

Minutes

UW Medical School Medical Education and Research Committee 5:00 PM March 13, 2006 – Room 4201 Health Sciences Learning Center

Members Present: Lynn Allen-Hoffmann, Sanjay Asthana, Bill Busse, Paul DeLuca, Dave DeMets, Norm Drinkwater, Maureen Durkin, John Frey, Jeff Grossman, Debra Hullett, Rick Moss, Greg Nycz, Susan Skochelak, Doug Smith, Jeff Stearns, George Wilding

Members Absent: Susan Goelzer, Javier Nieto, Gordon Ridley
Guests: Philip Farrell, Patrick Boyle, Mark Sager

Staff: Tracy Cabot, Ken Mount, Tonya Paulson, Karla Thompson, Eileen Smith

The Committee was called to order by Vice Dean DeLuca at 5:05 p.m.

1. The draft minutes from the February MERC meeting were presented. No modifications were suggested and the minutes were approved unanimously.

2. Announcements:

A. Progress Reports: Dean DeLuca stated that we have received progress reports from five of the recipients of the first round of New Investigator awards. If there are any questions about these reports, we can invite the awardees to come to a future MERC meeting.

B. MERC Elections: DeLuca reported on the MERC positions due for election this summer. For the basic science and clinical science chair positions, each caucus will nominate. For the faculty at large, faculty with population health expertise, and academic staff positions, there will be a call for nominations. All nominations will be forwarded to the APC, which formulates the final slate of candidates.

In addition, we will ask OAC to appoint two OAC members. The Focus Area Leaders are selected by the Dean and confirmed by the APC. Dean Farrell will discuss those appointments with incoming Dean Golden.

C. Bioinformatics Support: DeLuca reminded the group that our award for an extended planning grant to the Wisconsin Network for Health Research (WiNHR) separated bioinformatics support from the rest of the WiNHR proposal. We have finalized negotiations with Dave DeMets for bioinformatics services to support WiNHR.

3. Ken Mount presented the monthly listing of expenses to date. He showed a spreadsheet with awards by year (2004, 2005). The last column shows expenses incurred

in the past month. Most of the 2004 planning grants have finished, and spending is ramping up on the New Investigator Award projects.

Mount reported that we have received a request from Nieto to carryover \$15,000 from the SHOW planning grant that was budgeted for a seminar that did not occur during the planning period. The group is planning to hold the seminar this year, but it will be about a 12 month carryover. Grossman moved that the group approve the carryover request, and Nycz seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Dean Farrell announced that he will not make any more awards from the Strategic Allocation. Farrell stated that he reviewed a proposal regarding pediatric obesity which may be submitted at a future date. He also reported that Durkin has learned that the NICHD may not be able to continue the funding for the National Children's Study. Since children were eliminated from the SHOW project, it was hoped that Durkin's study would capture information from that population. When the NICHD funding decision becomes final, MERC may receive a proposal to expand SHOW to include children.

4. Eileen Smith reported that the draft of the annual report is a first effort. Another draft will be circulated to MERC; members are encouraged to provide comments to Eileen.

Due to time issues, the agenda was re-ordered.

8. Mark Sager presented an update on the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute. Sager reported that during the year, he received funding from the State of Wisconsin to support the Wisconsin Registry for Alzheimer's Prevention (WRAP), which was Objective 2 of the project supported by Strategic Allocation funding. Therefore, he used MERC funds for the Objectives 1 and 3.

Objective 1 seeks to develop a statewide network of dementia diagnostic clinics. This represents a great opportunity to involve communities in research, and to recruit people for studies. Four additional clinical sites were added to the network this year, with a goal to add four to six clinical sites each year.

Objective 2 will expand recruitment for WRAP, which involves adult children of persons with AD. Currently the registry includes people from 60 of the 72 Wisconsin counties. An earlier proposal to NIH for support of WRAP received criticism for the lack of diversity of people. Sager noted that funding from the State of Wisconsin has been used to increase recruitment of minorities in Milwaukee and LaCrosse.

The goal of Objective 3 is to develop a pilot study to evaluate a screening instrument capable of identifying cognitive impairment in older populations. Sager reported that the care of 10,000 people with AD costs about half a billion dollars to the state per year. Timely diagnosis of AD could allow family members to provide in-home care, representing a substantial cost savings. MERC funds are being used to train county workers to screen people for AD and to refer them to physicians. In addition, funds are being used to train physicians how to use the results of the screening program.

The goal of Objective 4 is to develop externships for medical, nursing and social work students interested in AD and related dementias. Additional funding for this objective was provided by the Helen Bader Foundation. An eight-week summer externship was a success, with students placed in Madison, Milwaukee, Beloit, Richland Center, and other locations across the state. .

Sager summarized that support from MERC has provided core funding to do things the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute couldn't otherwise do, and has resulted in bringing in grants that required matching funds. Sanjay Asthana added that four NIH grants have come from this network, and the Alzheimer's Center Grant application will be reviewed by NIH this week.

John Frey commented that this committee has supported a number of networks, and asked if the existing networks could be used for Alzheimer's research. DeMets noted that the SCORE project of WiNHR will be used by the Alzheimer's network. Sager explained that this is not a well accepted area of research. Each clinical site in the Alzheimer's network relies upon a strong regional leader. Frey suggested modifying the training of primary care physicians to create interest in this field. Grossman asked if there is a way to go around the physicians for the initial evaluations. Sager explained that physicians aren't interested because the assessment takes a lot of time, they don't know who to evaluate, and they don't have the right diagnostic tools. This points to the need for a good evaluation system.

Jeff Stearns said that we're not taking advantage of the various institutions associated with our Milwaukee Clinical Campus. Sager explained that those connections have been discouraged by the policies of the Helen Bader Foundation.

Durkin asked what happens when people screen positive? Sager explained that there is great concern about false positives. People don't like to be screened because cognitive disorders are seen as a stigma. Once people have tested positive, a profile is provided to their physician for follow-up. Nycz asked if Alzheimer's disease can be detected in the early stages, are there treatments delaying nursing home placement. Sager replied that at least five studies show just that. A report has shown that there is incentive to identify the appropriate population, because institutionalization is caused not only by disease, but also by absence of family caregivers.

5. Dean DeLuca reported on the progress of the New Investigator Workgroup Program. One of the key discussion items was how to fund a range of topics in medical education and research, while ensuring a tight connection between the projects awarded and the goals of MERC. Projects need to demonstrate how results will be translated to health improvement. DeLuca outlined the recommendations including: making five \$100,000 awards in each of two cycles per year, and re-ordering the evaluation criteria to emphasize improvements in health or healthcare. The eligibility requirements continue to be a point of discussion, but the program will remain open to all Assistant Professors not in their terminal year. The award categories will not be segregated by type (clinical or

basic). Applications must include a statement addressing the connection of the proposed project to the health of the people of Wisconsin.

Moss suggested that the program emphasize translational research, but the translation does not need to be immediate in time. Frey said that we should think in terms of translating results to systems, as well as to patients.

Moss argued for a narrower focus for the eligibility, with only those faculty in their first few years eligible to apply. He suggested excluding any faculty who have already received R01 grants, for example. DeLuca responded that narrowing the eligibility had been discussed, however, it might be better to have broad eligibility rules, and use career stage as a criteria in evaluation of proposals. Busse said that we don't want to eliminate support for new research directions for people who may have already jump-started their career.

The workgroup plans to finalize their recommendations before the April MERC meeting.

6. Greg Nycz provided an update on OAC activities, which will be a monthly MERC agenda item. He reported that OAC has a new member, June Martin Perry, representing urban and community health. He provided a brief overview of her credentials and experience.

Nycz also reported that OAC recently made nine planning and ten implementation grant awards, bringing the total to 52 awards totaling \$10.5 million. Nycz showed the distribution of OAC grants by target service area (19% rural, 22% statewide), by age of population served, by ethnicity and by State Health Plan priorities. Eileen Smith stated that OAC may consider proactively soliciting applications on specific priority areas. Also, joint funding of initiatives is likely to be an agenda item for the next meeting of the OAC and MCW's Consortium.

Nycz reported that the Population Health Fellowship Program has increased to five new fellows each year. He also mentioned that the Healthy Wisconsin Leadership Institute, jointly funded with MCW, recently received applications from 25 community health improvement teams.

Skochelak asked if they programs that do not receive OAC funding are given help on improving their applications. Nycz responded that many high-quality projects are proposed, but not all can be funded. One of the key items for applicants to consider before writing the proposal is the impact of the project. Durkin observed that one of the barriers to faculty participation is the fact that our faculty cannot receive compensation for participation on an OAC-sponsored project. Farrell added that the School does provide some non-WPP funds to departments with faculty involved in these partnerships to offset this impediment to participation. Eileen Smith added that it is important to note that over 91% of our community-partnership funds go to communities.

Frey asked about how we are bringing the activities of OAC and MERC together. Nycz said that this will be an issue as we develop our next five year plan, and will be guided by what we learn from our evaluation efforts.

7. Eileen Smith reported on the Evaluation Team meeting held on March 6. This included a discussion of the many stakeholders in this project, and if the team should be expanded to include a representative from the state dept of health and family services. The Evaluation Team focused on measures of governance, operations, and agenda setting, and will be looking at structure, process, and outcomes. The Team has identified a potential external consultant with significant academic experience as well as experience with Blue Cross conversion programs. An evaluation plan will be developed this summer, and will be reported to a joint MERC-OAC meeting this fall.

Dean Farrell expressed his gratitude to Regent Boyle for his key role in the evaluation process.

9. DeLuca asked for any suggestions for topics for future MERC meetings. Skochelak suggested asking David Kindig to present a progress report on his project. Farrell suggested that Pat Remington present his results from Milwaukee.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 6:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Tracy L. Cabot, Recorder