

# Society for Epidemiologic Research Spring Newsletter 2004

SER, P.O. Box 990, Clearfield, UT 84089

SPRING 2004

## JOHN C. CASSEL MEMORIAL LECTURE AND KEYNOTE SPEAKER

The John C. Cassel Memorial Lecture and keynote address will be given by: **Michael Kramer, MD**, McGill University of Medicine, James McGill Professor. The keynote address is entitled: **"Why Do Poor Women Have Poor Pregnancy Outcomes?"**

## 2004 SER STUDENT WORKSHOP FACULTY

- ▲ Maureen Hatch, NIH/NCI (Chair)
- ▲ John A. Baron, Dartmouth Medical School
- ▲ Jo Freudenheim, State University of New York at Buffalo
- ▲ Lynn Rosenberg, Boston University School of Medicine
- ▲ David Vlahov, New York Academy of Medicine

## ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

This newsletter has been sent either electronically or via US mail to all SER members, even if they have not renewed their membership for 2004. However, any future correspondence will be mailed only to paid SER members. Please contact Jacqueline Brakey with any questions. Telephone: (801) 525-0231; email: [membership@epiresearch.org](mailto:membership@epiresearch.org)

## JOB PLACEMENT NOTEBOOKS

If you have a job opening you are trying to fill or if you are interested in a new position, the SER meeting is the place to make a match. We are assembling notebooks of available positions, and people in search of new positions. At SER, you can read the job ads or resumes, and speak to the people themselves. Mail your resumes or positions to Sherilen Clark, Public Health, 375 Chipeta Way, Suite A, Salt Lake City, Utah 84108, or e-mail Sherilen Clark at [sclark@dfpm.utah.edu](mailto:sclark@dfpm.utah.edu).

## SER ELECTIONS

Ballots for this year's SER elections are available online at SER's website: <http://www.epiresearch.org>. The two nominees for President-Elect are Irva Hertz-Picciotto and Arthur L. Reingold. The nominees for Member-at-Large are Shirley A.A. Beresford and Donna Spiegelman. A brief biographical sketch of each candidate is included with this newsletter. Please vote for one candidate for president-elect and for one candidate for member-at-large. Your ballots must be submitted by May 21 to be counted. The election results will be announced at the plenary session of our annual meeting on June 16, 2004.

## CONFERENCE WEB SITE

Don't forget – you can register for the meeting, look through the program, or find out about Salt Lake City attractions and entertainment at the meeting web site. Check it out at: <http://www.epiresearch.org/meeting>

## REGARDING PRESENTATIONS

We schedule sessions carefully to avoid conflicts to the extent possible and to balance the distribution of topics across the meeting, but we are unable to provide schedule preferences. Please make sure that you have an alternate presenter in case you are unable to participate in the session assigned to you.

## SER LATE-BREAKER SESSIONS

For the twelfth consecutive year, SER will sponsor an Epidemiology Late-Breaker Session. This session will provide a forum for the presentation of investigations, analyses, and methods that were conceived, conducted, or completed so recently that authors could not meet the deadline for regular abstract submission. This session is fun because it is eclectic (diverse topics are presented), the topics are timely, and the session moves at a rapid pace (presentations are five minutes each and five minutes for questions). The deadline for submission was March 19.

## PRELIMINARY SER PROGRAM

Again this year the preliminary SER program is online for you to view. You can see the up-to-date preliminary program any time. If you do not have access to the Internet, you may call (801) 585-6225 and request a copy. Access the preliminary program through the Internet at: <http://www.epiresearch.org/meeting/>

## POSTER SESSIONS

The meeting will begin with the first poster session on the evening of June 15<sup>th</sup>. Posters are the primary venue for presentation of the annual meeting's highest quality research findings. Posters are hung each night before the session and will be on display for almost 24 hours. A panel of judges will select the three best posters from each session. Winners will be publicly recognized at the end of each session and receive a gift certificate from Oxford University Press. Judges will comment on each of the winning posters at the awards presentation.

## 2004 LOCAL HOST

SER would like to thank Joseph L. Lyon, MD, MPH and his staff from the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine, Public Health Program at the University of Utah for being the local host for the 2004 annual meeting.

### ABRAHAM LILIENFELD STUDENT PRIZE WINNER

Melissa C. Nelson, RD, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has been selected for the Abraham Lilienfeld Student Prize Paper. Her paper is entitled: "Are adolescents who were breastfed less likely to be overweight? Reducing the effect of confounding through the use of sibling pair analyses".

### SYMPOSIA

Symposia provide the opportunity to hear the experts express opposing views. Eight symposia are scheduled. They are:

- ❑ *Bayesian Methods in Epidemiology*-**Sander Greenland**
- ❑ *Control Selection in Case-Control Studies*-**Ira Hertz-Picciotto**
- ❑ *The Future of Folic Acid - Beyond a Role in the Prevention of NTDs*-**Peggy Honein**
- ❑ *Observational Studies vs. Clinical Trials: Recent Lessons Learned*-**Julie Buring and Noel Weiss**
- ❑ *Inflammatory Markers in Epidemiologic Research*-**Steve Kritchinsky and Lew Kuller**
- ❑ *The Obesity Epidemic in Children and Adults* -**Lynn Moore**
- ❑ *Life Course Issues*-**Nigel Paneth**
- ❑ *Impact of Infertility and Assisted Reproductive Technologies on Child Outcomes*-**Laura Schieve**

### SPOTLIGHT SESSIONS

The following spotlight sessions will be presented at SER meeting this year. These sessions are organized and moderated by experienced epidemiologists. The following are the topics and the moderators for Spotlight Sessions:

- ❖ *Causal Analysis*, Jamie Robins
- ❖ *Causes and Consequences of Preeclampsia*, David Savitz
- ❖ *Community-Driven Epidemiology*, Jennifer Balfour
- ❖ *Diet and Chronic Disease Risk*, Lynn Moore
- ❖ *Energy Balance and Cancer risk*, Graham Colditz
- ❖ *Environmental Epidemiology*, Stephanie London and Matthew Longnecker
- ❖ *Epidemiologic Studies of Prostate Cancer*, David Schottenfeld
- ❖ *Epidemiology of Infection*, Thomas O'Brien

- ❖ *Fetal Growth*, Roberta Ness
- ❖ *Epidemiologic Methods 1*, Sander Greenland
- ❖ *Epidemiologic Methods 2*, Charlie Poole
- ❖ *New Insights in 'Gene-Environment' Disease Relationships*, Patricia Buffler
- ❖ *Obesity, Anorexia and Female Cancer: The Impact of Age and Stage*, Carmen Rodriguez
- ❖ *Place and Health in Epidemiologic Research*, George Kaplan
- ❖ *Prenatal and Childhood Nutrition and Subsequent Health*, Gladys Block
- ❖ *Preventing Aging: Can Lifestyle Overcome Family History?*, Mary Haan
- ❖ *Race/Ethnicity and Health: The Role of Residential Segregation and Discrimination*, Sherman James
- ❖ *Racial Inequalities in Health*, Patricia O'Campo and Irene Yen
- ❖ *Social Class Inequalities in Health*, James Gaudino
- ❖ *Targets for Cardiovascular Risk Reduction?*, Murray Mittleman
- ❖ *Wining, Dining and Breast Cancer*, Lynn Rosenberg
- ❖ *Women's Health at Older Ages: The Influence of Reproductive Events*, Marlene Goldman
- ❖ *Women's Health - Pregnancy and Childbirth*, Jean Lawrence

### ROUNDTABLES

Led by members of the 2004 SER Faculty, the roundtable discussions have become one of SER's most popular events. Although the tickets are complimentary, there are only ten available per table. Please check the SER website <http://www.epiresearch.org/meeting> after May 1<sup>st</sup> to pre-register for a roundtable ticket. Remaining tickets will be available at the conference registration desk.

### ALUMNI REUNIONS

A number of universities have organized successful receptions for faculty, alumni, and students at past SER meetings. If you would like to have a reunion at the conference hotel, the Grand America in Salt Lake City, please contact Kim Johnston to make arrangements: Telephone: (801) 258-6767; email: [kjohnston@grandamerica.com](mailto:kjohnston@grandamerica.com).

## **BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

### **Candidate for SER President:**

Irva Hertz-Picciotto, Ph.D.  
Professor, UC Davis  
Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine.

Professional societies not only provide the opportunities to present cutting-edge research and to network with colleagues, but also can play a crucial role in promoting development of young investigators and in voicing the concerns of the members in public arenas. In service of the profession, as President of SER, I would emphasize several areas: (a) the furthering of epidemiologic methods in a friendly atmosphere; (b) timely response to new and emerging public health issues; (c) recognition of talented new epidemiologists; and (d) concerted strategic efforts to stop the many assaults, that come in the guise of protecting privacy, on the ability to conduct valid research. The concept of the 'common good' needs to be reasserted in the public discourse on rules that affect collection of data, and our professional organization can help to do just that.

I received my MPH and PhD at the University of California, Berkeley, and spent a decade on the faculty in the Department of Epidemiology at the School of Public Health at UNC, Chapel Hill. More recently, I returned to California to take a position at UC Davis in the Department of Epidemiology & Preventive Medicine. My research interests are in the areas of epidemiologic methods, environmental exposures, and reproductive health outcomes. I've conducted studies on lead, arsenic, pesticides, PCBs and air pollution, in relation to spontaneous abortions, fetal death, growth retardation and early cognitive development. Methodologically, my work has addressed left truncation in survival analysis, understanding dose-response, the 'healthy worker survivor bias,' issues of timing in pregnancy outcome studies, and use of epidemiologic data in quantitative risk assessment; most recently, I've become obsessed with the problem of (non)valid control groups for case-control studies. I was a founding member of the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology and served as President in 2001-2002. I authored the chapter on Environmental Epidemiology in the textbook "Modern Epidemiology" by Rothman and Greenland, and currently serve on editorial boards for the *American Journal of Epidemiology* and *Epidemiology*, as well as numerous state, national, and international panels and advisory committees.

I am a firm believer both in the need for rigorous science and in the role of professionals as servants of the public. I am also dedicated to promoting the career development and leadership potential of budding epidemiologists, particularly women and minorities, and have advised or mentored 60 doctoral students. I would be honored to serve as President.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

### **Candidate for SER President:**

Arthur L. Reingold, MD  
Professor and Division Head  
University of California School of Public Health

As is true for a number of other epidemiologists I know, my entry into the field of epidemiologists was the result of inadvertence rather than the inevitable outcome of a thoughtful career plan. Having gone to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as an Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) officer, with no training in epidemiology outside a brief required course in medical school (that was long on biostatistics and short on epidemiology) and a clear cut plan to return to academic medicine, I discovered that I loved epidemiology and public health. Epidemiologic studies provided intellectual challenges that suited my puzzle-doing, detective story-loving side, and public health provided an opportunity to prevent illnesses and deaths that accorded with my desire to contribute to the health of the community in some fashion. To me, epidemiologic research and public health were interesting and exciting in ways that neither clinical medicine nor laboratory research had ever been.

Although my EIS experience and the additional six years I spent working for CDC changed my life, I ultimately decided to leave CDC for a faculty position at the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley (UCB) where I have been since 1985. While academia is a step removed from the “real world” of public health, it provides an ongoing opportunity to conduct epidemiologic research and a unique opportunity to proselytize, spreading the word about epidemiology to undergraduates, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and even occasional faculty members from disparate fields outside of public health. In all my courses, both at Berkeley and in various countries around the world, I put a premium on bringing “real world” experience, challenges, and questions into the classroom, hoping to infect students with the same excitement and enthusiasm about epidemiology that I have retained for the last 25 years.

In my view, the key challenge for the Society for Epidemiologic Research (SER) is to find new and creative ways of generating and sustaining excitement and enthusiasm about epidemiology and about SER itself, among its members and at its annual meeting. Yes, there are constantly evolving methods to discuss and challenges such as declining response rates and HIPAA to confront, and SER needs to remain at the forefront of such discussions, serving as a forum for debate and for enhancing the professional development of our members. However, in my experience, getting senior members to make attendance at the annual meeting a high priority remains an ongoing challenge; most members of SER have little contact with or investment in the Society except for the annual meeting; and many epidemiologists are not currently members.

If we want SER to grow, prosper, and remain vibrant, I believe we must find creative ways for the Society and the annual meeting to evolve. What can we do? To be candid, I have only recently been stimulated to think about this challenge and can't claim to have the answer(s). However, if elected President, I would commit my time and energy to working with the membership, executive committee, and staff to energize and expand SER.

**BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION****Candidate for Executive Committee Member at Large:**

Shirley A.A. Beresford, PhD  
Professor, Epidemiology  
University of Washington School of Public Health and Community Medicine

My career in epidemiology began in London, while I was working as a medical statistician in a department of clinical epidemiology and social medicine. It was here that I became acquainted with the breadth of the discipline of epidemiology in its application to a wide variety of diseases and exposures.

I joined SER in 1983, within a year of moving to the United States and have valued my membership in this organization ever since. Although I have not come to every meeting because of competing demands on Travel time, I have thoroughly enjoyed the methodological rigor and the breadth of the presentations at the SER meetings I have attended. These aspects, together with the high rate of graduate student involvement in the Society, help maintain the Society for Epidemiologic Research as the core organization in the United States for our profession. We are invigorated by the methodological challenges that new developments in biological mechanisms or socio-behavioral aspects of disease risk pose. From the explosion of information available from microarrays, through the inferential challenges of observational studies juxtaposed by randomized trials, to the increasing recognition of the importance of contextual factors in area-level or group-level effects in social epidemiology, we are eager to adapt our methods or develop new approaches.

I would welcome the opportunity to serve you as a Member-at-Large of the Executive Committee. I would like to assist in the constant re-evaluation of the mission of the SER to support our professional development at all stages of our careers. I hope to be able to work with the leadership team on the Executive Committee to foster enthusiasm among the membership for participating fully in the meetings, acknowledging the fundamental importance of learning from other sub-specialties and valuing those members with eclectic interests.

From the beginning of my career at St. Thomas Hospital Medical School and the Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine through my early career in the United States at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, to my recent positions at the University of Washington, I have been drawn to the methodologic challenges of exposure assessment. For many years, I have taught and worked in nutritional epidemiology and have recently added social epidemiology. My research interests range from smoking and lung function, through high blood pressure etiology and control, to behavioral programs to change eating patterns. I am actively engaged in research on hormones and cancer risk as well as folic acid and cardiovascular disease risk. I have served on many national committees including the Executive Committee of the Women's Health Initiative and an ad hoc committee of the National Academy of Sciences.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

### **Candidate for Executive Committee Member at Large:**

Donna Spiegelman, Sc.D.  
Professor of Epidemiologic Methods  
Harvard School of Public Health

It is generally agreed that the decisive link between all of those of us who call ourselves epidemiologists is our frequent dipping into the growing pot of what we call 'epi methods', as needed, as we pursue our wide-ranging inquiries into the external determinants of health and disease.

I am a specialist in these methods. I have been teaching beginning and intermediate courses on these methods at the Harvard School of Public Health for many years. I develop new methods motivated by outstanding problems in 'live', high impact epidemiologic research -- motivated by the Nurses' Health Study as it goes on, the Health Professionals' Follow-up Study, the Pooling Project on Diet and Cancer in Men and Women, Trials of Vitamins in HIV-infected women and their children in Dar es Salaam Tanzania, and others. As a member of the Editorial Board of the American Journal of Epidemiology, I am working now with my methodologically oriented Editorial Board colleagues to initiate several strategies to improve the quality and quantity of methodologic publications in the Journal. The first of these you will see soon -- an Editorial inviting methodologic papers and clearly outlining the parameters of manuscripts likely to be well received.

We teach that in (observational) epidemiologic research, there are three fundamental sources of bias: confounding, information bias and selection bias. With the widespread adoption of multivariate modeling techniques and, more recently, the development of new methods for causal inference, major advances have been made in the control of confounding bias. Information bias -- a subset of which, measurement error and misclassification, is my own major research focus, can be controlled through main study/validation study designs and the application of a host of methods in the analysis phase to reduce or eliminate bias due to errors in the information about outcome, exposure or confounders. Barriers for the more widespread adoption of these methods remain. Selection bias has received the least amount of attention from methodologists -- even assessments on the magnitude of these sorts of biases and their most common locuses of occurrence are mostly lacking. Much more work could be done in this area.

I would like to strengthen the methodologic breadth and depth at our annual meetings. Lucid presentations of new methods linked to compelling substantive topics is one approach. Tutorials, mini-courses, and pre- and post-conference workshops is another. I invite you to write to me at [stdls@channing.harvard.edu](mailto:stdls@channing.harvard.edu) with suggestions about the topics of greatest interest to you that arise in your own work. I will continue to solicit your input on this. Survival data analysis? Longitudinal data analysis? Methods to correct for measurement error and misclassification in main study/validation study designs? New and old methods for the investigating the effects of single gene polymorphisms and their interactions with environmental exposures in standard case-control designs? When a multiplicity of single nucleotide polymorphisms are measured? When haplotypes are conceptualized as the fundamental genetic entity of interest? Pooling and meta-analysis? Multiple imputation and other methods for handling missing data? Let's figure out what the priorities are for our membership and be sure to get the material presented in a meaningful and accessible way at our annual meetings. (Not all at once!)

Beyond our annual meeting, there may be more that can be done to advance methodologic research in critical areas and train researchers in applications of them. Perhaps a 'Speakers Bureau' can be established which pulls together a cadre of expert communicators who are willing to spend a day or two in residence at Schools of Public Health around the country training colleagues on new and old methods of interest. Similarly, compiling a Consultants' Bureau of experts specializing in a range of methodologies which typically arise in the course of planning and conducting epidemiologic studies and who are willing to make themselves available for long- and short- term consultancies to assist in implementation could be compiled.

It would give me great pleasure to serve the members of the Society and the profession at large as a member of the board of the Society for Epidemiologic Research, our leading professional association.

# **SOCIETY FOR EPIDEMIOLOGIC RESEARCH**

## **BALLOT** **2004 ELECTIONS**

### **Ballot 2004**

Office of President -Elect: (vote for 1)

- ☐ Irva Hertz-Picciotto
- ☐ Arthur L. Reingold

Office of Member-at -Large (vote for 1)

- ☐ Shirley A. A. Beresford
- ☐ Donna Spiegelman

**Deadline for receipt of ballot – May 21, 2004**

Please mark your choices and mail to: Public Health Programs, Attn: Sherilen Clark, 375 Chipeta Way, Suite A, Salt Lake City, Utah 84108 or fax (801) 587-3353, or go to our website at **<http://www.epiresearch.org>** and follow instructions to cast your ballot. Candidate statements with a brief biographical sketch are included with this newsletter. The deadline for receipt of ballots is May 21, 2004. Thank you!