



The Empowerer

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER PROJECT EMPOWERMENT

Issue 1C
Fall 2009

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This third edition of THE EMPOWERER, the quarterly newsletter of Project Empowerment is being published during an exciting time for the grant project. Project Empowerment has drawn international attention and was recently featured in the November 2009 International Innovation Magazine that is produced out of England, which highlights technology, science and research projects on the international landscape that are deemed to be innovative. This magazine has a worldwide readership of over 35,000 and will enhance the global visibility of Project Empowerment.

There are also two new features in this edition of the newsletter to which I would like to draw your attention. As we are improving minority disability research capacity as a component of the grant, we thought it appropriate to begin to feature some of the up and coming researchers. This issue highlights an undergraduate student from one of our minority partner institutions, Norfolk State University.

This issue also features our first Research to Action Note (RAN). This is a knowledge translation tool that is a summary of the "lessons learned" from research that can be applied to rehabilitation and disability practice.

Finally, as you will see on the Project Empowerment website at www.vcu-projectempowerment.org, there are several archived webcasts. It is our endeavor to present a new webcast every two to three months as an additional method of achieving one of our goals on the grant, which is to develop more persons who are passionate in conducting minority disability research.

Sincerely,

Allen Lewis
Chair, Department of Rehabilitation Counseling
School of Allied Health Professions
Virginia Commonwealth University

IN THIS ISSUE:

Project Empowerment Spotlights in the International Innovation Magazine

Capacity Building with Minority Partner Institutions

Brett Dodd: Profile of an Undergraduate, Up and Coming Minority Researcher

Archived Webcasts

Research to Action Note: Disability Disparities: A Beginning Model

COMING SOON:

Webcasts in Spanish

Editors: Allen Lewis, Ph.D., CRC
Aisha Shamburger, M.S., CRC

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Spotlight on Minority Disability Scholarship

Upcoming Special Issue:

- Drs. Allen Lewis, PI and Juan Carlos Arango-Lasprilla, Co-PI of Project Empowerment, have been invited to be guest co-editors for a special issue of the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation (JVR)* on "Multicultural challenges in employment of people with disabilities." This special issue will be printed in early 2010 (February-March).

Research Magazine Publication

- The International Innovation Magazine (IIM) is an annual publication produced out of England for the purpose of disseminating innovative science and technology research. Project Empowerment

was spotlighted in the November 2009 issue of the International Innovation Magazine on pages 63-69.

Conference Presentations:

- Dr. Allen Lewis, Principal Investigator of Project Empowerment, co-presented on Disability, Gender and Race: Allegations of Employment Discrimination at the Annual National Training Conference on Vocational Rehabilitation Education sponsored by the National Council on Vocational Rehabilitation Education (NCRE), the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) in Washington, D.C. (October 2009).
- Dr. Allen Lewis, Principal Investigator of Project Empowerment, and Dr. Kelli Williams Gary, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow with Project Empowerment, each presented at the Traumatic Brain Injury Implementation Project Symposium on October 16, 2009 sponsored by the Connecticut Department of Social Services in Farmington, CT. Dr. Allen Lewis presented on "Serving Culturally Diverse Persons with Disabilities and Reassessing Progress in Rehabilitation." Dr. Kelli Williams Gary presented on "The Impact of Race and Ethnicity on Rehabilitation: Access and Quality."

Update on Research 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. Kelli W. Gary and Paola Premuda-Conti along with Aisha Shamburger, doctoral student, are working on revising the initial draft of the national survey, which was critically reviewed at the Project Empowerment Think Tank/Research Consortium on August 7, 2009.
- Dr. Kelli W. Gary and Aisha Shamburger are currently working on a comprehensive literature review on the experiences of minorities with disabilities in the public rehabilitation and disability services system AND minority disability research methods and dissemination practices.

Study 2 -- A longitudinal study examining post-injury unemployment for racial and ethnic minority persons with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries (TBI/SCI).

- This study has been completed.

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 was approved as of 5/4/09.
- 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 people 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 minority partner institutions (VUU, VSU, and NSU) as well as interested minority students identified at other universities. So far, we have done the following:

Informational sessions about the goals of the Project Empowerment grant were held at all three of the minority partner institutions.

- Virginia Union University (Richmond, VA): The informational session was held on October 26, 2009 and consisted of approximately ten undergraduate students and three faculty members.
- Virginia State University (Petersburg, VA): The informational session was held on November 4, 2009. Among the close to one hundred people in attendance, three faculty members and over fifty undergraduate and graduate students displayed an interest in participating in becoming minority disability researchers.
- Norfolk State University (Norfolk, VA): The informational session was held on December 2, 2009 and consisted of approximately fifteen undergraduate students and one faculty member.

Dr. Kelli Gary and Aisha Shamburger, doctoral student, are currently working on building capacity with faculty and staff at several Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). Efforts will continue with this objective through early 2010.

Profile: Brett A. Dodd, Jr.



Brett A. Dodd, Jr., is a senior psychology major at Norfolk State University. While Brett considers Maryland home, he completed his last year of high school in San Antonio, Texas. In addition to touting a 3.76 GPA at Norfolk State, he is also a team captain for NSU's Track and Field team. Brett currently holds the university's indoor pole vault record at 14-2 $\frac{3}{4}$ and an outdoor personal best of 14-5 $\frac{1}{4}$. He is currently in the process of applying to graduate schools and his future plans are to continue his education to pursue a doctorate degree in clinical psychology or sports psychology with a primary goal of serving as a clinician and leading researcher in the African-American community.

Brett indicates that as an undergraduate student, Project Empowerment has helped him in his career goals by opening his eyes to the significant role that research serves in bettering the African-American community, educating him on the research process, and providing him with invaluable connections that will undoubtedly aid him in his future career endeavors. He looks forward to being a co-author on one of the upcoming publications under the auspices of the Project Empowerment grant.

Training, Dissemination, and Knowledge Translation Corner

Project Empowerment will deploy 14 strategies for training and dissemination. Each 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. The strategies are:

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

- Research to Action Notes (RANs) are a summary of the bottom-line “lessons learned” from Project Empowerment research that will apply to rehabilitation and disability practice. The following RAN is based on the recent journal article: Lewis, A. (2009). Disability disparities: A beginning model. *Disability & Rehabilitation*, 31(14), 1136 - 1143.

- This paper presents a model of disability disparities. The concept of health disparities is discussed in the healthcare arena; however, no such model addresses disparities in the disability area. A disability disparity is defined by the author as existing when “an underserved, ethnic or racial minority cultural group’s goal is to receive services within the formal, rehabilitation and disability system (public or private), but there is a different experience based primarily on cultural orientation that results in higher occurrence of disability, and/or lower participation in the formal helping system, and/or fewer successful individual outcomes when compared to majority culture groups.”

The model is described as a five-point continuum that also includes three levels. The first level provides potential reasons on why disparities exist. The second level provides clarity of key concepts for researchers. The third level provides ideas for exploring disability disparities for practitioners in actual counseling sessions. On level three, point one (occurrence of disability), describes client lifestyle considerations for exploration. Point two (contemplation), addresses the client’s cultural view on the cause of disability, how it progresses without intervention, and what interventions are viewed as effective. Point three (access), speaks to exploring concerns that impact service access such as social economic status, culturally driven help seeking behavior, and rules of system entry. Point four (participation), examines the strength of the relationship between the client and counselor and how much the client views the counselor as being culturally competent. Point five (outcome), explores the extent that outcomes match cultural orientation and expectations, and whether the outcomes are measures in consideration of differences in severity as well as how much they are measured with and without cultural bias.

While this is a beginning model that needs testing through research, it is a start on explaining the cause of disability disparities as well as areas that are important for researchers and practicing clinicians to explore.

- Research Days will be held quarterly with the specific goal of engaging the participatory observers from the minority partner institutions. The second Research Day will be held on January 23, 2009, from 10am to 2pm at Virginia Commonwealth University’s Siegel Center. The objective of this half-day training will be to focus on providing an overview of the research process for the three main studies of Project Empowerment, providing knowledge pertaining to conducting scholarly research and engaging participants about their research interests.
- State of the Science Conference: Date TBD.
- As various initiatives are being developed to reach Latino disability researchers, Dr. Juan Carlos Arango-Lasprilla, Co-Principal Investigator of Project Empowerment, is developing upcoming webcasts that will be featured in Spanish.
- The following three webcasts have been completed and are archived on the Project Empowerment website.

- “Disability Disparities”: Offers a working definition of disability disparity along with description in the form of a five-domain continuum. The speakers for this forum were Drs. Allen Lewis, Keith Wilson, Phil Rumrill and Attorney Andrew Imparato.
 - “Employment Outcomes after Traumatic Brain Injury: Does Race/Ethnicity Matter?": This webcast examines the effects of race and ethnicity on employment outcomes following a traumatic brain injury. The speakers for this forum were Drs. Juan Carlos Arango-Lasprilla and Kelli Williams Gary.
 - “Strategies Toward the Elimination of Disability Disparities”: This webcast elaborates on the first disability disparities webcast and focuses on strategies toward the elimination of disparities based on the social ecological model (Bibeau, Steckler, Glanz, and McLeroy, 1988). The speakers for this roundtable discussion were Drs. Allen Lewis, Keith Wilson, Phil Rumrill, Reginald Alston, and Attorney Andrew Imparato.
- The Facebook fan page for Project Empowerment is active and growing with fans daily. A link to the Facebook page is provided at the bottom of the Project Empowerment website. The goal of using this forum is to inform individuals about the goals of the grant, upcoming webcasts, and to introduce new individuals, especially undergraduate minority students, to the opportunities available through the grant and to minority disability research in general.

Project Empowerment Team: Key Stakeholders

National Institute of Disability Rehabilitation Research -- Project Officer Delores Watkins, M.S.

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| Partnerships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Kent State University ■ Norfolk State University ■ Penn State University ■ The American Association of People with Disabilities ■ Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services ■ University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign ■ Virginia State University ■ Virginia Union University | | |
| Lead Project Personnel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Allen Lewis, Ph.D., principal investigator ■ Juan Carlos Arango-Lasprilla, Ph.D., co-principal investigator ■ Paul Wehman, Ph.D., co-principal investigator ■ Jessica Ketchum, Ph.D., biostatistician | | |
| Project Staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mike Barcus, M.S., project coordinator ■ Teri Blankenship, M.S., dissemination coordinator ■ Keith Caleb, B.A., fiscal staff ■ Satoko Crockatt, Ph.D., project evaluator ■ Douglas Erickson, M.S., coordinator of information technology ■ Kelli Gary, Ph.D., post doctoral fellow ■ Brian McMahon, Ph.D., research associate ■ Jeanne Roberts, coordinator of publication services ■ Aisha Shamburger, M.S., doctoral student/graduate assistant ■ Tricia Zeh, M.S., fiscal administrator | | |
| Consultants | <table border="0"> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reginald Alston, Ph.D. ■ Philip Rumrill, Ph.D. </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Andrew Imparato, J.D. ■ Keith Wilson, Ph.D. </td> </tr> </table> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reginald Alston, Ph.D. ■ Philip Rumrill, Ph.D. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Andrew Imparato, J.D. ■ Keith Wilson, Ph.D. |
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| Advisory Board | <table border="0"> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cheryl Al-Mateen, M.D. ■ Jihad Aziz, Ph.D. ■ Faye Belgrave, Ph.D. ■ Sheryl Garland, M.P.A. </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Michael Pyles, Ph.D. ■ James Rothrock, M.S. ■ Shawn Utsey, Ph.D. </td> </tr> </table> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cheryl Al-Mateen, M.D. ■ Jihad Aziz, Ph.D. ■ Faye Belgrave, Ph.D. ■ Sheryl Garland, M.P.A. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Michael Pyles, Ph.D. ■ James Rothrock, M.S. ■ Shawn Utsey, Ph.D. |
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