

UCSD Receives Global Health Grant for California/Mexico Border Health Studies

October 31, 2006 |

A multi-disciplinary, global health program headed by Steffanie Strathdee, Ph.D., Chief of the Division of International Health and Cross-Cultural Medicine at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) School of Medicine, has been funded by a \$355,000 grant by the Fogarty International Center (FIC), part of the National Institutes of Health. UCSD's School of Medicine and Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies will partner with the San Diego State University (SDSU) Graduate School of Public Health to offer a global health research and training program that will focus on the US/Mexico border region.

"To prepare for future challenges, today's students should learn to reach not only across disciplines, but across national borders," said UCSD Chancellor Marye Anne Fox. "This grant will enable UCSD to strengthen the international component of many of our research and training programs."

"We have become more globalized as a society," Strathdee added. "As San Diego is the largest city in the country in direct proximity to Mexico, we are in a unique position that requires we train the next generation of researchers, policy makers and health-care providers able to respond to complex health problems in developing countries."

San Diego and Baja California share large populations that cross the border frequently and transport infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, STDs and tuberculosis between the two regions, according to Strathdee. The U.S.-Mexico border region is also a nexus for other health problems caused by air, water and other environmental contaminants, drugs abuse and prostitution – all of which have spawned research projects on these topics at UCSD. The region is also home for a large number of migrants from other Mexican states and South America.

The program will partner UCSD and SDSU's expertise in a broad range of disciplines in Global Health, including epidemiology, public health, behavioral science, bioterrorism, anthropology, economics, climate change, political science, sociology, migrant health, toxicology, virology, molecular biology and more. The two universities already offer joint doctoral programs in

epidemiology, health behavior, psychology and – as part of this new global health grant – plan to expand the joint doctoral program in public health to include a concentration in global health.

“We plan to extend our efforts in such areas as minority health and health disparities research and training, focusing on HIV and cardiovascular-related training activities to incorporate an international perspective,” said Strathdee. “Our goal is for every student at UCSD to have an opportunity for an international educational experience.”

Activities proposed for the grant cycle include a visiting scholars program, a leadership seminar series in global health, a global health track for preventive medicine fellows, and internships in developing country settings for medical students and faculty.

The grant was provided by the FIC in partnership with the National Cancer Institute and the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities, all part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH.) The UCSD program joins nine new and 16 existing programs across the country as part of the FIC’s “Framework Programs in Global Health,” which supports the development of innovative, multidisciplinary global health programs on campuses in the United States as well as in low- and middle-income nations. As the international component of the NIH, the Fogarty International Center supports the mission of the NIH by addressing global health challenges through collaborative research and training programs.

Additional investigators include Miles Kahler, Ph.D., Rohr Professor of Pacific International Relations at the Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies and Professor of Political Science at UCSD, and John Elder, Ph.D., MPH., Professor, Division of Health Promotion at San Diego State University Graduate School of Public Health, and adjunct associate professor of pediatrics at UCSD, together with 50 other faculty who are collaborating from both institutions.

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