

CCEB Newsletter



Various aspects of the pediatric obesity epidemic are elucidated by a CCEB pediatrician and epidemiologist.

A Quarterly Newsletter

Vol. 2, No. 2 — Spring 2007

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A Q&A on issues related to the pediatric obesity epidemic

The notion that obesity has reached epidemic proportions has gradually gained momentum in the mainstream American media. It is not uncommon now to find articles related to diet, obesity, and exercise and on specific topics such as Philadelphia and New York City banning the use of trans fats (partially hydrogenated oils intended to extend a product's shelf life) in restaurants; sports venues offering a wider array of foods, including healthy choices, and using non-hydrogenated oils for cooking (The Aramark Corporation, in particular, has

announced that it will use non-hydrogenated cooking oils (corn and sunflower) rather than trans fat oils in the 13 major league baseball parks in which they run the concession stands); or numerous school districts banning or attempting to ban the sale of junk food in schools, or restrict the times during which such food can be sold.

The rise in childhood obesity has been the subject of increasing scrutiny and concern. According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, an estimated 25 million children are estimated to be overweight or obese, with related annual health care costs of \$14 billion. In April, an Associated Press story on the impact that a mother's weight gain during pregnancy may have on her child was inspired by an article appearing in that month's issue of the

American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology (Oken E, Taveras EM, Kleinman KP, Rich-Edwards JW, Gillman MW. Gestational weight gain and child adiposity at age 3 years. *Am J Obstet Gynecol.* 2007 Apr;196(4):322.e1-8), which found that greater maternal weight gain was associated with higher child body mass index (BMI) and risk of overweight in the offspring. The study's authors suggested that these findings, which support previous studies, provide fodder for *consideration* of revising the Institute of Medicine (IOM)'s 1990 guidelines regarding pregnancy weight gain, particularly in light of the obesity epidemic.

In our feature article, we have asked Nicolas Stettler,

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Faculty Profile:

Russell Localio, PhD, focuses on health services research and research methods



Russell Localio, PhD, Associate Professor of Biostatistics in the CCEB

Russell Localio was born in New York City and lived there until he was 14 years old, when his family moved to Deerfield, Massachusetts, which he calls “home” and where he still owns the family house with his brothers and sister. After high school, Russell headed back to the city of his birth to attend

Columbia University, beginning his studies as a math major. In his sophomore year, Russell became interested in applications of math in statistics and economics, eventually earning his BA in economics in 1969.

While still in college, Russell enlisted in the U.S. Navy Reserves. Upon graduation, he was placed on active duty and assigned to the Naval Security Group, an organization that specialized in the interception and synthesis of radio traffic. After a year of intensive instruction in the Hanoi dialect of Vietnamese at the Defense Language Institute, Russell was posted to the Philippines. He describes this period of his life as “very interesting.”

Upon completion of his service, Russell entered law school at the University of Michigan, graduating in 1975 and going to work in the Michigan Court of Appeals in Lansing. Unfortunately, the law did not offer him excitement and intellectual stimulation, so to relieve the tedium, he spent his spare time at the Michigan State University library. Eventually he enrolled in Michigan State’s economics graduate program, which gave him the opportunity to reacquaint himself with math, statistics and econometrics. After earning his MA in 1981, he headed back to Massachusetts to continue his graduate studies at the Harvard School of Public Health, where in 1982 he earned an MPH and in 1984 an MS in biostatistics.

While working at the Risk Management Foundation of the Harvard Medical Institutions in Cambridge, in 1986 Russ attracted national attention

when a New York congressman read his article published in *Law Medicine and Healthcare*, on the misuse of data on medical malpractice. Russ was invited to testify at congressional hearings on the topic, alongside such luminaries as Ralph Nader. Russ took the position, hardly controversial but most clearly based in fact, that better data were needed to inform the highly charged dialogue on patient injury and compensation.

During his years at Harvard, Russ was deeply involved in seminal research on health outcomes and policy. His work as a co-investigator on the Harvard Medical Practice Study, a formal analysis of the incidence and economic consequences of medical adverse events, served as a foundation for much of what was later reported by the Institute of Medicine on this subject.

In 1990, Russ left Harvard for a faculty position in Professor Richard Landis’s budding Center for Biostatistics & Epidemiology at the Penn State University College of Medicine in Hershey, bringing with him his own funded R03 and R01 grants. In 1993, he was appointed Assistant Professor of Health Services Research in the newly formed Department of Health Evaluation Sciences at Penn State University’s College of Medicine. During his years at Penn State, Russ served on the University IRB and on the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s National Advisory Committee IMPACS (Malpractice Prevention and Compensation Systems) Program. His collaborative work included a study of the ability of clinicians to identify defects in artificial heart valves in animals using conventional and experimental radiographic techniques. In 1997, Russ joined Dr. Landis and others in a move to the University of Pennsylvania, where Russ became an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 2006. In the process he went on to complete his doctoral work and dissertation, earning a PhD in epidemiology from the University of Pennsylvania SOM in 2006.

Here at Penn, Dr. Localio has been well known for his service as the course director of the second-semester course on Statistical Methods in Epidemiologic Research in the CCEB’s MSCE

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Faculty Profile:

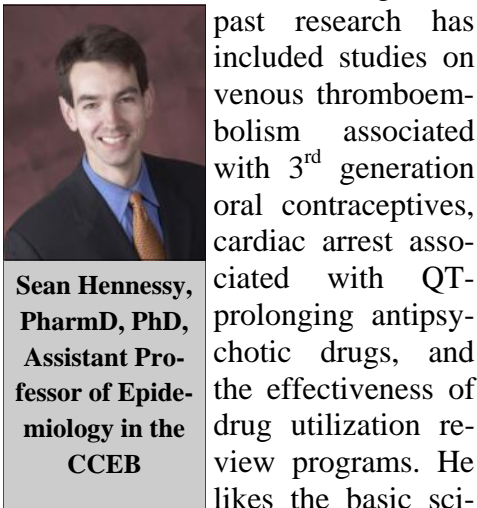
Sean Hennessy, PharmD, PhD, employs epidemiologic research methods to study the biological effects of drugs

Sean Hennessy, Assistant Professor of Epidemiology, and Assistant Professor of Pharmacology, Department of Pharmacology, University of Pennsylvania SOM, and Senior Scholar, Epidemiology, CCEB, was born and raised in Vineland, NJ. Based on a fervent interest in science, Sean entered Elizabethtown College in Elizabethtown, PA with the intention of majoring in chemistry or biochemistry. He changed his major to pharmacy when he transferred to the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia to complete a five-year BS, with an accelerated PharmD that he completed after the sixth year of study there.

After graduating, Dr. Hennessy worked for the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania for one year as a clinical pharmacist, concentrating on adverse drug reporting, pharmacokinetics, and drug usage. At that point, he met Dr. Brian Strom, Director of the CCEB, and learned about the academic field of pharmacoepidemiology, the study of the use and effects of medications in populations, which became his primary field of interest as he joined the CCEB. In 1998, Dr. Hennessy received the International Society for Pharmacoepidemiology Stanley Edlavitch Award for Best Abstract by a Student. After earning an MSCE in the CCEB, he continued his education at Penn to complete a PhD in Epidemiology. In 2002, Dr. Hennessy received the University of Pennsyl-

vania Saul Winegrad Award for Outstanding Dissertation in Epidemiology and Biostatistics. In addition, he received the Pfizer Scholars Grant for Faculty Development in Clinical Epidemiology from 2003 to 2005.

Generally, Dr. Hennessy uses epidemiologic research approaches to study the biological effects of drugs. His



past research has included studies on venous thromboembolism associated with 3rd generation oral contraceptives, cardiac arrest associated with QT-prolonging antipsychotic drugs, and the effectiveness of drug utilization review programs. He likes the basic science underpinnings of his research, but decided several years ago that he prefers studying populations as opposed to engaging in wet bench science. Dr. Hennessy's research in pharmacoepidemiology has been funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the National Institutes of Health, pharmaceutical companies, and private foundations.

Currently, Dr. Hennessy is using large databases, Medicare/Medicaid as well as the General Practice Research Database (GPRD), for pharmacoepidemi-

ologic research. Specifically, supported by an R01 grant, he is studying sudden cardiac death and ventricular arrhythmia from adverse drug events. In addition, he is investigating the clinical importance of drug-drug interactions among the Medicaid and GPRD populations. Dr. Hennessy asserts that large study populations are required to detect such interactions.

In addition to his research, Dr. Hennessy teaches clinical epidemiology to medical and graduate students, and actively fosters evidence-based practice at Penn. He is Director of Ambulatory Drug Use and Effects, University of Pennsylvania Medical Center, a Senior Fellow in the Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics, a Fellow in the Institute on Aging, and an associate editor for *Pharmacoepidemiology and Drug Safety*. He also serves on the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee at Penn. Dr. Hennessy's clinical program has received two Quality and Safety Awards from the University of Pennsylvania Health System.

Dr. Hennessy is a past president of the International Society of Pharmacoepidemiology. In addition, Dr. Hennessy plays a substantial public policy role as a member of the FDA Advisory Panel on currently marketed drugs, and finds this to be an especially satisfying part of his career.

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From the Director:



Brian L. Strom, MD, MPH

Thank you for reading our quarterly CCEB Newsletter, which serves as a forum for us to keep you informed of activities within the CCEB. In each issue, we present features of a few members of our faculty, some of the services we provide to faculty, residents, and fellows within UPHS and those external to Penn, and newsworthy events likely to be of interest.

In this issue, we profile Russell Localio, JD, MA, MPH, MS, PhD and Sean Hennessy, PharmD, PhD. Russell is Associate Professor of Biostatistics at HUP and a Senior Scholar in the CCEB. His collaborative activities include a wide range of clinical research projects. His methodologic interests currently focus on standardized estimates from regression models and confounding and clustered data. Sean is Assistant Professor of Epidemiology and Pharmacology and a Senior Scholar in the CCEB. Sean's primary field of research interest is pharmacoepidemiology.

In this issue we also include a feature article on childhood obesity. Nicolas Stettler, MD, MSCE, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Epidemiology, Division of

Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition, responds to a series of questions on this topic.

As a regular feature, we also highlight research services available to UPHS faculty, fellows, and residents. In this issue, we identify the clinical research methods courses available as short, intensive courses during the summer session (July 16 through July 27), including two new courses: *Economic Evaluation of Medical Therapies* and *Survey of Additional Topics in Biostatistics*. Registration for summer courses is ongoing through the following registration portal: http://www.med.upenn.edu/apps/my/epi_course. Courses available and the times these courses are offered are listed at the following site: <http://www.cceb.upenn.edu/education/non-degree/coursescrtp.php>. Descriptions of these and other courses can be found at: <http://www.cceb.upenn.edu/education/non-degree/courses.php#credit>. For questions about these courses and the registration process, please contact Tom Kelly (215-898-0861, tkelly@cceb.med.upenn.edu).

Finally, I would like to remind you to check our website regularly for announcements and other newsworthy events (<http://www.cceb.upenn.edu/>) and to find potential faculty collaborators (<http://www.cceb.med.upenn.edu/faculty/>). I hope you enjoy our newsletter.

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program. He has also mentored dozens of young investigators in designing, executing, analyzing and publishing their MSCE research projects. Apart from his research and teaching duties, Dr. Localio has served on the National Committee on Vital Health Statistics for the US Department of Health and Human Services. He also chairs the CCEB Data Privacy Committee, and for the last 10 years has been an associate editor of *Annals of Internal Medicine*, an activity that keeps him in the center of controversies on the use of statistical methods in the clinical literature.

In addition to his own methodological work, Dr. Localio is now busy as a collaborator on projects studying a broad spectrum of topics including utilization of emergency department services by Medicaid patients; the epidemiology of pressure ulcers; multimodality imaging in breast cancer; the epidemiology of screening mammography in the early detection of breast cancer; contamination in store-bought chicken; and the prevention of medication-related adverse events. Dr. Localio enjoys working on studies across many departments because it allows him to learn about, and contribute to, a range of medical research topics. He

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The CCEB Newsletter is published by the Center for Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, for the dissemination of information and as a reference for its constituents. The CCEB Newsletter is published periodically free of charge, and distributed to the Medical Center community. If you are interested in receiving hyperlinks to the newsletter, please contact us at the address below.

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MD, MSCE, Senior Scholar, Center for Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Epidemiology, Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition, University of Pennsylvania SOM/CHOP, whose paper “Weight Gain in the First Week of Life and Overweight in Adulthood: A Cohort Study of European American Subjects Fed Infant Formula” won the “Best Paper Award” for *Circulation* and was published in its April 19, 2005 edition (<http://circ.ahajournals.org/cgi/content/full/111/15/1897>), to discuss issues related to childhood obesity.

Q: *For how long has the epidemic of childhood obesity been unfolding and what are its primary contributing factors?*

A: The pattern, which has evolved into an epidemic, began to emerge in the 1980s. It is thought to be primarily attributable to sedentary activities (i.e., TV, electronic games), an increase in consumption of sweetened beverages, an increase in portion size, and an increase in the number of meals eaten away from the home. Unfavorable changes in the built environment (i.e., the greater availability and use of human energy-saving equipment) have also played a role. As more and more communities are built around driving rather than walking, the number of trips that children take by walking rather than by being driven has significantly decreased.

Also, it is important to note that while there may be a focus on healthier food options in the mainstream media and even by some food purveying companies, as you stated in the introduction, the obesity epidemic should not be confused or conflated with the issue of trans fats. They are unrelated. Trans fats are not etiologic factors in obesity; however, they do contribute to atherosclerosis and heart disease, one of the complications of obesity.

Q: *What are your thoughts and observations regarding maternal weight gain during pregnancy in terms of impact on the child?*

A: We have similar findings (to the Oken et al. study) in a different cohort from the 1960s and 1970s that we

are working on. Causality of the association is unclear, since no intervention trials to prevent gestational excessive weight gain have followed the offspring after infancy. In general, excessive weight gain during pregnancy leads to insulin resistance, which, in turn, paves the way for hyperglycemia and hyperinsulinemia. One of the theories is that this may lead to fetal programming of the brain and metabolic pathways that will set the stage for the later development of obesity.

Q: *What are the most critical periods of childhood regarding weight gain influencing or leading to overweight in adulthood?*

A: This is a difficult question to answer as it depends on the biostatistical methods used to analyze the data. In other words, it is difficult to ascertain which period of growth is most important, or if there is one period that is most important, because each growth period depends upon its predecessors. Also, the fact that variability in growth pattern is much wider very early in life than in later life makes this difficult to determine. Finally, there are no good reference data on changes in weight for age, as existing data are based on cross-sectional data. Therefore, normal changes in weight are difficult to judge.

Q: *The major components of metabolic syndrome (MS) include abdominal obesity, hypertension, dyslipidemia, and glucose intolerance. How frequent is MS in pediatric patients? What are the causes of MS in children?*

A: The frequency is unclear because the same criteria used to identify the prevalence of this condition in adults cannot be used in children. Therefore, different definitions are applied to the pediatric population. So, prevalence is not really clear and may not be that important. We can say that, clinically, metabolic syndrome is frequently observed and that its risk factors also cluster in the pediatric population, as they do in the adult population. Obesity and genetic predisposition are particularly important risk factors for metabolic syndrome in children, as they are in

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Faculty News and Notes

Several CCEB faculty have appeared in the news recently. A brief summary dating from late March follows in alphabetical order.

Angela DeMichele, MD, MSCE, Assistant Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology, University of Pennsylvania SOM and Senior Scholar, Epidemiology, CCEB, was interviewed on the 22nd of March by local ABC affiliate WPVI Channel 6 to offer her perspective on the announcement of Elizabeth Edwards's recurrence of breast cancer.

Dr. DeMichele was also featured on Channel 6 WPVI's Health Check segment on the 30th of March regarding her research on the breast cancer drug, Tykerb, which was recently approved by the FDA.

§

Joseph Gallo, MD, MPH, Associate Professor of Family Practice and Community Medicine, University of Pennsylvania SOM, Associate Professor of Epidemiology, Senior Scholar, Epidemiology, CCEB, was cited in a *Reuters Health* article (<http://www.reutershealth.com/archive/2007/05/14/eline/links/20070514elin027.html>) on the 14th of May for his research published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* (<http://www.annals.org/cgi/content/full/146/10/689>) indicating that the risk of mortality in older adults with major depression can be reduced through primary care-based depression intervention.

For another article (http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/22/health/psychology/22patt.html?_r=1&oref=slogin) based on this paper, Dr. Gallo was quoted in *The New York Times* on the 22nd of May.

§

Sean Hennessy, PharmD, PhD, Assistant Professor of Epidemiology, University of Pennsylvania SOM and Senior Scholar, Epidemiology, CCEB, and **Brian Strom, MD, MPH**, Director, Center for Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, were quoted on the 13th of April in HealthDay News (and Forbes.com, which picked up the story) and cited by *The Wall Street Journal Online* and MedPage Today based on their article in *The New England Journal of Medicine* (<http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/NEJMp078048>) on the reauthorization of the Prescription Drug User

Fee Act (PDUFA), which comes up for reauthorization later this year.

§

Darren R. Linkin, MD, MSCE, Instructor of Medicine, Division of Infectious Diseases, and Senior Scholar, Epidemiology, CCEB, was quoted on the 5th of May in *The Washington Post* article "Resilient Infections Worry Military Doctors," which can be read here: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/04/AR2007050401976.html>.

§

Timothy Rebbeck, PhD, Professor of Epidemiology, University of Pennsylvania SOM, Senior Scholar, Epidemiology, CCEB, was quoted on the 18th of May in an article (http://www.philly.com/philly/health_and_science/20070518_Suit_names_Rohm_Haas_in_death.html) in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* about finding an epidemiological link between cancer and exposure to leather-processing chemicals, which have been implicated in a wrongful death lawsuit against the chemical company Rohm & Haas.

§

Brian Strom, MD, MPH, Director, Center for Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, was quoted in a HealthDay News wire service article (<http://www.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=603564>) on the 11th of April in which he commented on the use of genetically engineered plants as a factory for producing proteins that could be used in a new vaccine for smallpox. The story was also picked up by Canada's *CBC News*, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and *Health24.com*.

Dr. Strom was also recently interviewed by NPR's *Justice Talking* for a story debating whether dying patients should have access to experimental drugs. Dr. Strom spoke with host, Margot Adler, about the clinical trial process and the current drug regulation system. His interview and the entire story aired locally on WHYH (91 FM) on the 23rd of April. It can

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be accessed online at the *Justice Talking* website (<http://www.justicetalking.org/viewprogram.asp?progID=597>).

Dr. Strom was also quoted, as was Mark Schutta, MD, Medical Director for the Penn Rodebaugh Diabetes Center, in an article ([http://www.philly.com/philly/business/20070523 Diabetes drugs future unclear.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/business/20070523_Diabetes_drugs_future_unclear.html)) on the 23rd of May in the *The Philadelphia Inquirer* about the future of the diabetes drug Avandia, in the wake of a new study that suggested the drug might increase risk of heart attack and death.

On the 24th of May, Dr. Strom was interviewed for another article (“[The rosiglitazone aftermath: Legitimate concerns or hype?](#)”) regarding Avandia in *Heartwire*, an online publication sponsored by WebMD. Dr. Strom was also quoted in an article in *BioCentury* on the same subject in the issue for the week of May 28th.

Dr. Strom was interviewed on the 25th of May for the ABC World News Tonight segment “What’s wrong with the way we are testing drugs in this country?” The story was aired on the 29th of May.

Dr. Strom was also quoted in the June 1st issue of *Business Week* in the story “The High Cost of the Diabetes Controversy” (http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/content/jun2007/db20070601_501893.htm?chan=top+news_top+news+index_businessweek+exclusives).

On the 5th of June, Dr. Strom was interviewed on Bloomberg TV, the Evening Edition (<http://media.vmsnews.com/MonitoringReports/060607/738915/R001062961/>), to offer his perspective on the Glaxo Avandia debate as another report has suggested that the drug does not present heart risk. He was also quoted in a follow-up report appearing on the 15th of June (<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601102&sid=aTAOZbW4DtXo&refer=uk>).

Finally, Dr. Strom was cited regarding his recommendations for reforms pertaining to Avandia in an article on the 14th of June in the *Philadelphia Bulletin* (http://www.thebulletin.us/site/news.cfm?newsid=18474502&BRD=2737&PAG=461&dept_id=576361&rft=6).

Notes

Harold Feldman, MD, MSCE, Professor of Medicine, Renal Electrolyte and Hypertension Division, University of Pennsylvania SOM, and Professor of Epidemiology, Senior Scholar, CCEB, and **Timothy Rebbeck, PhD**, Professor of Epidemiology, Senior Scholar, CCEB, were elected this spring to membership in the American Epidemiological Society, one of the highest honors bestowed in the field of epidemiology. They will be formally inducted as members of the society, along with other newly elected honorees, at a dinner during the society’s annual meeting scheduled for March 2008 in Pittsburgh.

§

Phyllis Gimotty, PhD, Associate Professor of Biostatistics and Senior Scholar, CCEB, has won the 2007 Dean’s Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Training. This award was established in the 1992-1993 academic year to recognize excellence in doctoral-level education. Dr. Gimotty was presented with the honor at the University of Pennsylvania Biomedical Graduate Studies Graduation Ceremony on the 14th of May.

§

Daniel Heitjan, PhD, Professor of Biostatistics, University of Pennsylvania SOM, Senior Scholar, CCEB, and Professor of Statistics, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, was elected Chair of the Biometrics Section of the American Statistical Association for a three-year term. He will serve as Chair-Elect for 2008, Chair for 2009, and Past Chair for 2010.

§

Ebbing Lautenbach, MD, MPH, MSCE, Assistant Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology, and a Senior Scholar, Epidemiology, in the CCEB, received the 2007 SHEA Investigator Award during the 17th Annual Meeting of the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America, held in Baltimore from the 14th to the 17th of April. The award is intended to recognize the work of young investigators who have offered exemplary contributions to the field of infection control and healthcare epidemiology.

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(Hennessy, continued from page 3)

Dr. Hennessy has been the lead author of articles published in many journals, including the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, *Archives of Internal Medicine*, *BMJ*, the *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*, *Contraception*, *JAMA*, the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, *The Lancet*, *Pharmacoepidemiology and Drug Safety*, and *Pharmacotherapy*. In addition to first-authoring several published letters, reviews and book chapters, he has also contributed to journal articles published in the *American Journal of Medicine*, *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *Archives of Dermatology*, *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology*, *Drug Intelligence and Clinical Pharmacy*, *Gastroenterology*, the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*,

tion, the *Journal of Infectious Diseases*, *The New England Journal of Medicine*, and *Pharmacoepidemiology and Drug Safety*.

In addition to his numerous responsibilities at Penn, Dr. Hennessy serves as Treasurer on the Board of Trustees of the Independence Charter School, where his children are currently enrolled in the Spanish-immersion program (70% of the school day is conducted in Spanish). In this capacity, Dr. Hennessy feels that he has learned what to compromise on, as he has attained additional skills in dealing with complex organizations. His position on the board has afforded him what he characterizes as “an interesting view of participatory democracy,” as he interacts on this all-volunteer governing body.

Dr. Hennessy avidly plays tennis (and, less avidly, squash) in his limited spare time. He lives with his wife and two children in Center City.

(Faculty News and Notes, continued from page 7)

ENAR Distinguished Student Paper Awards for 2007

The Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology is pleased to announce that one of its PhD students, **Wenguang Sun**, was among the International Biometric Society Eastern North American Region (ENAR) 20 Distinguished Student Paper Award winners this year. These highly competitive awards are presented on an annual basis at the spring meeting to a select group of the best biostatistics students and recent graduates in eastern North America

Recipients receive a certificate, reimbursement for travel up to \$500, free tuition for a short course of their choice at the meeting, complimentary issues of the *Journal of Agricultural, Biological, and Environ-*

mental Statistics (JABES) published during the previous year, and an invitation to the Presidential Reception during the April meeting in Atlanta, GA. The winner of the John Van Ryzin Award, and an additional \$500, for best student manuscript is selected from the Distinguished Student Paper honorees.

Mr. Sun, admitted to the PhD program in 2003, earned a BS in Mathematics from Peking University in 2002 and an MS in Biostatistics from the University of Pennsylvania in 2004. His research interests include estimating equations, causal modeling, and methods for addressing the false discovery rate problem. His paper is titled *Oracle and Adaptive Decision Rules for False Discovery Rate Control*. Mr. Sun is advised by Tony Cai, PhD.

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believes in the power of collaboration and enjoys the opportunity to work with many different investigators here at Penn, adding, “Learning should not be done in isolation.”

When he is not working, he enjoys spending time at his home in Media with his wife Kathleen (O’Connor); his son Liam, a sophomore at Wharton; his 14-year-old daughter Nan; and the family’s two dogs. Taking a long-deserved break from his busy

schedule, Dr. Localio and his family recently traveled to Ireland for a reunion with Kathleen’s relatives and a visit to her grandmother’s former home in Clonmel, County Tipperary.

When asked why he had exchanged a career in law to undertake the professional odyssey that eventually led him to a faculty position in Biostatistics here at Penn, Dr. Localio pulled out a 1977 editorial in *Science* by Lewis Thomas, the late physician and

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CCEB's Clinical Research Services: Summer Clinical Research Methods Courses

The CCEB serves as an interdisciplinary resource for clinical research throughout the School of Medicine and offers a range of services, primarily to faculty, residents, fellows, and research staff within the University of Pennsylvania Health System, but also to clinicians and scientists throughout the Delaware Valley with interests in such services. These services are identified and described as a regular feature of this newsletter.

A series of clinical research methods courses are available this summer for clinical research project managers, residents, fellows, and faculty without clinical research training who are interested in careers in collaborative and research support roles. These classes are intensive short courses, taught for two hours each day (Monday through Friday only) beginning Monday, July 16 and ending Friday, July 27.

These courses include an introductory course in epidemiology, an introductory course in biostatistics, a database management course, and a course in clinical trials and translational research. In addition, two new courses are being offered for the first time. The first, *Economic Evaluation of Medical Therapies*, introduces students to cost-effectiveness analysis by use of decision trees and Markov models. The second, *Survey of Additional Topics in Biostatistics*, serves as an introduction to statistical topics and methods important to clinical researchers that are not covered or are covered only briefly in an introductory course (students taking this course must have already taken an introductory course in biostatistics).

For course descriptions and the schedule, please

see the following web page: <http://www.cceb.upenn.edu/education/non-degree/>. Information about the Clinical Research Certificate Program, which awards a certificate to those who complete a series of research methods courses, distributed across core subject areas, also is available on this page.

Registration for summer 2007 courses is ongoing. Those interested in further information about course registration should see the following web page: http://www.med.upenn.edu/apps/my/epi_course.

Those interested in additional information about summer courses, courses offered in the fall and spring semesters, the Clinical Research Certificate Program, the registration process, fellowships available for the Clinical Research Certificate Program (limited to residents and fellows), and/or related issues, should contact Tom Kelly (tkelly@cceb.med.upenn.edu, 215-898-0861).

(Q&A, continued from page 5)

adults. It is thought that insulin resistance is really the driving force that results in the clustering of these risk factors.

Q: *The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has pledged \$500 million over the next five years to reverse the epidemic of childhood obesity in the US by 2015. How do they expect to achieve this goal? How would you characterize its chances of success?*

A: As I understand it, the Foundation is interested in taking a community-based approach, trying to alter the school, health care and environmental settings in which children live. Improving access to healthy foods and expanding opportunities for safe physical activity will be promoted. They also intend to place particular emphasis on improving conditions for at-risk minority children. Although this goal seems to be a particularly ambitious endeavor, the Foundation's approach is probably the best way to address the problem of childhood obesity from a public health perspective. Whether it will be successful remains to be seen; besides the monetary commitment, this plan will require effective leadership, creativity and significant contributions of time and energy from various members of the community.

(Localio, continued from page 8)

scientist. Thomas wrote: "From here on, as far ahead as one can see, medicine must be building as a central part of its scientific base, a solid underpinning of biostatistical and epidemiologic knowledge. Hunches and intuitive impressions are essential for getting the work started, but it is only through the quality of the numbers that the truth can be told."

Congratulations and best wishes to the following May 2007 graduates!

MS in Biostatistics Degree Recipients

Michelle Korenblit
Caiyan Li
Xiaoli Shi, MD
Chia-Hao Wang

PhD in Biostatistics Degree Recipients

Laurel Bastone
Long-Long Gao, MD, MSCE

MSCE Degree Recipients

Mara L. Becker, MD
Liana Roxanne Clark, MD
Patrick Hugh Conway, MD
Joyce Christine Frye, DO
Priya Pradip Gor, MD
Kevin Haynes, PharmD
Suleena Kansal Kalra, MD
Janet L. Kwiatkowski, MD
Sharon Bloom Meropol, MD
Giang Truong Nguyen, MD
Jesse Mireth Pines, MD
Joanne Natividad Quiñones, MD
Peter Philip Reese, MD
Samir Suresh Shah, MD

CCEB Photo Gallery: Graduation May 2007



Left, pictured l to r, are Y-N. Wong, G. Nguyen, S. Shah, J. Frye, P. Reese, A. Neimann, J. Pines, P. Gor, K. Haynes, C. Umscheid, S. Meropol, and S. Kalra



Left to right, G. Gaulton, Dean A. Rubenstein, P. Gimotty, & S. Ross

Left to right, B. Leiby, J. Cheng, L-L. Gao, L. Bastone, and T. Liu



Above, pictured left to right, X. Shi, J. Shults, C-H. Wang, C. Li, and J.R. Landis

Left to right, J. Frye, J. Holmes, and G. Nguyen

