury. Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.
- Lewis, A.N. (in press). Disability disparities: A beginning model. Disability and Rehabilitation (special issue).
- Lewis, A.N., Bethea, J., & Hurley, J. (in press). Integrating cultural competency in rehabilitation curricula: Keeping it simple. Disability and Rehabilitation (special issue).

- Lewis, A.N., Davis, K.E., & Zhang, N.I. (in press). Admissions of African Americans to state psychiatric hospitals. *International Journal of Public Policy* (special issue).

Conference presentations:

- Doval, E. Presented on Self-Determination for Students with Disabilities from a Hispanic Background in Transition from School to Work at the 61st Annual National Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (peer-reviewed presentation) (2009).
- Doval, E. Presented on Supporting Students with Disabilities: Self-Determination in Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities from a Hispanic Background at the 13th Annual Holmes Partnership National Conference (peer-reviewed presentation) (2009).
- Gary, K.W. Presented on Long-term Employment Outcomes among African Americans with TBI at the First Annual International Conference on Culture, Ethnicity and Brain Injury (invited concurrent session presentation) (2009).
- Lewis, A. Poster presentation on Project Empowerment: Improving Capacity to Conduct Culturally Competent Minority Disability Research – The National Survey on Current Status of Research and Service Practices with Racial and Ethnic Minority Populations at the National Council of Rehabilitation Education Annual Conference (peer reviewed poster presentation) (2009).
- Lewis, A. Presented on Disability Disparities: A Beginning Model at the National Council of Rehabilitation Education Annual Conference (peer-reviewed presentation) (2009).
- Lewis, A. Presented on NIDRR DRRP Grant (#H133A080060) - Project Empowerment: Improving Minority Disability Research Capacity at the Virginia Commonwealth University Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation-Neuropsychology Grand Rounds (invited presentation) (2009).
- Lewis, A. Presented on Rehabilitation Services to African Americans with Brain Injury at the First Annual International Conference on Culture, Ethnicity and Brain Injury (invited plenary session presentation) (2009).
- Lewis, A. Presented on Teaching Cultural Competency in the 21st Century at the First Annual International Conference on Culture, Ethnicity and Brain Injury (invited concurrent session presentation) (2009).

Update on Research Studies

Project Empowerment is conducting three primary studies.

- Study 1:** A national survey examining the experiences of Americans with disabilities from racial and ethnic minority groups to illuminate the current capacity of the rehabilitation and disability system, and to learn what research methods and dissemination practices are needed to advance the field in culturally competent research.
- A very rough initial draft of the national survey has been disseminated for the first round of feedback from targeted members of the National Council on Rehabilitation Education and Project Empowerment stakeholders.
 - Drs. Gary, Doval, and Crockett are currently working on a comprehensive literature review on the experiences of minorities with disabilities in the rehabilitation and disability services system AND minority disability research methods and dissemination practices.
 - The Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) application for study 1 is underway, but will not be finalized until feedback is given on the near final version of the national survey by Think Tank/Research Consortium members in August, 2009.
 - Revision of the timeline for study 1 implementation is underway.
- Study 2:** A longitudinal study examining post-injury unemployment for racial and ethnic minority persons with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries (TBI/SCI).
- The VCU IRB application has been approved as of April 20, 2009.
 - The implementation of study 2 is underway.

Study 3: A study examining prevalence and trends in employment discrimination due to disability for different racial and/or ethnic minority groups.

- The VCU IRB application has been approved as of May 4, 2009.
- The timeline for study implementation is under revision.

One of the exciting things about the implementation of studies 1 and 3 is that we will utilize a participatory action model to conduct the research, relying heavily on the active involvement and voices of both our minority institution partners (VUU, VSU, and NSU) as well as persons with disabilities through the American Association of People with Disabilities in Washington, D.C. in all phases of the research.

Capacity Building Forum

The capacity building component of this project is very important. It represents a way to engage in succession planning by identifying individuals who can be developed to be ready, passionate and interested in devoting careers to the study of racial and ethnic minorities with disabilities. Our capacity building efforts are based primarily on collaboration with the minority partner institutions (VUU, VSU, and NSU) as well as interested minority students identified at any university. So far, we have done the following:

- Engaged in initial recruitment efforts to attract students at VUU, VSU, and NSU and have begun to identify a small cadre of interested persons.
- Additional recruitment strategies for minority students at VUU, NSU, and VSU are currently being developed by Drs. Doval and Gary.
- Further contact with minority institutional partners has recently been made to schedule presentations by Drs. Doval and Gary to potential student participants and faculty members.
- We have identified several minority doctoral students outside of VCU, VUU, NSU, and VSU who are currently working directly under the guidance of Project Empowerment mentors (PI and post doctoral fellows) on manuscripts as a way of increasing research capacity within more advanced up and coming minority researchers. For example, Dr. Lewis is working directly with Mimi Getachew at the University of Iowa and Jenelle Pitt at Michigan State University; Dr. Doval is working directly with Quiteya Walker at the University of Iowa, Yojanna Cuenca at George Mason University, and Sonja Lopez at the University of Southern California.

Training, Dissemination and Knowledge Translation Corner

Project Empowerment will deploy 13 strategies for training and dissemination. Each one is designed to promote minority disability knowledge system-wide. Together, they constitute a multi-pronged approach to ensure broad reach and maximum system penetration of knowledge generated by Project Empowerment.

- newsletter,
- listserv,
- website (www.vcu-projectempowerment.org),
- minority disability research training module in Blackboard,
- grant writing training module in Blackboard,
- annual web casts on minority disability topics,
- fact sheets on minority disability topics,
- minority disability research database,
- conference presentations,
- published manuscripts,
- state of the science conference,
- handbook of minority research best practice, and
- Research to Action Notes.

Research to Action Notes (RANs) will be a primary strategy that Project Empowerment will utilize to attempt to move research to practice on an ongoing basis. RANs will be a one-page summary of the bottom-line “lessons learned” from Project Empowerment research that will apply to rehabilitation and disability practice. The language of RANs will be distilled down from “researcher ease” to include only language that is easily understood by frontline rehabilitation and disability practitioners and program staff. Our goal is to eventually have a RAN that corresponds to each research article published under the auspices of Project Empowerment. Once each RAN is disseminated, a designated Project Empowerment researcher will be available for follow up telephone and email consultations as needed.

- The Think Tank/Research Consortium will be an annual, face to face, real time, formal, discussion about the research aspects of Project Empowerment with as many stakeholders as possible. The national survey for study 1 will go to the IRB after it is finalized in the Think Tank/Research Consortium session this summer. The date of the first Think Tank/Research Consortium session will be August 7th at the Crown Plaza Hotel in downtown Richmond, Virginia. This will be a one-day event that will run from 9:30 am until 4 pm. The primary agenda item for our August 7th meeting will be to finalize the national survey for study 1.
- Year 1 Web cast – Topic: “Disability Disparities” - anticipated date to be June, July, or August, 2009 (final date TBA).

Project Empowerment Team: Key Stakeholders

National Institute of Disability Rehabilitation Research (Project Officer Delores Watkins, MS)

Partnerships

- Kent State University
- Norfolk State University
- Penn State University
- The American Association of People with Disabilities
- The Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services
- University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign
- Virginia State University
- Virginia Union University

Lead Project Personnel

- Allen Lewis, Ph.D., Principal Investigator
- Juan Carlos Aranga-Lasprilla, Ph.D., Co-Principal Investigator
- Paul Wehman, Ph.D., Co-Principal Investigator
- Jessica Ketchum, Ph.D., Biostatistician

Project Staff

- Mike Barcus, MS, project coordinator
- Teri Blankenship, MS, dissemination coordinator
- Keith Caleb, BA, fiscal staff
- Satoko Crockatt, PhD, project evaluator
- Elin Doval, PhD, post doctoral fellow
- Douglas Erickson, MS, coordinator of information technology
- Kelli Gary, PhD, post doctoral fellow
- Brian McMahon, PhD, research associate
- Jeanne Roberts, coordinator of publication services
- Aisha Shamburger, MS, doctoral student/graduate assistant
- Tricia Zeh, MS, fiscal administrator

Consultants

- Reginald Alston, PhD
- Andrew Imperato, JD
- Philip Rumrill, PhD
- Keith Wilson, PhD

Advisory Board

- Cheryl Al-Mateen, MD
- Jihad Aziz, PhD
- Faye Belgrave, PhD
- Sheryl Garland, MPA
- Michael Pyles, PhD
- James Rothrock, MS
- Shawn Utsey, PhD

Editor: Allen Lewis, Ph.D.

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