

# Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing

## news release

### **African Women, Patient Safety, Kidney Donors The Focus of JHU School of Nursing Awardees**

October 16, 2009—The following Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing (JHUSON) faculty members received fellowships and earned grants in recent months:

Assistant professor **Nicole Warren**, PhD, MPH, CNM, earned the Maryland Higher Education Commission's (MHEC) New Nursing Faculty Fellowship of \$20,000 over three years. Warren joined JHUSON this semester after two years as assistant professor at Chicago's Loyola University School of Nursing.

As a Peace Corps volunteer in Mali in 1994-1996, Warren first was exposed to midwifery and to midwives' crucial role in providing reproductive health care in developing countries. The experience was life-altering: Warren returned to attend JHUSON to train as a nurse and midwife and earn her MPH, traveling often to Mali.

In 1996 she formed Mali Midwives, an organization that arranges continuing education programs for *matrones*, auxiliary midwives who provide most of the country's reproductive health services. Warren's research interests include maternal mortality in Mali and the work environment of such front-line health workers.

She also wants to learn about some African women's "unique reproductive health needs" after immigrating to the United States, particularly women who underwent female genital cutting, also known as female circumcision. Warren is working on a pilot study in Baltimore to explore the childbearing experiences of Somalia-born couples.

"I'd like to find out, for example: Did they feel they were unnecessarily subjected to Caesarean section? When the fellowship came through, I thought, 'This money will allow me to do that study,' " Warren said. "I'd like to see this [fellowship] used in a way that contributes to what I bring to the classroom. I can use those tools ... in order to be a better teacher."

\* \* \*

**Jo Walrath**, PhD, MS, RN, director of the JHUSON baccalaureate program, received a \$35,000 grant under the program, Retooling for Quality and Safety: An Initiative of the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation and the IHI Open School for Health Professions Institute for Health Improvement. Her grant proposal was submitted collaboratively with the JHU School of Medicine.

Walrath's pilot project will bring together undergraduate nursing students and medical students to study how to improve interprofessional communication and work together for patients' benefit. The project will take place during classes in early spring, with a goal of reaching all 109 traditional nursing and 120 medical students. Both schools already include patient quality and safety in their curricula.

The students will jointly participate in case studies involving "simulated" patients – sophisticated, anatomically accurate medical mannequins – as they apply safety and communication strategies to case

studies. Effective communication is a core competency of all medical professionals and is considered a key element in reducing medical errors that adversely affect hospitalized patients, Walrath explained.

“This effort is aimed at interprofessional education and will provide these students the opportunity to come together early in their educational process,” she said. “Nursing students often ask why nursing and medical students are trained in academic silos and then are expected to come together *after* their careers start to figure out how to work together. This is a tremendous opportunity for these students to have both schools committed to pilot interprofessional education.”

\* \* \*

Department of Health Systems and Outcomes assistant professor **Laura Taylor**, PhD, RN, received a \$450,000, two-year grant from the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR). The grant will expand Taylor’s Living Donor Information Network for Caregiving (LINC), a Hopkins-based Web site for living kidney donors and their “informal caregivers,” usually relatives. Taylor hopes to gain critical insight into how African Americans, in particular, utilize the Internet to gain information and seek emotional support.

Taylor has worked at Johns Hopkins Hospital since 1987 and cared for patients who have undergone liver, kidney, and pancreas transplantation since 1994. For the past decade, she has studied the linkage between organ donors, information technology and donors’ trust in the medical staff.

In the randomized controlled trial, donors and their informal caregivers will be invited to join LINC, which features a discussion board, PDF files on kidney donation, video clips and Podcasts. The initiative was prompted, in part, by the disparity between African Americans’ constituting the majority of patients with end-stage renal disease but less than 12 percent of the living kidney donors last year. A 2007 Pew Internet study revealed differences in African Americans’ and Caucasians’ use of the Internet to access health information.

“What I really don’t know is: What are African Americans seeking on the Internet?” Taylor said. “I hope to create educational resources that’ll best meet the needs of the African-American population. Maybe, then, more African Americans will consider living kidney donations because they feel more confident in the information they’re receiving.”

\* \* \*

The Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing is a global leader in nursing research, education and scholarship and is ranked fourth among U.S. nursing schools. Our community health program is second in the nation, and the nursing research program now holds seventh position among nursing schools securing federal research grants. The School is recognized for its reputation of excellence in educating nurses who set the highest standards for patient care, exemplify scholarship and become innovative national and international leaders in the evolution of the nursing profession and the health care system. For more information, visit <http://www.nursing.jhu.edu>.

***For media inquiries, contact Lynn Schultz-Writsel at [lwritsel@jhmi.edu](mailto:lwritsel@jhmi.edu) or 410-955-7552.***